

## Some thoughts and advice on webcam etiquette

Many organisations including our own committee are holding virtual meetings via webcam. It is interesting to watch all the interviews on television that are now taking place via webcam. What makes it so absorbing is we get to see the inside of politicians and journalists' home/offices.

But have you ever looked behind the speaker and thought what room are they in. Is it the kitchen, living room, bedroom or attic. I'm intrigued by some of the rather large sets of bookshelves in the background. Are these real books and how are they displayed. Are they in alphabetical order by author or subject? And have they all been read?

If the speaker is in their living room have you noticed the occasional cat or dog sleeping on the sofa, or thought what is that picture in the background and are those flowers just for the tv or are they always there.

It's interesting to watch the review of the papers on the BBC News channel or the questions being asked on the daily Downing Street briefing at 5pm. Notice the quality of the pictures. This depends on the type of webcam you have. At our virtual committee meeting I was the only one without a camera. My laptop is broken and whilst I use a large 27inch monitor with my desktop computer I don't have a camera. Trying to obtain one is proving difficult. Yes I could get a cheap import from China but delivery is about a month. No I would prefer to purchase via Curry's/Argos/John Lewis but none are available. Why, they have all been snapped up by all the new "work from home brigade".

Is there such a thing as webcam etiquette? Oh yes there is.

### 1. Dress Appropriately

One of the magical things about working remotely is the freedom to wear anything to work. It's the dream, right? Still, there's no reason to show your colleagues your PJs and bedhead. (Unless it's a joke the whole team agrees on, in which case we approve).

Take a few minutes to throw on a clean shirt and brush your hair. The best part of actually getting ready while working remotely is that you'll put yourself in the right headspace to be productive.

### 2. Be aware of your surroundings

Your colleagues won't be able to hear your ideas or take you seriously when there is a pile of dirty clothes in the corner behind you. You also want to avoid looking like you work from the inside of a cave because of bad lighting.

Adjust your work setup so that you face a window or are exposed to plenty of light. And make sure your background is professional and work appropriate! This means:

- No beds (unmade or made) in the background.
- No messy rooms or open closets where everyone can see your clutter.

### 3. Mute your microphone when you're not talking

Even though you may not be speaking and think you're being quiet, most microphones can pick up minor background noises, like coughs, sneezes, or typing. These sounds can easily distract other video conferencing participants and potentially even cause annoyance. Make it a practice (out of common courtesy to your colleagues) to mute yourself whenever you're not talking. For most video conferencing software, it's as simple as a click of a button.

### 4. Frame the camera correctly

We've all been on video calls where we end up looking up people's nostrils or seeing the side of their face. When you're on video, make sure you frame your camera in a way that feels natural and allows you to look at the camera. Sit at eye level to the lens, and try to position yourself so that it shows midsection up. Placing it too high leaves other participants staring down at you like a bad tv show. Putting a camera too low can lead to unflattering and awkward angles.

### 5. Look into the camera

A common mistake is looking at the video feed instead of the camera when speaking to a remote participant. While it may seem like the right thing to do, it actually makes it appear as if you're looking off and not paying attention. This will make you come across as more aloof and less professional. Looking into the camera lens is the equivalent of looking into the person's eyes, so practice doing so until you're comfortable with it.

### 6. No food allowed

Try to eat a snack before your virtual meeting. No one wants to see you stuff your face with chips while discussing important business matters. Not only is it distracting to others, you won't be able to focus on the task at hand because you'll be worrying about dropping crumbs all over your keyboard.

### 7. Have the right light

Poor lighting conditions have an enormous effect on the video quality that you send. You'll want to make sure that there is enough light in the room you're in so that your video isn't grainy and unwatchable. Try to not mix natural lighting and office lighting unless your office bulbs are daylight white. You also don't want any faces being lit from below, as this makes you look like a cartoonish villain from a silent film. Lighting from the sides will make faces look the best, so try for that if you have the ability.

That's all folks. Check out the YouTube videos below – it might be fun!

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8PCMWuAgg\\_g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8PCMWuAgg_g)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BZfujnPVAAnU>