

FAQs

Guide to Videoconferencing

What is Videoconferencing?

Definition: Videoconferencing is a real-time, two-way exchange of information between two or more geographically dispersed locations using audio, video, and sometimes data.

What can Videoconferencing be used for?

Videoconferencing can be used tool for communications, and can allow you to have one-on-one conversations, or join in group conferences with multiple participants. In this way, you can virtually join meetings that you are unable to attend in person, or meet new people (organisations, stakeholders, business partners, potential customers, peers) for the first time.

This is a useful tool to enable different partners in different locations to communicate effectively, share information, knowledge and experience without the cost in travel or time of meeting personally. There are many features which make videoconferencing a versatile way to share information. For example, a laptop connected to VC equipment will share documents which are displayed on screen for all participants to see.

How do I prepare for a Videoconference?

As with all commitments or meetings, make sure you turn up on time. This is important in a videoconference as you may have to check that your camera and microphone equipment are correctly positioned and working properly.

When the videoconference starts, make sure that you can see and hear, and that others can see and hear you. If things are not right, let the other participants know so you can fix it before proceeding with the discussion.

I don't feel comfortable in front of a camera

Most people don't initially, but you will soon forget about the camera being there. If the camera is zoomed in so that everyone can be seen clearly (leave a little bit of space), it will feel as if you are all in the same 'virtual' room.

How do I make a call?

Depending on what software you are using (Zoom, Skype etc) you will either receive a weblink or have to manually begin your videoconference. With Zoom and some other platforms, you will receive a weblink with your invitation to the videoconference, which when clicked, will take you straight into the virtual meeting.

With Skype and some other platforms, you may have to manually search for the other participant(s) using their email address, and then click the icon on screen to begin a videoconference. Pay attention to which symbol you click, as a phone symbol will



likely mean an audio-only conference, whereas a video recorder symbol will mean visual videoconference, you may be required to activate both.



Top Tips

Light

Make sure the room is light enough and check whether participants will be sitting in front of a window, which can result in that person being too dark to be easily seen.

Camera

Check that the camera is at a good level in relation to the participants. Remember how the newsreader on television appears on the screen - the picture includes head and shoulders but there will be a little bit of space all around the sides and top.



Sound

 Use the Vol+ and Vol- buttons on the console or remote to increase the incoming volume and check whether your microphone is on or off - there will be an icon on your screen to indicate this, usually resembling the icon on the left.

Speak in a normal voice, you shouldn't have to shout. Talk directly into the microphone. Where possible, keep your microphone muted when not speaking. Un-muted microphones can be the single most important problem for communicating during a video conference meeting, picking up background noise.

Etiquette

A list of participants' names could be made available to everyone prior to or as part of the conference. Introduce yourself before so as other participants know who is talking and also direct questions by name. You may also have to ask for feedback on points raised.

It is usually wise to mute your microphone if no-one at your site is speaking. This means that coughs, etc do not disturb people listening at other sites. Rustling papers or tapping of pens can be very distracting so if in a group if the mike is on be aware of the noise you make which can be picked up by microphone. Beware of making comments at the end of a video conference before ensuring that the call is completely disconnected.

When you wish to speak, make sure that you have turned on your microphone and are not going to interrupt a current speaker or cut off another participant. Some VC tools also provide option to indicate that you wish to come in with a point.

Bear in mind that you can still be seen, if not heard, so mobile phones and laptops should only be used if they are necessary to the business of the videoconference.

Reference: This resource has been informed by material produced by University of Highlands and Islands '*Learning and Information Services, Discovery Series No 5: Videoconferencing*'.

Resource: [Link to a video '6 mistakes you're making during videoconferencing'](https://www.wsj.com/video/six-mistakes-youre-making-during-videoconferences/4013DD94-1F3F-4A66-9A24-926349127C7C.html)

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