

# TIPS TO ROCK YOUR NEXT VIDEO CALL

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## CONNECTION BEFORE CONTENT

In the wake of COVID-19, how we meet and gather for work or play has changed forever, turning our kitchen tables into home offices as we connect via video conferencing. Without the benefit of face-to-face communication and fewer non-verbal cues to follow, it's harder to get our point across – clearly and confidently. Done poorly, the results can range from a mild distraction to downright annoyance – and be an unnecessary waste of everyone's time. Follow these pro tips to help you rock your next call.

### Set up your 'studio'

- Find a meeting space where you can have some privacy: book a meeting room or use your spare guest room.
- Check your background. Try to frame yourself. Books, art, and plants help. Aim for clean lines, less clutter.
- If using a virtual background, use it with a green screen or be careful of your movements in case you – or parts of you – disappear!

### Lens, lighting, and listening

- Build connection with eye contact. Position the lens of your device at eye level. Use a small stand, box or even a stack of books. Secure it to avoid the annoying shakiness of hand held.
- Maintain eye contact. Position the 'speaker view' directly under your lens to reduce shifty eye movement.
- It's ok to look at your notes. Think of an old school news anchor – a deliberate look down then back to your audience. You can also tape notes with your key points to the side of your screen so you don't have to look down.
- Make sure you have good lighting – with light facing you - not behind you. This may require extra lamps at each side of your monitor. A window behind you or to the side can darken your face with undesirable shadows.
- Check the sound on your phone or laptop. You might need a headset with a microphone for the best sound quality – and to avoid the unpopular screech of audio feedback.

### You are also the message

- Dress appropriately – for Council or the Board room depending on the focus of the meeting. Colours like black, grey, or white can make you look washed out. Avoid the distraction of noisy plaids, busy patterns, and jangly jewelry. Opt for solid colours.
- If you're using a green screen, don't wear green as you may disappear into the background.
- Use a separate meeting to test your video picture, sound, and other features in advance. Record your test and play it back to ensure you look and sound your best.
- Unsure? Ask a friend for feedback.

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## Know your 'vidiquette'

- Simple movements like moving your iPad, your documents, or adjusting your headset are magnified online. These actions reduce others' ability to hear each other – and increase the annoyance factor.
- Be fluent in how to mute yourself. If on a mobile device, move your hand from below lens level to hit mute – instead of scaring your audience with a giant hand approaching the lens.
- Arrive early and test your tech so you're not making your colleagues wait for you to take your virtual seat.
- Be careful with what you're doing during the meeting (i.e. eating, flossing, multi-tasking). Would you do that in person?
- It's ok to step away. Let your chair or host know and simply mute your audio, and if need be, turn off your video.

**Mute is your best friend.**

## Get ready

- Put a 'do not disturb – on a conference call' sign on the outside of the door. Lock it, if you can, to avoid accidental entries during your call.
- Turn off the ringer to phones in the room – including your cell.
- Turn off automatic notifications on your computer so they don't interrupt with pop-ups or dings.
- Have a coffee mug of water ready in case you need a drink (if you are nervous and your hand is shaking, using a ceramic mug will hide the shaky waves 😊).
- Be a calm, confident communicator. Stand tall and 'box breathe' – breathe in for a count of three, hold for three, breathe out for three, hold for three. Repeat three to five times.

## Go for it!

- Remember people are assessing a lot about you from how you come across online.
- Sit up straight, take a deep breath.
- Start with a smile – it's contagious!

## #YouGotThis

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