

Video Conferencing Etiquette

Good video conferencing etiquette is really just common courtesy and respect for the people in your meeting. Read through these tips for successful conferencing.

Introduce all conference participants when the meeting starts.

- Introduce yourself when you start speaking.
- Make sure that you can see and hear the far-site participants.
- Adjust your camera and microphone so that the far site can see and hear you.
- Place the microphone between the monitor and the people closest to the monitor.
- Avoid tapping on the microphone or rustling papers near the microphone.
- Mute the microphone before moving it so that the far site doesn't hear you moving it.
- Speak in your normal voice without shouting.
- In a multipoint call, mute your microphone when you are not speaking.

The usual principles of polite behavior required with any meeting apply for conferencing and collaboration — the trick is to understand how the use (or misuse) of technology can make meetings less effective.

The ideal video conference should get as close as possible to the dynamics of a real, face-to-face meeting from the participants' points of view, but of course it is not 'exactly' like a real meeting, since the system mediates communication between remote participants. Therefore, the role of everyone in the meeting (not just the chairperson) is to ensure that the system is not filtering out critical interactions, allowing discourtesy to sneak in.

Introductions - Who's that guy again?

In a face-to-face meeting, preliminary introductions, handshakes, and business card exchanges often occur as participants enter the room and begin taking their seats; a more formal around-the-table introduction, once all are seated, can complete the process to ensure that everyone knows who's who and what they're there for. In a video conference, the formal introduction part is even more important, because the benefit of informal introduction is unavailable to all participants. Make sure everyone is introduced at the start, preferably zooming in closely so facial expressions and features can be clearly seen. Most important, make sure that latecomers are properly introduced as they join. A non-introduced and unknown 'face' is like an eavesdropper, making other participants feel uncomfortable and awkward.

Muting - What are they saying about us?

Sometimes there are good reasons to mute a site (switch off the sound) so the far end can't hear distracting noises (as furniture is moved, for instance). But participants should be aware that talking among themselves at the near site during a mute period can easily be seen as discourteous by those at the far end - rather like switching languages during a meeting. And it's up to participants to make sure that they aren't unintentionally discourteous during muted periods.

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Fiddling with the equipment: Don't!

There's no better way to make participants feel unequal and out of control than to move cameras during a conference or over-use technical features such as 'zoom', camera switching, and screen layout. Not only can the close-up subject feel uncomfortable (as if personal space is being invaded), but other participants may feel the conference is being over directed. At a minimum, they may become distracted from the business at hand.

Noise, speech, and horseplay

The usual meeting rules should apply. But there are some additional technical parameters to remember for video conferences. Shouting is always unnecessary, but mumbling, speaking softly, and making vocal asides should also be avoided. Be aware that sensitive microphones will pick up the sounds of pencil tapping and paper shuffling. And don't risk excessive horseplay or in-jokes. These might serve to break the ice in a face-to-face meeting, but in a video conference they can fall flat and even alienate those at the remote site.

Short Dos and Don'ts

As with any meeting, the leader should be organised and have an agenda. But with a video conference, make sure that:

- Participants know in advance how they will be connected to the conference; ensure that dial-in numbers are distributed to participants ahead of time.
- The timing of the meeting is correct for different time zones.
- Everyone knows that the meeting is by video.
- If the conference is being recorded, ensure this is understood and all participants know how and where to find the replays.
- Lighting is direct onto faces, and windows and other light sources behind participants don't create silhouettes.
- In a multipoint conference, put location signs behind the speakers, so everyone can see where the talking heads are from.
- All presentations or other documents for collaborative work are ready to go on the system or your laptop.
- Introduce yourself before you speak (This is Sam from Singapore...)
- Whatever you say or do can probably be heard and seen by someone, so be careful!

The primary point of contact is the BT provided Logica Help Desk:

UK: **0800 389 7471**
International: **+44 20 8747 6210**
Email: **logica.conferencing@bt.com**

Alternatively you can contact the Logica MIS Help Desk:

UK: **0207 182 0158**
International: **+44 20 7182 0158**
Email: **MIS.helpdesk@logica.com**