

Effective Video Conferencing

Tips for Persons with Brain Injury

We're all trying to adjust to video conferencing. Whether for support groups, appointments with doctors and therapist, or as a way to see your friends and family, we're lucky to have this technology. But using it can be tricky, especially for people with brain injury who may struggle with processing delays, speech impairments, solving problems and being flexible. This cheat sheet is designed to provide hints and reminders about how to make the most out of your meetings. But remember: webinars or online support group formats and functionality may differ depending on the meeting type and platform used (GoTo Meeting, Zoom, WebEx, etc.).



Get Ready Early

- Test your hardware and internet connection before the meeting to make sure everything works; most video conferencing apps will help you test your microphone, webcam, and speakers to confirm that they'll work during the meeting.
- Make sure you have any passwords you might need.
- Close tabs or applications you don't need during the call to improve video performance, especially on older computers.
- Position yourself in a quiet place with your light source in front of you, think about what's behind you, and minimize distractions, like pets or other people.



Remember: Everyone Can See and Hear You

- Make sure what you say and how you act is appropriate to the conversation and for the group.
- Mute your microphone as a habit. That way you can cough, clear your throat, and avoid unexpected background noise like a dog barking. This tip is for video as well; if you need to do something, and you are just listening, better to mute the video than distract the audience.
- Do your best to pay attention. It is pretty obvious to everyone on the call if you are distracted or start doing something else while someone else is talking.
- Behave and dress for the call the same way you would for the in-person meeting.



Respect the Group and Use the Tools You Have to Contribute

- Make introductions, and identify yourself when you start speaking.
- Do your best to pay attention. It is pretty obvious to everyone on the call if you are distracted or start doing something else while someone else is talking.
- If the video conference has a “chat” feature, you can use it to ask questions or make comments during the meeting without interrupting anyone who is speaking.
- Don’t use the chat box to goof off with anybody or send messages you wouldn’t want the whole group to see.



Good Communication on Video Calls

- View the calls as an opportunity to sharpen your listening skills. Demonstrate active listening by using facial expressions and occasional head nods to let everyone know you are paying attention. Keep notes about points you might want to make later.
- Eye contact is an important signal to the others that you see and hear them. It can be tricky with video calls to know where to look; but one thing for sure, don’t look at yourself.
- Signal when you want to talk by raising your hand.
- Speak clearly and watch how fast you speak, and don’t forget to unmute yourself! And speak at your normal volume — there’s no need to shout.



Getting the Most Out of a Video Conference Call

Don’t say what comes to mind when it comes to mind. Wait until it’s your turn, or until you have several things to say. Use the WAIT (why am I talking) tip to think about what you share and why.

Ask yourself:

- What is the purpose behind what I’m about to say?
- Is there a question I could ask that would help me better understand what the other person is saying and perceiving?
- Is it my turn to share?
- Is this the time to share? Is what I want to share on topic? Don’t divert the conversation away from what’s being talked about just because, “that reminds me of a time when...” If you do speak up, don’t start rambling. If you have a hard time self-monitoring that, watch for clues from others that you may be getting off topic.