Best Practices and Etiquette for Web Conferencing

Whether you are learning or working from home, understanding best practices and etiquette for web conferencing is important. Courses and meetings are often held remotely using web conferencing (also known as video conferencing) software because it provides opportunities for us to stay connected with our peers, colleagues, teachers and learners. Web conferencing platforms connect us in an online capacity through video and audio connections, screen sharing, in-meeting chat functions, document sharing, whiteboard functionality and more.

Check your technical equipment

**Use a high quality internet connection** through your Wi-Fi or ensure you have a hard-wired (Ethernet) connection. If using Wi-Fi, try to be as close to the router as possible to optimize your connection.

**Use a laptop or desktop computer** to access your web conferencing session. Mobile devices, though supported, are not recommended.

**Use supported browsers** - For the best experience, use Mozilla Firefox or Google Chrome on Windows 10 or Mac OS.

**Disable AdBlockers** on your video conferencing page(s). Browser AdBlockers can turn off your audio and video and can cause buttons to not show up.

**Use a webcam and headset with microphone** to reduce distractions for yourself, improve the audio quality, and decrease echoes and audio feedback.

**Ensure your device is plugged in.** Battery use can adversely affect video/audio quality.

**Close other programs and streaming services on your device** except for the browser you are using for your web conferencing session. This will prevent potential bandwidth issues during your session.

Prior to your web conferencing session

**Test your meeting connections in advance**, especially if you are using new/unfamiliar equipment or are in an unfamiliar location.

**Establish your connection 15-20 minutes in advance** of the session in order to ensure you have time to troubleshoot potential issues.

**Have a back-up communication plan** if you cannot establish a connection. You can try to join from a different device (if available) and most web conferencing tools allow participants to connect through phone.
Make sure you are in a quiet space with appropriate lighting (if possible) so you can be seen by other participants.

Adjust your webcam to make sure others can clearly see you. Remember that your immediate surroundings are also visible through your webcam.

Avoid background noise and distractions by muting cell phones/other mobile devices and turning off notifications on your computer.

**During your web conferencing session: expectations and etiquette**

Be punctual and use the chat function to introduce yourself when you arrive, if appropriate.

Always use your headset with microphone when speaking in order to reduce background noise and improve the quality of your audio.

Mute yourself when not speaking. Nothing is more distracting than hearing outside sounds like typing, a side conversation, or audio feedback. Make sure to take note of your microphone settings throughout the session as you don’t want to start talking while still on mute.

Turn your webcam off when not speaking. This can reduce potential bandwidth issues and mitigate the webcam limits of some web conferencing platforms.

Use the raised hands, chat or other interactive functions, where available. If you have questions or would like a chance to speak, using tools like raised hands (where available) or writing your question into the chat will get the facilitators attention and allow you to interject without interrupting.

Speak clearly in a normal voice when talking. Do not shout.

**Webcam tips**

Be aware of your surroundings and how you appear visually.

- Have your webcam at eye level or higher.
- Make sure that your primary light source is in front of you or slightly to the side.
- Avoid sitting with your back to a window or other light source, if you can help it. It makes you darker and harder to see.
- Wear neutral, solid-colored clothing. Avoid black, white, or striped clothing.
- Be aware of your behavior (e.g., multitasking during your session), facial expression(s) and background surroundings.

**Troubleshooting 101**

What should I do if I can’t hear or my microphone isn’t working?

- If you are using a USB headset, ensure your headset is fully plugged into a USB port
• **Ensure your headset is the default audio device**
  - See this How To Guide for Windows 10 users
  - For Mac users, open the System Preferences > Sounds; ensure your headset is selected for both Output and Input

• Most web conferencing platforms allow you to **run an audio and video check/setup** to verify functionality and help troubleshoot.

• **Ensure your browser has permission to use your headset and webcam** by clicking the little padlock icon to the left of the browser URL field:

  ![Padlock Icon](michener.png)

**What happens if I close my browser?**

• **Re-enter your web conferencing session** as soon as possible the same way you initially accessed it.