
VIDEO CALL SUGGESTIONS

To ensure that your video calls go as smoothly as possible, try to follow these guidelines.

Your Equipment and Connections

1. Type of equipment.
 - A computer is better than a tablet or a smart phone. You will be able to see other people much better if you have a larger screen.
 - A wired connection to the Internet is better than a wireless connection. Wired connections are always more stable and give you a faster Internet speed. A stable, fast connection leads to better video and sound quality.
 - Ear buds with an in-line microphone generally work ok. A headset (headphones plus a microphone) is even better because it provides higher quality sound.
 - A headset plugged into your device is better than Bluetooth (though Bluetooth devices usually work ok).
 - As a last resort, use your device's built-in speaker and microphone.
2. No matter what device you use, place it on a stable surface (like a desk or tabletop) so it won't move during the call. When your device jiggles, it distracts other people who want to see and hear you clearly.
3. Show your love for other people by positioning your device so the webcam is at the same level as your eyes. They don't want to look up your nose or down on top of your head!
4. If you other people have problems hearing each you, your microphone controls might be muted. Check:
 - your headset's controls
 - your software's controls (i.e., within Zoom, Skype, etc.)
 - your computer's master volume control
5. If you're making a Zoom call, please use either Firefox or Chrome as your browser. Browsers like Edge or Opera may or may not work. Safari is usually fine.
6. If someone says they emailed you a link for a Zoom call but you don't see it in your inbox, then check your junk, trash, or spam folders. Occasionally your email provider thinks a legitimate Zoom link is junk or spam.

Location

7. Choose a place in your home, church, or office where other people won't bother you or overhear your conversation.
8. Before the call, pay attention to how you and your background look on camera. Consider having art, a bouquet of flowers, a candle, or something else attractive in the background.
9. After the call starts, hide yourself on your own screen so you can focus completely on the other person(s). This eliminates getting distracted by your own face.

During a Group Call with More than Two People

10. Mute your microphone when you aren't speaking. This prevents other people from hearing extraneous sounds in your room that could make it harder for them to hear the person who's speaking. If you're using Zoom, the mute button is probably on the lower left corner of your screen. Your headset may also have a built-in mute control.
11. When you want to speak, unmute yourself or make some kind of hand gesture to signal your intention to speak.

Performing Triage during a Call

12. When the video or sound quality deteriorates (it lags, freezes, or drops you off the call), you may have low bandwidth. To address the problem, you can perform emergency triage in the following order. Remember that the closer you sit to your router, the better off you'll be. The best connection is plugging an Internet cable into your computer. Other interventions:
 - Change *your* video from HD quality to standard quality.
 - Ask the *other person* to change their video from HD quality to standard quality.
 - You can turn off your video. You'll still be able to see others, although they won't be able to see you.
 - Both of you can turn off your videos. Essentially this turns the conversation into a phone call.
 - If all else fails, you can talk with your cell phones.
 - Sometimes the other person and I have talked on our phones while watching each other on video.