

Video Conference Etiquette

▪ Preparation

- Wear blue or gray, not white shirts or lab coats. Avoid stripes and patterns or prints.
- Label your site clearly with nice background signs or with character generators. At the least, provide a clearly lettered name plate on the desk in front of the participant with name, logo, and site location in bold letters.
- Connect to your assigned endpoint in advance of the event, and, if possible, remain connected until after the end of the event. Connecting and disconnecting can cause audio noises and instabilities in the system.
- Consider that you can be observed at any time before, during, or after the session. Look interested, and look at the camera unless another participant in your room is speaking.
- Watch posture, facial expressions (all non-verbals!), and cover confidential documents.
- Have a written list of participants and their locations to facilitate interaction during the session.
- Send an agenda to all sites prior to the day of the session.

▪ Sound

- Mute your microphone when you are not speaking. Failure to mute is the leading offense in videoconferences.
- Do not cause echo. Echoes are a leading problem in videoconferences. Place pod microphones at least 4 feet from the TV monitor and any external speakers in use. Use a system that has good echo canceling capabilities. If this is not possible, use a headset, or provide external echo cancellation equipment. Remember, you will not hear the echo, but everyone else in the conference will.
- Mute your microphone when you are not talking.
- Eliminate background noises (e.g. fans, disks, etc). If you have a laptop, put it as far away from the microphone as possible.

▪ Color & Lighting

- Adjust your color. Set color or saturation to maximum, and then adjust the hue. Back off on color only if it is too garish. Most endpoints are too faded/washed out.
- Provide good lighting on participants' faces. Do not use back lighting: do use front and side lighting. Using only overhead lights (typical room lighting) can shade your eyes too much.

- **Speaking**

- Allow for time delays. When called upon, start talking and keep talking and don't hesitate because you see or hear something unexpected. Delays are always present.
- The first thing you should say is your name, the name of your site, and where it is located geographically. Say this VERY SLOWLY and CLEARLY so that everyone can understand it. Many people who are recording want to hear it in your own words.
- The session leader may call on you to find out who is present or to give you an opportunity to ask the speaker questions. The session leader will wait 5 seconds for your reply. If the session leader does not hear you, he or she will call again and wait 5 seconds. If he still does not hear you, he will go on to the next site. The 5 second wait is to allow for the delay as the signals propagate through all the endpoints.
- If you are a presenter, when you start, JUST KEEP TALKING. Do not say "Can you hear me?" or the like. Assume that everything is working fine, since you have practiced this before. We will interrupt you only in the direst case to say that something is wrong.
- When you are talking, IGNORE whatever video you are receiving. Do not be concerned if some unexpected video appears. It may soon go away, and is not worth worrying about. The control site will ignore all extraneous video and audio unless it becomes so bad that disconnect / reconnect is necessary.

- **Using Visuals**

- Pre-test by calling your own site and check the visual image in the picture-in-picture frame on the whole screen.
- Font size (print size) minimum is 28 points in a plain style. Headlines should be 36 points. Have a plain background. Layout should be horizontal (landscape).
- Limit the amount of writing on each visual: 21 words maximum is effective. No more than six lines of text per visual helps the viewer stay focused.
- If you have detailed documents, send them to participants in advance and ask that they print them for use during the session. Documents need a name and page number so that they can be referred to specifically by the speaker.

- **Odds 'n' Ends**

- Practice! Get comfortable with the remote control, use of visuals, and seeing yourself on camera.
- Avoid clutter in the room and on the desk.
- Remind participants to silence cell phones and pagers.
- Accept imperfections. Have a Plan B in case of technical problems.