

The New Rules of Virtual Meeting Etiquette

20 July 2021 WARROOM TASK TEAM




We have all been there - fumbling with presentation-sharing during an on-line meeting, trying to quietly 'sneak' into the meeting (does not really work too well, yeah?), or shouting 'Can you hear me?' or, best of all, creating a symphony of squeaks with your microphone. These tips may help us cope with online meetings in a calm and collected manner.

- **Watch your background.** Your co-workers will not take you seriously if you have a pile of dirty clothes or an unmade bed in the corner behind you. Make sure your virtual meeting background is professional, distraction-free, and work appropriate, and that the lighting is good. Both MS Teams and Zoom have professional background templates to pop into your screen.

- **Make sure you are 'screen-ready.** Dress professionally in case you are called to 'show your beautiful face. Ensure you tilt the laptop screen so that your whole face is framed in the thumbnail.
- **Minimize distractions.** Video meetings have enough background noise, so don't add to it. Make sure you are in a quiet room; turn off radios, cell phones, and TVs. Also, minimize the use of your keyboard because the sound is distracting if you do not mute your microphone.
- **Speak clearly, concisely, slowly, and do not interrupt.** The technology has improved greatly for video conferencing, but it is still smart to speak clearly, concisely, and slowly. If you have a decent mic, you do not need to yell. Your normal speaking volume should be fine.
- **Make eye contact.** During your video call, especially with clients, your screen probably has a presentation open, a window to type comments, and multiple video screens with your colleagues' faces. When it is your turn to speak, remember to look into your camera, not at the multiple distractions on your computer screen. It takes a while to grasp this, but it looks more natural and connects to people more effectively.
- **Do not eat during on video meetings.** Even if the meeting takes place during lunch time, do not eat during your video call unless your camera is off and your microphone is muted. We do not want to hear chewing noises or see you eating Nando's while the rest of us are hungry.
- **Turn your video camera off after your meeting has ended.** When in an online video conference, be sure to turn your camera off at the end of the meeting so that others, still linked, cannot see you. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=48KjeTeWe7Y>
- **Do not multitask.** Imagine being called to comment while you are checking your social media or completing your monthly report and having to admit you did not hear the question. Let us give virtual meetings our full attention. It is more productive - and more respectful to our colleagues.
- **Always mute your mic until you want to address the meeting.** Nothing is more frustrating than hearing that alien echo or high pitch screech from conflicting microphones. Make sure to keep your microphone muted when you are not speaking.
- **Find a quiet space in your home,** preferably behind a closed door. If you have vacuum cleaner running in the background or your next-door neighbour is hammering in his garage, the noise will filter through. Also keep family on the other side of a closed (or locked) door. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mh4f9AYRCZY>
- **Be on time** for your meeting. In fact, wait in the 'foyer' for the meeting to start 5 minutes prior. Inform the Chairperson or the secretariat if you know you will be late for the meeting or if you need to leave the meeting early.

- **Be patient:** Especially in client meetings, you and your team will need to listen to feedback from the other side, so it is important not to interrupt or jump in while someone else is talking. If necessary, make notes to ask during question time or raise your virtual hand to draw attention to yourself.
- **Record the meeting** to provide a historical **record** that can be used for verification of decision
- s, and as a reminder of past events and actions. It can provide important information to people who were not invited to or able to attend the **meeting**. It helps keep everyone on track and it makes life easier for the secretariat when capturing minutes.
- **Familiarise yourself with how to share your screen.** Nothing wastes time like being unprepared and scrambling awkwardly while people wait for you to gather your thoughts and present your items. We need to share our own presentations so that we can control the scrolling speed, move the presentation up and down and pause on important points. Practice with a colleague.

🔴 Step by step to MS Teams document sharing:

Select **Share content**  and choose sharing options (such as audio)

Select what you want to share:

- **Screen** lets you show everything on your screen.
- **PowerPoint Live** lets you share a PowerPoint presentation.
- **Microsoft Whiteboard** and **Freehand by Invision** lets you share a whiteboard where participants can sketch together.
- **Window** lets you share an open window like a specific app you have open.

After you selected your presentation, a red border will surround what you are sharing. Meeting participants won't see any notifications that might come in.

Select **Stop sharing** to stop showing your screen.

- ▶ Send us your virtual meeting tips and, (for a laugh) share your most embarrassing virtual meeting moments on warroom@sasseta.org.za



Stay well. Be safe