

BEST PRACTICES – VIRTUALLY PRESENTING

This guide will provide best practices and tips as a virtual presenter.

WHAT YOU NEED TO GET STARTED

- An internet connected computer or laptop (wired is preferred not Wi-Fi)
- Headphones or earbuds
- A webcam (if video is required)
- If applicable, the provided microphone/headset
- If applicable, the provided USB camera

GENERAL TIPS FOR A GOOD WEBCAM EXPERIENCE

Dress comfortably for the occasion

- Wear something that is appropriate for your audience and makes you feel comfortable and professional. Choose a solid-colored dress shirt or blazer and avoid fabrics with small or distracting patterns.
- Avoid wearing solid black or white as those can be hard for your camera to properly expose your face.
- Be mindful of distracting jewelry, including anything that can bang on the tabletop.
Glasses often reflect the lighting, windows, and monitors. Consider your options.

Flatter yourself with your webcam placement

- Some camera angles can exaggerate your facial features and distort your appearance. Fortunately, simply placing your webcam properly can go a long way to achieving the look you want. Whether you are using a USB webcam or the built-in webcam on your laptop, make sure that the camera lens sits at or above eye level, no higher than your hairline.
- Once your webcam is in place, remember not to sit too close to the camera. Position your webcam far enough away to capture your shoulders and your entire face with some room to spare.

Use soft lighting from the front

- All cameras capture better-looking video when there is a good light source, and webcams are no exception. Poor lighting may leave your video looking washed out, or worse, may leave you looking like a shadowy figure.
- Ideally, you want to light yourself from the front with soft, indirect light. Place a light with a lampshade in front of you, behind your webcam. Being near a window with indirect light behind your camera can look great! If the window has direct sunlight, an option is to pin or tape ripstop nylon or other non-colored thin fabric directly to the window frame. Experiment with one or more layers of fabric. This will set you up nicely with diffused natural light.

Look behind you

- Windows in the background are often a challenge for webcams. Avoid silhouettes. If you sit with your back to a bright white wall or uncovered windows, your webcam will try to balance out that bright background with your face -- and your face will usually lose, ending up in silhouette.
- Be cognizant of the detail behind you in your camera shot. Your audience will notice everything, and it can distract their attention from your presentation. Try to keep the background simple by avoiding anything that looks busy or cluttered. Simply choosing a plain wall as your backdrop is often best.

Connect with your audience: make eye contact and smile

- Eye contact is everything when it comes to public speaking, and it's no different when it comes to video. Look directly at the camera. While it's perfectly fine to peek down at your presentation materials and other participants from time to time, that also makes you look distracted. Remember to look at your webcam lens while you are speaking.

TECHNOLOGY TIPS WHILE VIRTUALLY PRESENTING

Are there other people sharing your internet connection?

- Pick a room that can isolate you from other people. Close the door, if possible, and tell others what time you are presenting so they know not to interrupt you while you are speaking
- Tell others to not use the internet, stream movies, or play video games during your presentation
- Turn off all devices except your computer. Turn the WIFI off on all phones, tablets, and other computers. Airplane mode is another quick way to shut off mobile devices WIFI connection

Are you using WIFI on your presentation computer?

- A wired connection to your router or modem is the best option to get maximum internet speed

Restart your computer

- Restart your computer an hour or two before it is time to present
- Close all programs except those needed to present

What type of desk or table are you presenting at?

- Tapping on the desk or table could be picked up by a microphone
- Standing desks are great for posture, but can add camera shaking
- Do not lean on your desk while you are presenting

Disruptive background noises

- Dog barks and other pets are the most common interruption that affect a presentation
- Isolate yourself from noises that could happen at home or outside during your presentation. Some examples: lawn work, home telephones, a smoke detector with low batteries.

Use headphones to reduce feedback

- Plug in your headphones/earbuds into your computer. It is preferred to use your computer's headphone port and NOT any microphone's headphone port.

Use a USB microphone for better sound quality

- Sound matters more than you might think. We recommend using a USB microphone that will better minimize background noise.

Monitor light

- The light bathing your face from a device screen is usually a shade of blue that isn't flattering. One way to combat it is to find the display controls that set it to a warmer shade or "color temperature." This may be called "blue light filter" or "night mode." Screen light will always mix with ambient room light, so try different display settings as you look at yourself.

Adjust your webcam settings for new lighting

- Don't rely on your webcam's auto-exposure. Tweaking your Webcam will make your camera look *much* better. Uncheck any Auto settings -- this may be auto-exposure, auto-white balance, and auto-gain. Manually adjust them so that your picture looks correct. Your final product will be based on your preferences.

Practice with Your Webcam Setup

- It's always a good idea to record a test video or two — not only to make sure your setup is giving you the look and sound quality you want, but also to practice presenting in front of a video camera. While you may be perfectly comfortable presenting in a general session or meeting room, you may feel different the first time you record yourself on a webcam.