

10 Tips for Hybrid Work and Video Calls



Working a hybrid schedule often means an increased use of video systems to conduct meetings, stay in touch with supervisors and co-workers, and meet with stakeholders. While using video calling systems is familiar to most people, it is possible for workers to make mistakes that undermine their professional appearance and their productivity while working outside the office. The following tips and recommendations can help you avoid some of these pitfalls.

- 1. Test your technology in advance.** Prior to the meeting, make sure your camera and microphone are working properly. This will also give you time to determine if your lighting is appropriate and to double check your background. Depending on your work space, you may need to place a front-facing light source to provide proper illumination. This will also help make you look professional and engaged during the meeting.
- 2. Make sure you know how to share your screen.** If you suspect you might be called upon to share your screen, make sure you know how to do it with the video conferencing platform you are using. All of the more common platforms operate differently so research in advance the proper procedure for screen sharing.
- 3. Gather any materials you may need for the meeting.** Many of the files and documents you need to reference may be saved or accessed through the computer you are using for the meeting, so you should have them open and ready – either in the background or pulled up to view on a second monitor.
- 4. Wear work-appropriate clothing.** A good rule of thumb is to dress as if you are going into the office. Be sure to look well groomed and business-like. This not only projects a professional appearance, it also enhances the point that you take the meeting and other participants seriously.
- 5. Clear your background of clutter and confidential materials.** If participating in a video meeting from home, make sure your bed isn't in the view even if your bedroom is the only quiet place to work. If that is not possible, use the *blur background* setting available through nearly all video conferencing platforms. If conducting the call from a home office, make sure you don't have confidential information on a white board or bulletin board behind you. Try to avoid using background images unless they provide a professional appearance. If using a green screen, pay attention to the clothing you wear so you do not disappear into the background.
- 6. Keep your microphone off and your camera on.** Unless you are speaking, always keep your microphone muted. This will prevent any unexpected background noise to

interrupt the audio feed for the meeting. It will also keep the meeting participants from hearing your phone ring, the dog bark, the doorbell ring, or any of the other common disturbances that take place when working from home. Keeping your camera on, however, clearly shows that you are engaged in the meeting and paying attention.

7. Look at the camera. Maintaining eye contact with the camera illustrates to the other participants that you are engaged and paying attention. If using multiple monitors, make sure your camera is mounted in line with the monitor displaying the meeting participants. Otherwise you will be constantly looking in another direction. Another tip is to change your display so that it features the speaker and moves the other participants to the side or top of the screen. This will allow you to focus on the person is talking rather than glancing from participant to participant.

8. Do not multi-task during meetings. If you are working on other things while you are participating in a video meeting, your attention is pulled away from the meeting and you may miss crucial information or a question directed toward you. People can tell when someone is not really paying attention during video meetings and it is rude and disrespectful to the others in attendance.



9. Participate, but do not over-participate in the meeting. While it is important to be engaged and take part in the discussion while attending a video meeting, resist the temptation to joke, make side comments, or otherwise disrupt the flow of the meeting. When you do speak, contribute to the topic at hand and make sure what you are saying is relevant to the discussion. Be precise and to-the-point.

10. Do not flaunt that you are working from home. Not everyone has the luxury of working a hybrid schedule and this could be a sore point for some people. Avoid bringing your pets into the picture or inviting members of your family to say hello to the other participants. Your home work environment is intended to be an extension of your office environment and it should be treated as such. If you would not do something during an in-office meeting, do not do it during a video meeting.

Even though you are not in the office, you are still representing your department or agency and the Board of Lucas County Commissioners. Be professional at all times. Make sure your display name reflects your actual name and not a nickname or joke name. Include Lucas County, your department, or your position as part of your name if you want (*My Name, Lucas County* or *My Name, Office Manager*) but do not use this space to make a political statement, editorialize, or promote a personal side business.

Remember, Hybrid Work is a privilege *and not an entitlement*. Failure to act professionally, including on video calls, could result in the loss of this privilege or other discipline.