

Information & Robotics Technology for Global Societal Impact

The 5th University of Tokyo – University of Cambridge Joint Symposium 'UTokyo-Cambridge Voices'

Video conferencing setup and general etiquette

(Tips & tricks for efficient and quality video interactions)

As we moved into a period of uncertainty with regards to COVID-19, you may be finding yourself being asked to participate in meetings, webinars and 1-to-1 communications via video for the first time!

Don't worry, we've all been there at some stage. The key thing to remember is to treat this simply as an extension of talking to someone face to face, in the same way that telephones enable us to hear and talk to each other. This guide gives a few simple and basic things for you to think about which will help enhance your video communication and make it a more natural occurrence than may initially be feared.

Firstly, how?

The first thing you need to think about is how you are going to be connecting to a video call. Will it be using a laptop, a desktop computer or maybe a smartphone or tablet?

Will power be an issue, depending on your physical location – will your battery last long enough for that hour long meeting?

The next thing to think about is ergonomics.

Here's a few questions you can ask yourself that may help: Where you will be sitting, will that be comfortable for the period of time you'll be in the call?

- 1) If you are at a desk, is everything set to the correct height? The top of your monitor should be in line with the top of your head, for example
- 2) If you are using your laptop, are you able to have it on a stand or surface that puts it more at an eye-level height?

Video

No matter whether you'll be using a built-in webcam or a separate device, you need to be seen. Having a webcam at the same level as your keyboard whilst you look up at a screen would give a very odd perspective, whereas a camera on the top of a monitor would make it more natural.

Lighting also plays a key part – think of news reports on TV where the presenters have a reasonably muted background and the lights are in front of them. Where your computer is set up, there may be a window behind you – in the middle of a sunny day, that could cause you to look like a shadow on the screen with no one able to see your face, so closing a blind/curtains and even having a lamp just to one side or the room light switched on is advisable.



Audio

The next important thing, even more important than actually seeing you is being able to hear you! Without sound, you would only be a mime. This is where having a good microphone is always preferable.

Everyone has his or her preference when it comes to audio, so we can only advise on what may be available and best practice.

Internal microphones & speakers – for mobile devices, whether your smartphone, tablet or laptop, the internal devices are normally quite close to each other simply due to the size of the device itself. Laptops have the added issue of internal fans which can cause a lot of background noise, but also the keyboard too which adds a great ‘typist/note taker’ sound track behind the call if you’re multitasking at the same time as a video call.

This is where we suggest having a separate microphone, whether as an independent device or as part of a pair of earphones/headphones, is certainly preferable.



Source <http://subreel.com/the-best-youtube-microphones/>



Source: <https://www.logitech.com/en-us/product/usb-headset-h340>

In a similar thought, also being able to hear the audio of a video call or webinar is important. Having to turn your speakers up on a mobile device can lead to a distorted and uncomfortable experience. This is where, again, having a physically comfortable pair of headphones – or even better, headset or earphones with a built-in microphone – can make virtual interactions so much more bearable.

Lastly, think about you. It’s easy to be so focused on the content of the meeting itself, that it’s all too easy to forget about yourself - the fact you may be thirsty and forgot to get a drink prior to the meeting, or that you’ve been sat in the chair for too long.

Remember to schedule breaks at least every two hours, if not more regularly, so that you can go to the kitchen to make a brew, have a walk in the garden or just to help your mind catch-up with the content for the next part of the call (or indeed, for another call!).

If you are in for the long-haul, such as an all-day webinar, have plenty of supplies on hand – such as sugary/energy foods, plenty of water for sipping, tissues/towel, possibly an extra cushion for under your feet as a flat hard surface can be uncomfortable for long periods – but also make sure you’ve got a good light meal on hand for lunch breaks.

Don’t forget too, that extended working on computers means you need to give extra rest for your eyes, which is why the regular breaks away from the computer helps your eyes too.

Look after yourself, and we hope this guide helps you.

*If you have any feedback regarding this guide, please email <EMAIL needed> and your feedback will be passed to the AV Support team helping us.
Thank you!*