10 VIDEO CALL BASICS

1

CHECK YOUR BACKDROP
Your wall art or decorations should be work-appropriate and your surroundings clean. Also check your lighting - if it's too dark you may look like you're in a cave. Get rid of clutter on your desk and around you. That includes multiple coffee mugs, dishes and trash.

2

USE HEADPHONES
Use headphones with a microphone, rather than your laptop's speaker, so you can hear everything that is said the first time. This also allows you to sit further from the screen and still be heard without shouting, and others sharing your physical space who don't need to hear your call.

3

COVER YOUR IMAGE
Look at the camera when you are talking rather than at the picture of yourself on your screen. It will seem like you're making eye contact. If your conferencing tool has a gallery view, use it to see all of the faces of the group.

4

INTRODUCE YOURSELF
If you're in a group call without video, introduce yourself before you talk. Consider something like "Hi it's Lisa, I have a question." While several programs will notify you as to who is talking, conference line numbers will not. Be polite and introduce yourself.

5

USE THE MUTE BUTTON
Mute when you're not talking. This will reduce the ambient noise and allow everybody else to hear what is being said. When your microphone is live, be mindful of things like drumming your fingers on the table, typing loudly, eating or putting down cups that can grab focus and be distracting to everybody else trying to listen. Also, put your phone on silent and turn off notifications on your computer, especially ones that ding.

6

USE HAND SIGNALS
Use hand signals to communicate without interrupting when others are speaking. For example, use a thumbs-up for "agree," and a hand wave for "hello/goodbye." Even simple nods and frowns are helpful. Most conferencing software will only let one person speak at once, so it's also useful to practice leaving micro-pauses when you finish speaking.

7

DON'T INTERRUPT OTHER SPEAKERS
Wait for an opening in the conversation before putting in your two cents. Cutting off other speakers is bad form in any meeting. Another option is posting pending questions by instant message so that every comment is addressed.

8

DON'T CARRY ON SIDE CONVERSATIONS
If you wouldn't do it in a face-to-face meeting, then you shouldn't do it in a virtual one. This includes tuning out of the present conversation to talk to someone else sitting next to you, on the phone, in an IM chat, with anybody not in the current meeting. If you're working from home, let others know not to disturb you.

9

DON'T WEAR NOISY JEWELRY
Jewelry should be small and simple. Big jewelry can be distracting to those tuning-in and it can also bump against your microphone. Also, stay away from dangling earrings and shiny eyeglass frames.

10

REDUCE EYEGLASS REFLECTION
Take off your glasses if practical. If you need to wear them, turn down the brightness on your monitor to the lowest level where you can still see it. Check your image for reflections and try to move yourself or your lights to avoid reflected glare. You can try angling your glasses slightly downward on your face, but don't overdo it to the point where you look disheveled.