

Best practices for virtual meetings

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Introduction

Online communication tools such as Teams, Zoom and other solutions with plug-and-play cameras and headset microphones ensure our business continuity, but we may struggle with the limitations of poor audio and video quality.

Moving forward and considering virtual and hybrid meetings as part of the *new normal*, the importance of establishing a **professional online image** is now an additional, fundamental aspect of communication.

With a little preparation, you can maximize the efficiency of your meetings and make a great professional impression, whether you are in your weekly meeting with your chief or at an Executive Board Session presenting regional updates.

1. YOUR VIRTUAL PLATFORM

In case of hybrid or virtual events, Zoom is the platform currently being used by the Conference Servicing Team in EBS.

Please download the most recent Zoom version at [Zoom Download Centre](#).

- For Microsoft operating systems, check [here](#) how to update your Zoom application.
- For MacOS, check [here](#) how to update your Zoom application.

2. ENHANCE VIDEO QUALITY

Optimizing your appearance on camera improves engagement and communication as a participant, presenter or speaker.

a) Use a high-quality camera

Use a good quality HD webcam instead of your computer's built-in camera. Please find below some suggestions of high-definition webcams.

- Poly Studio P5, Worldwide, Open Ecosystem, 1080p Camera and Mic; USB Powered
- Poly Studio P15, Open Ecosystem, 4K Camera, Integrated Speaker, 3xMic; USB Powered

b) Watch your position

Head position: where's your head at? Avoid your chin or forehead being cut off. Position yourself so that you are squarely in the middle of the frame.

Position to eye level or just above: maintain visual engagement by positioning yourself at eye level. If you are reading, help yourself with a **document holder**, so that your eyes can still be seen. If you are viewing someone else, try moving that feed just below your webcam to improve visual engagement.

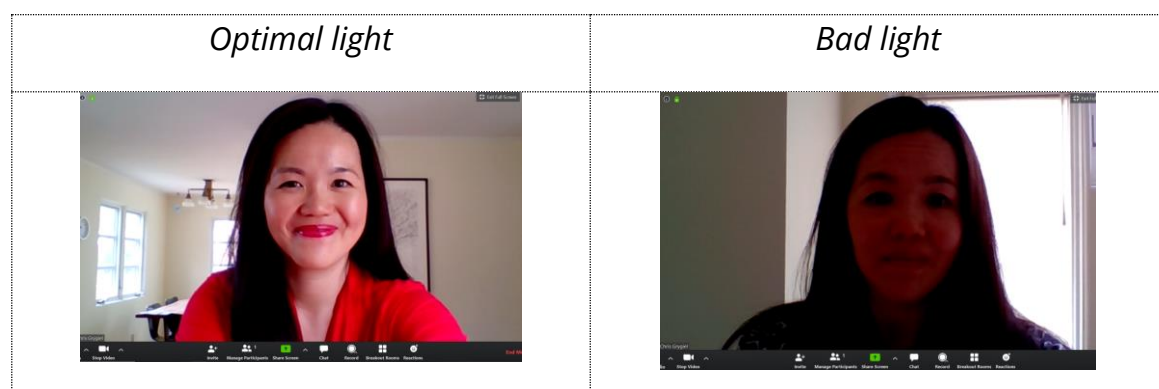
Look into the camera: Don't look left or right, or off to a second monitor; this is distracting. Look directly into the camera.

Distance: remain approximately 0.5 meters from the camera. You don't want your face to be too small or too large on screen.

c) Plan your lighting

Face lighting: light evenly with medium to light brightness. If you can, sit facing a big window. Natural light is almost always better than artificial light. Make sure the **light source is in front of you**, not behind you, so you don't get silhouetted.

Color temperature adjustments: some videoconferencing tools, such as Zoom, offer [video enhancements features](#) to adjust your color temperature as well as your lightness. You can do some tests to find the best adjustment for your setting. You can also visit [Zoom Lighting Concepts](#) to improve your video lighting.



d) Set up your background

Authenticity: real office settings are the best and most authentic backdrops for your work meetings. However, your background makes a strong statement about the Organization you represent. Therefore, curate your background and scene to project a professional environment.

Virtual backgrounds: if you are not able to have a neat, clean, bright, and professional background, use a virtual branded backdrop to keep other participants focused on you.

Motion: Keep background motion to a minimum. People walking around and other motion in the background is distracting. If you're going to be on a call, set up in an area where there's likely to be little going on behind you.

To set a virtual background, follow the instructions [here](#).

3. IMPROVE AUDIO QUALITY

The kind of microphone you use will affect the other participants' ability to hear you as well as interpreters. The use of a good quality microphone is recommended by the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) to all UN agencies to enable interpreters to work to the highest possible standards and to safeguard their occupational health while servicing remote or virtual meetings. **The interpreters will interrupt their work if the audio becomes sub-standard.**

Here are a few tips on how to have professional audio quality:

a) Get a high-quality microphone

The use of built-in computer microphones is highly discouraged. Investing in a high-quality external microphone, such as lapel mics, not only improves the way you sound, but also helps keep your audio clean and professional. Below is a list of recommended microphones by the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC).

Table mics

- Razer Seiren mini
- Razer Seiren X
- Shure MV7
- Rode NT1 USB

Headsets

- AKG HSC15
- BOSCH HDP

Consider your background noise. Some microphones are good at picking up voice only and filtering out ambient sound. Some applications, like Zoom for instance, offer [*Noise background suppression*](#) features to help you adjust the level of background noise that your microphone captures.

b) Speak slowly and clearly

Use complete sentences and allow extra time for the interpreters to complete text passages. If a prepared statement is to be read, please send the text file before the meeting to hq.confservicing@wfp.org and please read it slowly.

c) Turn off App notifications

Please remember to mute notifications on devices close to you, including those of applications on your computer (Outlook, Teams, WhatsApp) in order to avoid distractions for both speakers and listeners.

[Here](#) are instructions on how to turn off your notifications.

d) Use the mute/unmute button:

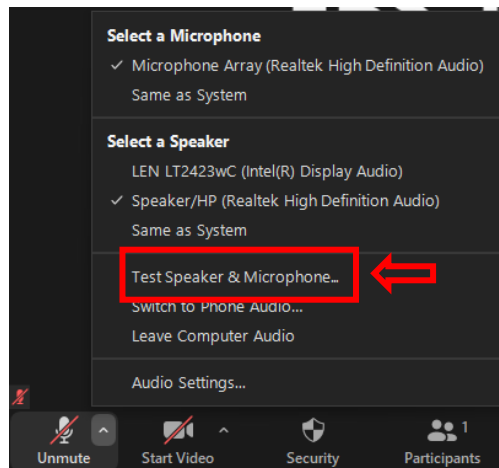
When it's time to speak, make sure to unmute yourself by clicking on the microphone button at the bottom left of your Zoom meeting window.

When it's not your time to speak, make sure you set yourself on Mute by using the same button. If you do put yourself on mute, be aware and unmute yourself when required to speak! You will avoid "Sorry, I was on mute."

4. TEST BEFORE YOUR MEETING

Now you can test your speaker and microphone in just a few steps:

1. From your Zoom meeting window, go to **Mute/Unmute** and click on the angle-up arrow
2. Once you have clicked on the arrow, click on **Test Speaker & Microphone** (see screenshot below)
3. Follow the guided instructions



Need help?

Contact the EBS Conference Services Unit at hq.confservicing@wfp.org