

# Virtual Meeting Etiquette: The Do's and Don'ts

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It would be fair to say that this year, 2020, has been more than unique. It started out much like any other new year, full of hope and promise, only to be redirected by the Coronavirus. Decisions had to be made, and made quickly, about how to continue operations where possible. Business as usual was no longer...usual.

Working remotely from home has become the “new normal” for many, and virtual meetings have become a necessary source of business communication for part of the population that has not been exposed to virtual platforms. Additionally, we've seen an increase in Telehealth visits as protocols are developed to minimize person-to-person contact. Again, we have a population who are having to learn an entirely new way to communicate that extends beyond a simple telephone call.

Educating on the use of a virtual platform is a unique challenge, especially if that education is being done remotely, via the platform itself. Once we manage to get people audibly and visibly engaged on the platform, an entirely new challenge presents itself: Virtual Etiquette.

Etiquette is generally defined as an unwritten code of polite behavior in society or among members of a profession or group. This certainly applies to virtual meetings and telehealth visits. Here are some things to consider when engaging in either of these activities and are generated from personal experiences.

Consider the **environment** in which you will be interacting via video. Being set up in a quiet, well-lit and neutral area of your home that is a dedicated space for virtual meetings is going to promote an engaged conversation with minimized distractors. Working in a high-traffic area can be precarious, especially if other household members are not aware they will be on camera and are moving about the house in various states of dress, or otherwise. It is also a bit unsettling to join a professional video call with someone in their bedroom. Is this intimate space an appropriate area in which to hold a business call? We understand that this may be the only quiet space they have in order to accomplish the call for that moment, but it may be worth considering a more appropriate setting for future virtual engagements.

Personal **appearance** is key to demonstrating a level of professionalism that you want to portray. One should still appear dressed for work specifically when engaging with other professionals, even if they are coworkers. It is easy to get lax when you are moving 20 feet across the hall from bed to computer to start your workday, but you still

want to ensure you are being perceived as the put-together professional you are, even if you are wearing shorts or yoga pants with that shirt and tie or lovely blouse.

**Camera positioning**, to include height and angle, is a consideration that is often ignored. Virtual calls are conducted via laptops, cell phones and tablets for the most part. If there is an opportunity to have the camera directly in front of your face at eye level, this is ideal as it allows you to look directly at the person you are speaking with. Books and boxes make great props for setting height levels and being hands-free makes it better. Many will use the laptop literally on their laps (imagine that!) and I often wonder if they are not seeing themselves reflected on screen because the angle of the camera is up the nose.

These are just a few considerations when working in a virtual-driven environment and certainly do not encompass everything. There are a multitude of resources that are available online to give advice on how to manage remote working and maintain the same level of professionalism you would have at the office, as well as facilitate an engaged interaction. ☾

