

Tips for Videoconferencing

Despite the added dimension of multiple locations and cameras, a videoconference is very similar to a normal meeting. It is important to be organized and efficient to save time and cost. Here are a few suggestions that will assist you in having a successful videoconference.

Preparing for the Videoconference

- Reserve videoconference rooms well in advance
- Specify start/finish times and equipment required. Be mindful of time zone/date differences.
- Provide participants with clearly defined objectives, agenda, supporting documents and presentations in advance.
- Generally Videoconference co-ordinators/operators are to start setting up the multi-point videoconference no less than 30 minutes prior to the scheduled meeting time.

Preparing the Visual Material

- If using presentation software, such as PowerPoint, ensure that prior to the conference a computer is attached to the videoconferencing unit and that you have tested the system.
- Know how to switch easily between the presentation and the camera. Familiarize yourself with the concept of local and live-transmit display.
- To maintain your audience attention, we recommend that you not leave your audience staring at the same slide for an extended period of time.
- Use text that contrasts strongly with the background. For example:
 - Use large fonts to compensate for the low screen resolution.
 - Use nothing smaller than 32 pt.
 - Average text size should be 44 pt. or larger.
 - Avoid all-caps text.
- Avoid animations, motion can be choppy over videoconference.
- Avoid placing objects around the edges of computer slide presentations, the edges will be cut off when the slide is displayed on the monitor.
- Use bar and pie charts as the preferred graph formats.
- If a site other than yours is making a presentation, mute your local microphone. This will prevent needless image switching caused by background noises in your room.
- Be familiar with the features of the document camera, especially focus and zoom.
- When using the document camera, avoid moving presentation materials around. The far-end screens take a while to update. Use a pen or pencil as a pointer and leave it in one spot while you make your point.

Chairperson

- Take control at the meeting start time. Inform the other sites that you will be chairing the meeting (normally done prior to the meeting via the convening order/agenda).
- Prior to the conference, take the time to familiarize yourself with voice activation and split screen. Additional adjustments, such as camera angle and zoom for videoconferences may also be necessary.
- In lengthy meetings, be alert for fatigue and call for a break as needed.

During the Videoconference

- Arrive 5 to 10 minutes early.
- Introduce participants who will take part in the conference via audio add on only.
- Be aware of your proximity and/or distance from the microphone. Speak clearly and distinctly in order to avoid the muffling created by using a microphone.
- At any time during the conference make sure that all the participating sites can see and hear your site.
- Don't hesitate to ask other participants to speak up if necessary.

- Be aware of the transmission delay (up to approx. 1 second) and pause to allow others to comment.
- Remember excessive fast movement at low speeds (128k) on some systems can affect the video quality and be disruptive.
- In most instances, the site speaking will automatically be displayed.
- Muting. Mute your microphone immediately. Wait for response. Remember that any sound can trigger the switching mechanism. It is important to mute your microphone while you are not speaking for three reasons:
 - it prevents your site from broadcasting unwanted sounds/talking to the rest of the conference sites.
 - it prevents voice-activated switching to your site at inappropriate times.
 - it prevents your site from causing an echo.
- Should you need an extension to your meeting, ensure you notify the Videoconferencing Bridge. Note that it may not be possible to extend all sites due to previous bookings.

Some Etiquette Hints

- Avoid side conversations that would exclude the far-end site from your conversation or that would be distracting to other sites involved in discussion.
- Avoid shuffling papers or tapping objects near the microphone.
- Remind sites to use their mute feature when they are not talking for extended periods of time.
- Direct questions to individuals where possible. Address questions and comments to participants by name and rank.
- Avoid turning your back on the audience.
- Request technical support as needed. The Bridge Operator will troubleshoot / resolve technical problems as they occur.

Ending the Videoconference

- Notify the Videoconference Co-ordinator / Operator that the meeting has ended.
- Ensure that you disconnect your system at the end of the conference.