

5 TIPS FOR MAKING A PRESENTATION VIA LIVE ONLINE VIDEO



Know your material

Presenting online instead of in person, even if unexpectedly, is no excuse for faulty information or poor argument construction. In fact, you lose some of the dynamic energy you get from being in the same room as a person when you are online, so you need to make sure your material is finely tuned for your online occasion.

Yes, you can have notes sitting in front of you while you speak, but you should still strive to speak **extemporaneously**, which means having a strong organization and a solid understanding of your information that you deliver in a conversational and strategically structured way. You should typically *NOT* read, memorize, or “wing it” when presenting.



Know the tech

Everyone should be a little forgiving with unexpected tech hiccups in an online environment, but that’s no excuse for being unprepared. Watch tutorials on your program of choice, and **practice** giving your presentation in that program prior to the real pitch.

You should especially know where the “Screen Share” feature is, as that is common tool you will need in order to share a deck, walk-through, or other on-screen items.

Here are a few intro tutorial videos for common programs:

- **ZOOM:** “How to Use Zoom Online Meetings” (Ben Balden)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ik5o6WptX0>
- **MICROSOFT TEAMS:** “Learn how to run a modern meeting with Microsoft Teams meetings” (Microsoft Office 365)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wuA4rdFsVxo>
- **GOOGLE MEET:** “How to Use Google Meet – Detailed Tutorial” (Teacher’s Tech)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wGXl0KpkR50>



Control your environment

You want your video to look professional, which means having **no distractions** behind you on the screen. Think of it like you are trying to take a nice photograph; what would you want behind you for that portrait? Eliminate clutter, move plants, remove stray dishes, and watch out for things floating around your head like mirrors, fans, or light bulbs.

Blank walls and bookshelves are often nice options. If you are against a wall, move your chair (yes, you typically sit during the presentation) a couple feet away from the wall to give depth. Be careful with windows in the shot; they can sometimes make you backlit so that you end up just as a silhouette. In the rare even that you have no good place to speak from, some programs like Zoom offer a last-ditch workaround: a virtual background that uses a green-screen-like software tool to erase your background and replace it with a stock image.

You should also typically be **dressed professionally**, even if working from home.

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Test your audio

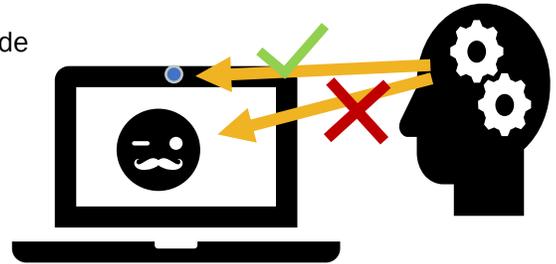
Your client, boss, professor, or colleague can choose to watch a poorly framed video, but they cannot listen to one with bad audio. Control your environment to **eliminate white noise** (maybe shut off the AC, stop the dishwasher, or put the dog outside). Make sure to **test** your audio ahead to ensure that it works properly at a nice listening level. Using **headphones** with a built-in microphone is typically very acceptable.

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Make eye contact *(with your camera)*

Eye contact establishes a connection with your audience and reinforces credibility. Because of the way our screens and cameras are set up, though, you have to fake it in an online video pitch. You can **simulate eye contact NOT** by looking at the videos of your audience on your screen while you are talking, but instead you simulate eye contact by looking at your computer's **camera lens** while you are talking.

You might want to pretend your audience is sitting inside the lens, or maybe draw a face on a sticky note and place it behind your camera to remind you to **look into the lens** just as if you were making meaningful eye contact with a real person. The angle of your eyes on the camera will translate on the audience's screen in a way that makes it look like you are making eye contact with them.



It is also usually best to have your **camera at eye-level**. This might mean placing your laptop on top of a stack of books. It will give you the most natural “face to face” simulation with your audience (instead of looking up/down at them).