

12 Tips for Effective Virtual Meetings

1 Reduce background noise

Road noise, barking dogs, or a noisy open office all make for poor virtual meetings. Attend meetings in a quiet room or use a noise-cancelling microphone or software.

2 Mute your microphone when not talking

This is a good habit, even if not always necessary. What isn't a problem in a meeting with 3 people can quickly become one in a meeting with 20.

3 But act like your microphone is live

Sometimes microphones don't mute like you thought. To prevent extraneous conversation from broadcasting when not intended, save private conversations for later.

4 Use a computer and headset for audio

Bad audio is the biggest reason virtual meetings go poorly. Joining by computer and headset will deliver much better sound than joining by telephone.

5 Embrace video conferencing

Video changes the feel and etiquette of a meeting, often resulting in more engagement. Attendees are less likely to multitask or zone out and teams feel connected and aligned.

6 Test your audio and video

Many conferencing apps let you make test calls to check your speaker, headset, and camera view. Don't forget to adjust camera angles, background items, and lighting too.

7 Announce yourself

Much like saying your name when you stand up to talk in a large group, announcing yourself in a virtual meeting helps everyone else to follow the conversation.

8 Review before sharing your screen

When possible, share only the application. If sharing your desktop, first minimize windows you don't want to display and quit programs with alerts.

9 Keep track of participants

Know when required attendees are present. If people dial in, they usually appear as "Dial-in User 1" or a phone number, so ask those calling in to introduce themselves.

10 Don't rush to fill silence

It can take people longer to speak up in virtual meetings. Leave plenty of opportunity for participants to speak. And look for people speaking, but who've forgotten to unmute.

11 Actively facilitate when needed

Virtual meetings make it easier to interrupt or to dominate conversations. It's okay to direct the flow and invite participants to speak.

12 Don't be afraid to mute others

At the beginning, ask attendees to mute themselves when not talking. Politely give reminders or mute participants if necessary. In large meetings, use the "mute all" option.

