

# Etiquette at its best

Ten tips on how to make an impact during a video communication

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**You** bought a webcam and are ready to join the millions of savvy people taking advantage of video communication over the Internet. Now you can talk to anyone, anywhere in the world, just as if they were sitting in the same room as you.

While this opens up many possibilities to keep in touch with loved ones or communicate with key colleagues, video communication presents a perplexing new set of etiquette rules that you'll want to know before jumping on to your first video call. To avoid embarrassing "captured-on-video" moments, consider the following tips for a successful, stress-free experience:

**Looks 'do' matter:** before joining a video call, comb your hair. Some webcams provide such good image quality that viewers will know if you haven't washed your hair lately. Don't wear bright colours and patterns that may make it difficult for people on the other side to focus.

**Face-scan:** check for fly-away food in your teeth. And ladies — sloppy make-up is a strict no-no. Use your man-

ners — introduce yourself, speak clearly, don't interrupt.

**Be cautious of your body language:** remember others can see you. So eye-rolling or snickering in response to even the most asinine comments won't go unnoticed. Avoid tapping your pencil or drumming your fingers.

**No food allowed:** munching is inappropriate in any conference, more so in a videoconference where you are visible. This can irritate them and make the conference less productive.

**Use the best VoIP video calling service:** Skype is an easy-to-use piece of software that enables free video calling over the Internet.

**Do not look distracted:** don't constantly check your watch, recline with your feet up or doodle on your notepad. If you have to fiddle, at least pretend that you're interested. Do not interrupt or distract others when they are talking.

**Can you hear me now?:** ask people on the other side, if they can hear you. Make sure you're using a headset or a webcam with an integrated microphone or other participants may be unable to hear you. Speak in your normal voice. Have them introduce themselves so you that you can be sure that you can hear them.

**Be aware of your surroundings:** make the area, where you are conferencing from, presentable. Watch out



for distracting or inappropriate background items, such as a dirty shirt draped over a chair, strange artwork or large quantities of office supplies that you took home from work. They could make you the topic of tomorrow's water-cooler gossip.

**Limit background noise:** for the best audio results, conduct your video call in a quiet environment. Like in a normal meeting, try to avoid side conversations. Mute the microphone before moving it during the meeting. Shuffling papers in a conference call can be very annoying. Do not have babies screaming or your dog barking during a video conference call. It's not cute at all! If it is not possible to be away from noise, mute your phone whenever you are

not speaking. And of course, turn your phone off (airplane mode) — not just on silent — to avoid any kind of feedback.

**Check the lighting:** to ensure the best video quality, find a well-lit room and try not to sit with your back to a window during daylight hours. Close the curtains. Daylight may conflict with the required lighting.

Most important, regardless of whether its work-related or catching up with friends, treat the experience as if you're actually in the same room with your friend or colleague. Then be yourself and your video conversations will always be a success.

Happy video calling! ■

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