**Tips for Better Videoconferencing**

**I. Make sure you have a reliable internet connection**

1. The most reliable, trouble-free connection is a wired connection from your router to your computer using an [ethernet cable](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B00N2VIWPY/?tag=thewire06-20&linkCode=xm2&ascsubtag=AwEAAAAAAAAAAWHn&th=1). You can run an ethernet cable up to 300 feet. If you have a newer computer with USB-C ports and no ethernet port, you’ll also need an [ethernet to UCB-C adapter](https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B077KXY71Q/ref=ppx_yo_dt_b_asin_title_o00_s00?ie=UTF8&psc=1) to connect the cable to your computer. Read more about the benefits of a wired connection [here](https://www.nytimes.com/wirecutter/blog/bad-wifi-solutions/).

2. If you must use a Wi-Fi (wireless) connection, make sure your computer is close enough to the router for maximum signal strength. Your computer will show Wi-Fi signal strength in “bars.” Anything less than maximum bars is inadequate for videoconferencing.

3. If you cannot use an ethernet cable or get close enough to your router for maximum Wi-Fi signal strength, the solution is to extend your Wi-Fi network by replacing your router with a mesh router system. A mesh system uses a base station and satellite units to create a Wi-Fi network that can extend to every corner of your home. Plan to spend $250-$400. Read reviews and buying advice [here](https://thewirecutter.com/reviews/best-wi-fi-mesh-networking-kits/) and [here](https://www.consumerreports.org/wireless-routers/best-mesh-wifi-router-systems-for-350-dollars-or-less/). (Note that a mesh network is *not* the same as a Wi-Fi extender which is *not* an adequate solution.)

**II. Check your internet speed**

Go to [speedtest.net](https://www.speedtest.net/) to test internet speed on the device you use for videoconferencing. Internet speed is measured in Mbps (megabits per second) and there are separate speeds for upload (outgoing data) and download (incoming data). At a bare minimum, you need reliable speeds of 5 Mbps for upload and download both. High-speed plans provide speeds of 150 Mbps and higher and are strongly recommended.

If other internet-connected devices may be in use while you are videoconferencing (like other computers, streaming services, games, etc.), test your speed when all other devices are in use. They share your internet and siphon speed, so you need to know your speed under realistic conditions.

If your internet is too slow, contact your Internet Service Provider (ISP) to upgrade to a higher speed internet plan. There is no workaround for this.

**III. Close other applications**

Close other applications when videoconferencing. Videoconferencing puts heavy demand on your computer. Applications running in the background tax it further and can degrade audio and video performance.

**IV. Use a Headset**

Straining to understand the other person makes for a poor videoconference experience. Don’t rely on your computer’s speaker and microphone. Instead, get a quality headset. Headsets with boom microphones (near your mouth) generally work best. Here are links to reviews of quality [wired](https://thewirecutter.com/reviews/best-usb-office-headset/) and [wireless](https://thewirecutter.com/reviews/best-wireless-headset-for-the-office/) models. Here are links to inexpensive models from [Logitech](https://www.amazon.com/Logitech-USB-H570e-981-000574-Auriculares/dp/B00MUTWMJQ) and [Senheiser](https://www.amazon.com/Sennheiser-PC-USB-Mono-Headset/dp/B005HWEZ98/). If you have a newer computer with USB-C ports and no standard USB port (“USB-A”), you may also need a [USB-A to USB-C adapter](https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B01COOQIKU/ref=ppx_yo_dt_b_search_asin_title?ie=UTF8&psc=1) to connect the headset to your computer.

**V. Look professional on camera**

1. Be aware of your background. Declutter your space, position your computer so it’s facing a suitable, neutral background, or put a screen or curtain behind you.
2. Raise your camera to eye level. Nothing looks worse on camera than looking up someone’s nostrils, which is what the other person sees if you’re using a laptop on a desk or table. Raise the camera to eye level by putting your laptop on a stack of books or buy a [laptop stand](https://thewirecutter.com/reviews/best-laptop-stands/). You will also need an external [keyboard](https://thewirecutter.com/reviews/the-best-bluetooth-keyboard/) and [mouse](https://thewirecutter.com/reviews/best-wireless-mouse/). You can find good ones at a range of price points.
3. Keep your distance. Laptop cameras and webcams use wide angle lenses that distort your face when you get close. Keep a minimum 2 ft distance from the camera.
4. Create good lighting. Your face should be evenly lit with no harsh shadows. Think of a television newscaster.
   1. Your primary light source should be in front of you. If you have natural light from a window, position yourself with the window in front and to the side (up to a 45º angle).If it’s too bright, use a translucent curtain or shade or hang [light diffusion fabric](https://www.amazon.com/Neewer-Seamless-Diffusion-Photography-Lighting/dp/B06XS1PWG8/ref=sr_1_7?crid=2GLH28OCB2MOR&dchild=1&keywords=light+diffusing+fabric&qid=1588223466&sprefix=light+diffusing%2Caps%2C398&sr=8-7).
   2. Don’t sit with a window or other bright light source behind you. You will be backlit and look like a dark shadow. If there’s a window behind you, use shades or curtains to block the light (but not blinds with slats because they can wreak havoc with your camera’s automatic light adjustments.)
   3. Avoid mixing artificial and natural light because it will distort colors. Try to use one or the other.
   4. If you use artificial light, make sure your face is well lit from light sources in front of you and near eye level. [LED desk lamps](https://thewirecutter.com/reviews/best-led-desk-lamp/) work well because you can adjust brightness and point them where you want. Don’t aim the light straight at your face. Create softer and more even lighting by bouncing the light off a light-colored wall or [other reflective surface](https://www.amazon.com/Meking-Cardboard-Reflector-Photography-Tabletop/dp/B083M24RHD/ref=sr_1_1?crid=3VB73FKVAUX8&dchild=1&keywords=cardboard+light+reflector&qid=1588224020&sprefix=cardboard+light+reflector%2Caps%2C215&sr=8-1).

Here are helpful resources for more information:

<https://thewirecutter.com/blog/professional-video-call-from-home/>

<https://thewirecutter.com/blog/video-call-lighting-tips/>

<https://www.theverge.com/2020/4/8/21202907/zoom-tips-video-call-lighting-audio-look-your-best>

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/tech/2020/04/11/zoom-meetings-go-better-these-6-tips-look-your-best/5125980002/>