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The absence of video call manners is frustrating for everyone

I'm working remotely full-time, and video calls with coworkers are 50% of my time. Working from home (or remote work in general) can trick us into being in too relaxed mode.

This is my list of DO's and DONT's

- Don't message someone while I'm talking to you.

Your eyes are wandering around. You're typing. It's obvious and impolite. I'd rather stop talking and let you finish.

If there is some urgency, just say it: Excuse me, I need one minute to respond to some urgent messages.

- Mute your microphone, all the time.

You're drinking coffee or having some snacks. It's pretty impolite chewing out loud to everyone's ears.

Make a "unmute to talk" habit. Video call apps usually support some "hold key to unmute" feature, which is quite efficient.

- Turn on your camera.

It's so hard to have a decent conversation without looking at body language. If you're nodding your head while I'm talking, it tells me a lot.

Otherwise, explain why you cannot turn on the camera, but make it an exception.

- Dress appropriately.

Sitting in a beach cafe doesn't justify showing up on a call in a bikini. Yes, I've seen those as well.

Rather turn off the camera in this case.

- Reduce background noise.

Working from a coffee shop is cool, but if there is a lot of background talk and music, it's just less efficient for everyone. It is your responsibility to find a quieter space.

Invest in higher-end headsets with active noise reduction.

- Setup video call equipment upfront (headphones and camera)

Setting up equipment during the call is just wasting the time of call participants.

Every app provides a "check equipment" feature before the call.

- Explain that you'll be writing down notes.

If you're gonna do the notetaking during the call, ask if that's ok, and explain that you're listening actively, regardless of writing down something in the notebook.

- Don't interrupt others, raise a hand and wait.

It's the basic thing. Everyone has a comment on something. Raise a hand and wait for your time.

- Ensure that you're using a stable internet connection.

We tend to switch to 4G easily, with poor coverage. So you went to the mountain to remote from there. That's fine. But without proper signal coverage, your team will be more frustrated than you are.

- Stop screen sharing.

We screen share always in order to discuss something. Once such discussion moves to different topics, just stop the screen sharing.

The point is again, to see each other when talking, instead of watching the slide or diagram that is no longer in context.

- Pay attention to lighting.

If the window is behind you, your face will be dark. While cameras nowadays and software are decent in resolving this on the fly, try the following.

- try to turn yourself to the window
- try investing in a cheap lamp or ring-light

There are countless examples of what we should pay attention to when on a video call.

What frustrates you most?

I often write on similar topics in my newsletter. If you've liked this thread, subscribe to get weekly posts.

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