

Successful Online Meetings

We've prepared some hints and tips for ensuring your online meetings run smoothly. A little preparation in advance can be the make all the difference for a successful meeting.

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Equipment

1. Test your equipment.

If this is your first online meeting, make sure that your equipment is working in good time before the meeting. You can use a [test call](#) in Teams to check your video and sound. It's better to sort it out beforehand rather than realising it's not working during the meeting!

2. If possible, use a headset.

If you use a microphone and speakers this can cause feedback and echoing which is unpleasant on the ears of everyone attending the meeting. If you have a headset (both headphones and microphone together) or can use headphones instead of your speakers this will avoid this issue.

3. Mute your microphone when joining the meeting.

This is especially important in large meetings or if you are late joining. By muting your microphone, you won't disturb people as you join.

4. Keep your microphone muted until you need to speak.

This avoids sounds from your location being heard by everyone in the meeting, e.g. slurping tea, typing on a noisy keyboard, someone mowing the lawn next door!

5. If using video, make sure you can be seen.

If you are using video, it's worth checking whether you can be clearly seen. If you work with a window behind you, it's likely that you'll be hard to see and will just be a silhouette. You might want to close the curtains for the meeting or move to another location if that's possible. Also consider the angle your webcam is using – ideally your face should be in the centre, not peeking out at the bottom of the screen!

6. Use background blur, or a background image.

If there is a lot going on behind you, it can be distracting for other users.

Consider using [background blur, or a background image](#) to remove distractions. This is also useful if you are in a personal location and don't want people in the meeting looking at your personal things or seeing how messy you are!

7. Close documents and programs if you are going to share your screen.

If you share your screen without closing programs first, you may unwittingly share confidential or personal information with other people in the meeting. Before the meeting begins make sure you only have things on your desktop that are ok to be seen by all. This might mean closing Outlook and your web browser.

8. Use the chat pane.

If you need to share a link with people in the meeting, it's much easier to paste it into the chat pane than to try and read it out so people can type it in. The chat pane is also useful to ask questions that the presenter can read and answer when they've finished presenting.

Etiqutte

1. Be prepared.

If you are the presenter make sure that you have an agenda or at least a rough plan for the meeting. If there is anything people in the meeting need to have read before the meeting, make sure you've sent it to them in good time. If you are an attendee, make sure you have looked at the agenda and read any paperwork that you have been sent.

2. Be on time.

If you're the presenter make sure you're online a few minutes before the start time. Try to finish the meeting on time as it's likely that some people in the meeting have other commitments after your meeting. If you're an attendee, try to avoid rushing in disturbing the meeting after it has already started.

3. Set some ground rules.

Before starting the meeting, the presenter should let people in the meeting know what is expected of them. In an informal meeting, everyone may be free to speak whenever they have something to say. If the meeting is large, or more formal, you may need to decide on some rules, e.g. when questions can be asked, how people in the meeting should indicate they have something to say, or when you will deal with items that aren't on the agenda.

4. Try not to talk over others.

In a 'normal' meeting it's easier to get cues from others that they're about to say something. In online meetings it's harder and this can result in talking over each other and nobody hears what either of you are saying. In a large meeting with one main presenter, use tools like the '[raise your hand](#)' button, or use the chat pane to tell the presenter you wish to talk. In smaller meetings you could wave (if you are using a webcam) or use the chat pane to indicate that you have something to say.

5. Let people in the meeting know if you are going to record the meeting.

Don't just start recording without telling anyone. Make sure that they are happy for the meeting to be recorded first. If you are recording the meeting, let people in the meeting know what you are going to do with the recording, e.g. is it going to be shared with anyone outside of the meeting?

6. Remember that if you have your video on, everyone can see you.

It's easy to forget that everyone will be able to see you unless you turn video off. In a large meeting you might not be visible in the video grid, but if you were to talk (or make a sound while your microphone is not muted) your video will become visible. Other people in the meeting could choose to 'pin' you while you are talking, which means that your video would fill up the screen instead of being small in the grid. In a small meeting, your video may be on screen all the time. If you don't want people to see you in your pyjamas, turn your video off (or get dressed!).

7. Switch your phone to silent.

Even though you're not physically in a meeting room, your phone can still be distracting if there are notifications coming in or you get a phone call. If you are using speakers, you should also try and reduce any sounds that your computer makes, e.g. new email notifications. If you use a softphone, you might want to shut that down before your meeting to avoid getting a call.

8. If you are the presenter or organiser of the meeting, remind people in the meeting of this list of suggestions.

This list is only useful if people read it. If you're running the meeting, especially if it's a large meeting, it might be useful to quickly run through some of these points before the meeting gets going.

Security

1. Protect your join link.

There isn't currently a way to stop uninvited users from joining your meeting if they have the join link. If you are having a confidential or sensitive meeting, avoid making your join link available to anyone outside the meeting. Don't forward the meeting invitation to others and set the meeting to private in your Outlook calendar. Setting the meeting as private will stop the details being seen by staff you have shared your calendar with.

2. Keep an eye on the participants list.

If you are having a confidential or sensitive meeting, someone should check who is currently part of the meeting. This might be something the organiser does, or one of the attendees can be given this task if the organiser is presenting. Check the list of people who were invited, and if someone appears in the participants list who is not invited, they can be removed.

3. Set presenter permissions.

Unless you want all attendees to have full permissions, you might want to specify who is a presenter and who is an attendee in the [meeting settings](#). In an informal team meeting where everyone participates fully, leaving the setting for 'Who can present?' set to 'Everyone' would be fine. However, in a larger or more formal meeting, it is wise to restrict permissions to keep the meeting on track. As an organiser you can change meeting settings to either make everyone else but yourself attendees, or you can specify certain people as presenters and make everyone else attendees.