

The Do's & Dont's of Zoom Meetings

#1. Don't let your guests wait for you

- In fact, I recommend that you log in early. This way, you will be able to accommodate anyone who might decide to hop on Zoom a few minutes earlier.

#2. Introduce yourself and everyone at the start of the meeting

- I admit; this is my personal gripe with many Zoom meeting hosts. They let everyone into the call and leave it to everyone to get to know each other. Unfortunately, often, this leads to nothing else but a prolonged and rather awkward silence.
- It's also you who need to make sure that everyone knows the other people on the call. So, in a situation where your other participants don't know each other, you need to speak first. Introduce yourself, and then tell everyone who else is on the call. This way, you'll break the ice, and you will also get the meeting going. Believe me, once that's done, getting the conversation started is a breeze.

#3. Use the camera

- Important for both the host and other participants to have their camera on. If you're the host, your camera should be on. Having them stare at a blank rectangular patch with your name on it is not a good way to build rapport and engagement.
- As participants, it's OK to keep the camera off. But keep in mind that having it off will reduce the opportunity for more human interaction. Your co-participants will not be able to read your body language, and you won't be able to provide additional context with gestures, etc.

#4. Dress Appropriately

- Important for All Participants. You will be informed before the Auxiliary meeting as to whether you will be in Business Casual attire or in your Official Look. It was fine then. But as the world continues to go back to normal, you need to start paying close attention to what you wear during Zoom calls.

#5. Mute the Microphone until it's your turn to Speak

- By far, keeping the mic on all the time is the number one source of the most embarrassing moments during Zoom calls. It's one thing when the microphone picks up everyday sounds – kids playing in the room next door, conversations between yourselves, or a radio/TV playing in the background. You can avoid all that by following a simple rule—Keep your mic on MUTE unless it's your turn to speak.
- TIP: Some laptops feature a mute microphone button. You can find it among the function keys in the top row of your keyboard. This makes muting and unmuting microphones during Zoom calls a breeze and doesn't require you to click a relevant option in Zoom's interface to block background noises.

#6. Notify others when you want to Speak

- Zoom has an amazing feature that allows you to “raise your hand” to notify others that you want to speak. Use it to eliminate that annoying situation where participants start to talk over one another, trying to introduce their ideas to the conversation.

#7. Avoid multi-tasking

- I admit that this is my personal pet peeve during Zoom calls. I absolutely hate seeing other participants eating food, playing on their phone or even having separate conversations with others. And you can so easily tell when they do so.
- All this multitasking leads to serious problems during Zoom meetings: Important information gets lost. Whoever is multitasking is bound to miss at least some of it. Others get distracted or demotivated by such behavior too. Not to mention that it's unfair on the person speaking when you're not paying attention to them. Instead, follow the same etiquette as you would during any standard, non-virtual meetings:

- Mute all notifications, close all browser tabs you had open before the meeting began. Mute your phone too.

#8. Pause regularly when speaking

- Important for all participants who talk and present information at the meeting. This Zoom etiquette advice has more to do with technological limitations than human behavior. You see, one challenge we experience when chatting on Zoom is lag time. People on the call may use different Internet speeds, etc. and these can lead to lagging in your words reaching them. Taking short but regular pauses, even though it might seem unnatural to do at first, will ensure that everyone's caught up and no information is lost.

#9. Set your environment with a Zoom background

- If you are joining the call from home, a coffee shop, or another non-professional setting, then you should optimize your background. Luckily, Zoom gives you the option to set up a virtual background for the call and hide your current environment from other participants. Zoom offers plenty of options to choose from—from cityscapes or landscapes to plain color backgrounds—so you can optimize the environment to represent you best.

#10. Don't Eat while on a Zoom Meeting

- This rule should apply even if you don't use the video camera during the meeting. Sure, with the camera off, other meeting attendees will not see you eating. But they might still hear you chewing or swallowing. This is particularly true if you forget to mute your microphone. Overall, eating during a meeting is a big no-no. It's not professional behavior, for one. It's also distracting and disrespectful to others.
- What about drinking water or coffee?
Personally, I choose not to drink water or coffee during Zoom meetings too. I'm not comfortable with others seeing me taking a sip. However, I do not have a problem with others doing that, as long as their microphone is on mute.

#11. Position your camera to maintain eye contact

- Eye contact is natural when you meet someone in person. You stand in front of each other and maintain eye contact naturally. The situation is quite different when you're in a virtual meeting: Your laptop, and with that, the camera, might not be on your eye level.
- Even if you look directly at the screen, you do not seem to be looking directly at the person talking. You watch their image on the screen instead. That image is below the camera, of course, and so to the person on the other side, you look as if staring at something lower than their eyes.
- Not to mention that, often, we look at our own image on a screen rather than the person talking to us. To fully maintain eye contact, you need to look directly at the camera. This way, to the person seeing you on screen, you look like you are looking directly at them. To do that well, you should position the laptop at your head level. You should be able to look at the camera without dropping your head down.

#12. Don't treat the camera as a mirror

- I'm sure this isn't just my pet peeve. Seeing other participants correcting their hair or attire is simply annoying. You immediately know that they don't focus on the meeting but use the camera as a mirror, and their thoughts are on improving their looks. Don't make the same mistake. The camera is not a mirror but a device through which you connect and maintain eye contact with other participants. Use it as such and remain focused on the conversation.