



Do you find conference calls difficult? Do you become stressed during the call? Do you freeze when you have to speak? Don't worry because you're not alone – many people find them difficult.

This text will help you overcome these problems and provides some useful tips and common phrases to help you with your next call.

Video Conferences

5 points to consider beforehand

1. Camera position

Understand **how the camera's distance affects the way you look to a viewer**. If you position the camera too close, every expression and gesture will be exaggerated. The best results come when the screen-image frame starts a little above your head and ends around waist level. When not using them to gesture, place your hands on the desk in front of you so that people can see them. Keep them relaxed and separated. **Don't hang onto the edge of the table**, or you will look desperate. **Don't play with your pen or shuffle papers**. Make sure you keep a preview window open to check how you look to the remote viewers.

2. Look at the lens

Each time you look at the screen you shift your eye from the camera. If the camera is above the screen, you'll always appear to be looking down, and **a lack of eye contact reduces trust and viewer satisfaction with the interaction**. You might have to raise or lower the height of your monitor so that the lens hits you at about eye level.

Occasionally glancing down to read from notes is fine, but if you are going to refer to them constantly, try having one set of notes on the table, and then placing sticky notes with short bullet points right below or next to the camera lens. That way you won't be breaking eye contact so often. It's also fine to look at the screen when others are speaking. Just **remember to move your eyes back to the camera when you reply**.

3. Warm up

Research has discovered that participants in video conferences tend to be more influenced by how likeable they perceive the speaker to be – than they by the quality of the arguments presented by the speaker.

When you are the presenter, you will want to guard against looking stilted and emotionless or the opposite by “over-acting,” since distracting mannerisms and facial expressions will all be picked up on camera. Instead, **stay relaxed and mentally picture the viewer**. Doing so will help you naturally express non-verbal signals of empathy, likeability and warmth – such as leaning forward slightly, smiling, and showing the palms of your hands when you gesture.

4. Watch your posture

Posture affects how people perceive you. Just as someone with good posture sends non-verbal signals of energy, enthusiasm, and health, a person with poor body posture appears uncertain, uninterested, or lethargic – which is not the impression that any of us want to project in a video conference. **Sit up straight, put both feet on the floor.** The goal is to look comfortable and confident.

5. Prepare to be seen

Above all, always remember that you are visible. (Which is not as easy as it sounds if you are used to teleconferences or online exchanges.) Give your full attention to those who are speaking, as you would if you were in the same room. **Don't be seen getting distracted by email or texts.** And no snacking, grooming, or fidgeting. Be aware that your body language is constantly sending messages.

Useful phrases

Getting started

- Good morning/afternoon from....
- This is Anette Terlutter
- I'd like to welcome you all to this video conference about.....
- Thanks to all of you for being on time.
- Let's get started then.

Stating purpose

- You should all have the agenda.
- As you all know, we are here today to talk about...
- We need to talk about 3 points: Firstly ..., secondly..., thirdly ...
- Let's take a quick look at / review

Inviting people to speak

- Anette, would you like to kick off?
- John, perhaps you could explain the situation.
- Would you like to comment on that, Anette?
- John, I think you wanted to say something.
- We haven't heard from John yet.
- Linda, what do you think?
- Any other comments?

Insisting that people use their own names every time they speak

- Sorry. Can people identify themselves before they speak?
- It might be easier if people said their names each time they speak.

Interrupting someone

- Can I come in here?
- Can I just say...
- Can I add that...

You need to email a document

- Just a second, I'll find the document on my laptop and email it to you now.

Talking about a particular part of a document you all have copies of

- In the first section / paragraph / sentence / bullet point.....

Summing up the discussion

- I'd like to sum up the main points.
- If I could just summarize the main points here.
- Let me try to sum up.
- Right, I think that covers the first point.
- If nobody has anything else to add, ...
- To sum up, I think we all agree that ...

Deciding on action

- So, what's the next step then?
- Basically we should aim to ...
- Now the only thing to do is to finalize a date for ...

Delegating

- John, could you mail us a report on ... by next Friday?
- John, could you look into ...
- John, so you're going to write up ...
- I need the information/file by Friday.
- John, do you think, you can manage to report back by Friday? Cathrin, I'd like you to look into that matter for us.
- Could you do that, Cathrin?

Prioritizing (Phrases for the person in charge)

- This is the order in which we should proceed.
- Firstly, we should... . Secondly

- I think we should have the following priorities: Firstly ..., secondly..., thirdly ...
- Organizing the, that's the most important point.
- No, no,... finishing the current project is our top priority.

Prioritizing (Phrases for team members)

- I don't think I'll have time to get the data together by Friday because I've still got the Do you think Monday would do?
- What do you want me to do first?
- What has higher priority?

Moving on to the next point

- Right, if no one has any further comments, I think we can go on to the next point.
- Good, let's move on then.
- Now we come to the question of ...

Sticking to the point

- John, can we just deal with ...(topic) first
- John, we'll come to that in a moment?
- John, can we come back to that point later?
- John, that point is coming up in a moment.
- John, perhaps we could come back to the main point.
- I think what John is trying to say is (that)...

You need to have a short break

- Maybe if we hang up and try again it will sort out the problem.
- Sorry, I need to speak to this person for just two minutes. I'll contact you again when I finish.
- I have to take this (call), if you don't mind.
- I'll just go and get the documents, I'll be back in a second.

You need to discuss something with just your side

- Can you give us a moment?
- We need to discuss this, if you don't mind.
- I'll just turn off our microphone for a second.

Closing the video conference

- Right then, I think we've covered everything.
- To sum up, I think we all agree that ...
- Before we close, let me just summarize the main points.
- Thank you all for participating today.

Dealing with technical problems:

The video has some problems

- The video is rather jumpy/jerky.
- I can't see people at the sides of the room.
- Your image has frozen.
- The image has disappeared.
- The image and sound are out of sync.

You have problems hearing

- You're quite quiet.
- Just a second, I'm going to turn the volume up.
- Can you try moving the microphone?

You can't identify who is speaking

- Was that John?
- Sorry, who was that just now?

You don't understand something

- Sorry, I didn't catch that / what Anette just said.
- Sorry, I still don't get it.
- Could you just say / repeat that one last time?

There is an interruption your side

- Sorry, someone has just come in.
- Sorry, there's a lot of noise outside.

Telling the other side they need to adjust their equipment

- The camera seems to be pointing in the wrong direction.
- Can you try moving / adjusting....?

You have a technical problem that takes several attempts to solve

- Let me try one last time.
- There's one more thing we could try.
- Third time lucky, I hope.

