

VIRTUAL MEETING ETIQUETTE

Here are a few virtual meeting etiquette tips to ensure your meetings are professional and effective. Many of the same rules for in-person/face-to-face meetings apply for virtual meetings.

1. Be Prepared

It is poor etiquette to be unprepared when called upon during a virtual meeting. It is also a missed opportunity. Have your notes, paper, pen, props and any other pertinent items conveniently located within arm's length. If you will be sharing your screen during the meeting, then have your presentation materials pulled up and ready to go in advance.

2. Always Have an Agenda

An agenda lets attendees know what to expect, helps them to estimate how long the meeting may run and provides them with an opportunity to ponder and prepare any questions, comments or concerns ahead of time.

3. Report your Absence

If you are going to miss any portion of a meeting, then be sure to provide the appropriate individual(s) with plenty of advance notice. To the frustration of everyone involved, video conferences are often needlessly held up while waiting for tardy attendees to appear in "*just a few more minutes*".

4. Look Presentable

Just because it is a virtual meeting doesn't mean you shouldn't at least wash your face, brush your teeth, comb your hair and throw on a clean shirt. Dress appropriately and be sure to leave those speedos and halter tops safely tucked away in your dresser drawer. Besides, you never know when your boss may wish to hold you afterward for a private face-to-face meeting, and you want to be ready for that.

5. Nature's Call

If you anticipate needing to take a bathroom break during the meeting, then try to take care of business beforehand so that you can minimize the potential for interruptions.

Try to eat a snack prior to the meeting. No one should hear your stomach growling or see you eating while discussing important business matters. If you tend to get thirsty during meetings, then a glass is more suitable than a bottle or thermos for drinking purposes. Large drinking vessels may obscure your face and be interpreted as a form of rudeness by some participants.



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6. Check that Tech

Confirm that your computer is functioning properly, ensure that your headphones, microphones, internet connection, etc. are all ready to roll before the meeting start time. It may seem like overkill, but it is best to be prepared. Review any presentation materials you may be sharing onscreen to make certain they are appropriate and in order. If you will be sharing your screen during the meeting, then be careful not to have any sensitive or confidential information inadvertently open which could then be mistakenly displayed.

7. Put Distracting Pets in Another Room

One giant perk to working from home is having your pet(s) nearby. However, if your dog tends to get the “zoomies”, your cats constantly battle for dominance, or your parrot likes to screech “Polly want a cracker”, sequester them in a separate room before the meeting starts.

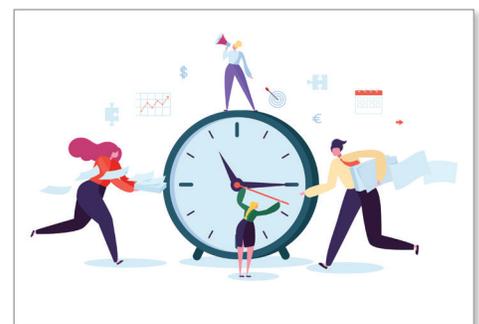
8. Location, Location, Location!

If your spouse is mowing the yard, your meeting coincides with the weekly trash pickup or you live next door to a busy construction site, choose a different space to take the meeting. If possible, sit somewhere with plenty of daylight. We tend to feel more comfortable and look better--especially on a laptop camera--in spaces with lots of natural light.

Background also matters. Your coworkers will not be able to hear your ideas or take them seriously when there is a pile of dirty laundry, questionable artwork or a giant television set blaring behind you. Also, be wary of any pesky mirrors hanging on the wall which may reveal more about your surroundings than you would have otherwise intended. You may even wish to consider adding a suitable virtual background if your technology of choice will allow it. A flattering picture of your boss boldly captioned with “**My Hero**” is always nice.

9. The Early Bird Gets the Worm

Try to be a few minutes early. This is common courtesy for any meeting, virtual or not. You will want to log in and be ready to go a few minutes ahead of schedule. This can also be a great opportunity for you to engage in a little friendly chit chat with your colleagues before the meeting begins.



10. Mute your Microphone

When you are not speaking, mute your microphone. You do not need others to hear your children arguing, dog barking, dishwasher clanking or whatever other chaos may be happening in your world, nor should you have to tolerate theirs.

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11. I'm Ready for My Close-Up, Mr. DeMille

Do not forget to unmute yourself and turn on your camera when it is time for you to make an appearance. Someone (or all) will let you know if you forget, but everyone will laugh.

12. Smile, You're on Candid Camera

Yes, you are likely to feel more relaxed at home than you would normally be in the office, but you are also on camera. However, if you must stretch your arms and yawn, then momentarily turn off your camera and limit your meeting participation to voice and chat during this short interlude.

13. Wait Your Turn

Don't interrupt! Again, this is basic meeting etiquette, but it can be easy to let those professional expectations slide during a virtual meeting. Let other people speak and then, when they are done, chime in. Some videoconferencing formats will allow you to virtually raise your hand when you wish to speak. Keep your remarks brief and to the point, and once you are finished, mute your mic and yield the floor to someone else.

14. Focus! Focus! Focus!

Focus on the task at hand! Listen, we all love to multitask. However, when it comes to a virtual meeting, you should treat it the same way as any in-person meeting. Keep your hands off your keyboard, put down the cell phone and do your best to hold any other distractions at bay.

It may be tempting to check your inbox, respond to a text message or carry on a side conversation during a lag in the action, but don't do it. Everyone will notice and you might miss out on key information or an opportunity to offer valuable input. Use attentive body language: sit up straight, don't make big extraneous movements, and don't let your eyes wander astray. If you must take a phone call or respond to a home "emergency" during the meeting, then mute your microphone, quietly step away and try to keep the interruption to a minimum.



15. Don't Be Shy

Announce yourself when you enter a small group meeting. It can be disconcerting to hear the "someone-just-joined" ding followed by silence. When you do join in, introduce yourself and say hi – just be sure not to interrupt someone else in mid-sentence. Make certain your microphone is turned on when you wish to interject. Do not be afraid to project your voice. Your team will appreciate being able to hear you without having to strain their ears or turn their volume all the way up.

If it is simply a check-in or update meeting, be prepared to summarize your current project and any recent accomplishments. Be clear and concise, and let the attendees know that if they have any input to share, you'll be happy to address it now or get back to them on it later.

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16. No Birdwalking Allowed!

With close knit groups, it may be tempting for members to digress while sharing personal tales of limited relevance to either the team at large or the issues on the table. Make certain that your input is germane to at least three people in the meeting. If not, send an email, make a phone call or arrange a smaller meeting later with the interested parties.

Appoint a moderator to help keep things on track. Set realistic time constraints and stick to the agenda. This will help to cut down on any extraneous bloviating and cap the overall length of the meeting.

If you have any questions regarding virtual meeting etiquette, please contact the Risk Management Department at 800-285-5461 or riskmanagement@sdao.com.

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INSURANCE SERVICES

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Toll-Free: 800-285-5461 | Phone: 503-371-8667

Email: sdao@sdao.com

www.sdao.com