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LIFE & STYLE

Seven Rules of Zoom Meeting Etiquette From the Pros

No more dogs, chips or 'lurkers'—as video-conferencing becomes a fixture in working life, it's time to shed the rookie moves

By [Betsy Morris](#)

July 12, 2020 7:00 am ET

Video-meeting apps have grown up—now users need to, too.

Zoom saw daily meeting participants soar to a peak of 300 million in the latest quarter, up from 10 million before the pandemic. Roughly two-thirds of U.S. workers who have been working from home would prefer to continue working remotely as much as possible when pandemic restrictions lift, according to a recent Gallup poll.

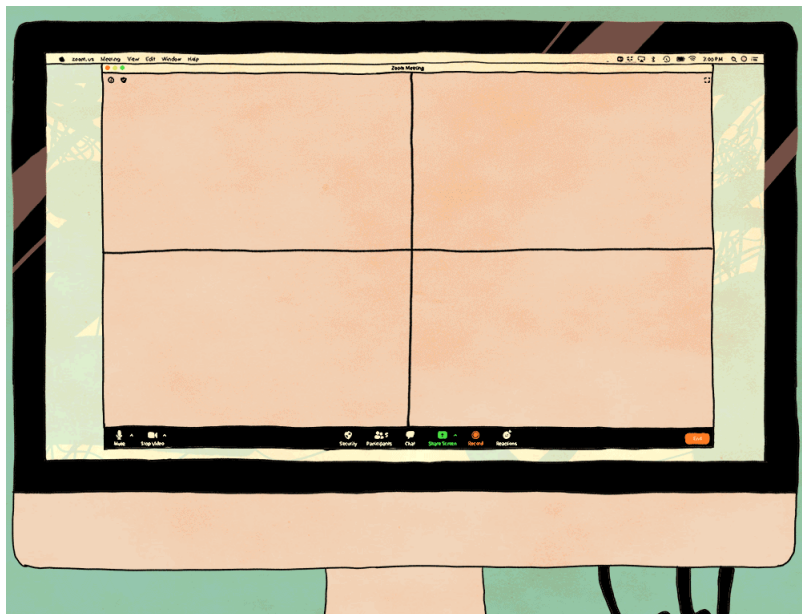
So it's time to get serious about video meetings. No more dogs and cats; no more avatar stand-ins. It's time to enter a remote meeting as if it were a conference room. Here are a few rules from the pros.

Don't Be Late



Video meetings make it obvious when colleagues show up late, wasting the time of those who log in promptly. One Cisco marketer recommends locking the door of a meeting on a Webex video conference five minutes after it starts. Zoom's waiting room allows a host to decide how long laggards must cool their heels before being granted entry. A rule of thumb: There's no need to recap for a late arrival.

Turn on the Camera



Avatars and stock photos are no longer acceptable stand-ins at many workplaces. They're difficult to take seriously and make everybody wonder what you're up to. Even for introverts, even on bad hair days, it's important to show up in person unless there's a good explainable reason (you're sick; you're starving, you have a muscle cramp from too much Zoom). Increasingly those who use avatars are known as "lurkers."

Sit Still



Don't pace. Colleagues stop listening because they're watching you. If you need to change location, don't just grab the laptop and go, making everybody else feel like they're on a wild amusement ride. Turn off the video momentarily so you don't make them dizzy. "I think a lot of people understood working from home as 'sitting by my pool taking a call,' " says Doug Hanna, COO at Grafana Labs, a software-monitoring and visualization platform. "I'm generally in my home office, focused and paying attention. We take it pretty seriously."

No Eating



Don't eat on a video call—and especially don't eat chips. As Zoom becomes a way of life, more and more attendees are using high-fidelity headsets that amplify the sound of

chewing. “The crunchy crunch of chips is just gross. Stop it!” says Samantha Castro, director of video production at the digital platform InspireHUB, a software company and creator of a digital platform that allows customers to build intranets, extranets and other apps. “If you’re going to eat, do us all a favor and mute yourself.” Better yet, she says, excuse yourself and come back when you’re finished.

Get Good at Interrupting



Conventional wisdom has been: Don’t interrupt. But that makes it too easy for grandstanding by the so-called loudest voice in the room. Asking permission to talk via chat or raising your hand is awkward. Those moves make it impossible to achieve what’s becoming the ultimate video chat: when everybody in attendance forgets they’re meeting remotely. Video gamers know how to volley through conversations naturally. They anticipate and watch for signals; coming off mute means “I’m about to say something.” A good moderator is also a gatekeeper, drawing people into the conversation or giving them the hook.

Close the Office Door



Turn off your phone. Stop notifications and Twitter alerts. Arrange for family to stay out of the way. At many places, pets and children are no longer the cute intrusions they were in the early days of the pandemic. Nobody wants to hear a housemate in the background unloading a dishwasher. Of course, there are always exceptions. Gap Inc.'s culture allows for "some informal check-ins and chit-chat" at the start of a video meeting, says communications manager Mark Snyder. "If we're lucky, someone will show us their dog or be Zoom-bombed by a frisky cat."

Don't Multitask



It's really tempting. It's also really obvious. At the start of each meeting, InspireHUB, an all-remote company since its start seven years ago, asks everybody to close all other

windows on their screens so they can be fully present. Workday, a provider of enterprise cloud applications for finance, asks employees to provide their full attention in meetings, says Ashley Goldsmith, the company's chief people officer. "This supports our belief that you're invited to a meeting for a reason."

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SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS

What are your top do's and don'ts for video-conferencing? Join the conversation below.

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