



Virtual Engagement Best Practices

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How do I convey confidence in virtual meetings?

Maintain eye contact with the camera when presenting/speaking. It can be tempting to look at the thumbnails on your screen, but focus on the camera.

Your voice is one of your strongest tools. In the virtual mode, gestures are usually less visible, so our toolkit for conveying confidence is smaller than usual. Vary intonation, use pauses, and project to make a stronger impression.

Become comfortable with your technical setup. Practice with a partner or a second device so that you know with certainty how you appear and sound to others.

How do I engage my audience with body language?

Make sure your camera is at eye level (so that you're not looking down at your audience, nor are they looking down on you). Place the audience window (in which you can see everyone's faces) near the camera.

Make sure you know what is in frame and what is not. Remember to keep gestures closer to your body than you normally would. Anything that is close to the camera will appear quite large and may be distracting. Keep an arm's length between yourself and the camera.

Consider using a standing desk, or, as an alternative, use a stack of books to raise your laptop/device to a height that allows you to stand while presenting. This will help with energy levels and will also give you more freedom to use gestures.

Keep posture in mind—whether you're sitting or standing, you'll want to make sure your back is straight, with your head centered over your spine.



How do I read body language in a virtual context?

Be gracious. Don't read into any one gesture too much. Some participants may be using a second screen and thus may appear to be looking away from you; others may choose to mute their video, giving you no opportunity to assess your impact.

Build in opportunities for feedback or questions. Signal early on that these opportunities exist.

Pause to take a quick look at your participants to gauge any behaviors that indicate engagement or agreement (e.g., nodding, verbal affirmations, etc.).

How do I avoid distractions?

Close or mute programs that might intrude on your device. For smart devices, use the "do not disturb" settings. Keep in mind, if you're on other devices/platforms, it shows—and some companies may use analytics to track desktop activity.

If you live with others, have a household “do not disturb” system (e.g., a sign on the door that shares schedule/busy status).

Hide your own thumbnail in your meeting window or place a post-it over it if you find your own image on the screen distracting.

Be aware that virtual background might be distracting for your audience. You can come across as more authentic by simply showing your actual background.

How do I know when to speak up?

Agree on how people should indicate that they have something to contribute. A hand raising function (or a hand raised physically) or a chat function can be helpful here. Aim for freer expression rather than a rigid process when soliciting feedback and fostering discussion.

If you've interrupted someone, acknowledge and yield the time back to them.

“Pay it forward” – hand it over to someone else who may have had their hand raised; help others to speak up (watch when they go from mute to unmute).

Be affirmative without being confrontational. If someone interrupts you mid-comment, it's fine to say, “Dan, let me just finish this thought and I'll pass it over to you.”