

Leading Virtual Meetings - Top Tips

(inspired by Kings Fund)

The technical things for large meetings (more than 10 people)



Make sure everyone has the link for the meeting in good time



Give people clear instructions about joining

For example:

- Please join the meeting 3–5 mins before it starts so that you can check out your connection. We shall place you in a virtual waiting room and start promptly on time.
- If you join late, join quietly and do not interrupt the conversation or the presentation. The facilitator will notice you've joined and welcome you at an appropriate point
- Background noise and audio feedback can disrupt the meeting. Please turn off your phone or anything else that might distract you or the other participants. When you are not speaking mute your mic
- It's great to see the visual of who is with us, so ideally please choose video when you connect in
- We recognise that everyone has their own unique and individual living arrangement, so please feel free to attend to whatever you need to in your home during the meeting **without** having to explain why. Simply put your video on off and audio on mute and go and sort what you need to sort. If you have time you can type a quick update in the chat box *"I'll be back in 3 minutes"*
- We shall record the meeting for those that couldn't make it along



Always share an agenda before the meeting



We recommend a planned 5 minute break at least on the hour - never miss this as it's intense being on a virtual meeting for everyone



A meeting of more than 10+ people needs a "virtual moderator" who manages the chat box, identifies any 'virtual hands raises' and helps manage time for the facilitator



Explain the meeting protocol at the beginning of each meeting

- There is a meeting facilitator/lead plus the meeting moderator
- The meeting facilitator is needed to manage the flow – have that person nominated
- and ready
- The facilitator manages the timing and agenda

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Continued..



- Participants need to use the 'raise hand' function if they have something to contribute during a discussion (otherwise you risk cutting people off or not allowing everyone to contribute)
- The moderator will flag who is next to speak based on the 'raised hand' function
- Participants can use the 'chat box' function to express a simple idea or remind others about something
- The moderator will monitor the 'chat box' and can invite/signal participants to speak
- You need to use the break out room function to allow people to discuss things in greater detail and in smaller manageable groups
- A facilitator is also needed in a breakout room
- Depending on the size of the group for some meetings where it might be helpful for people to introduce themselves via the chat function



Prepare slides for sharing information or ideas and be ready to share these to the group in your slot

- Ensure any presentations are short and digestible.
- People only listen for 5-10 minutes. Keep the slide content clear and simple.
- When having a discussion, it can be useful to use the whiteboard function.
- Top Tip! Remember to save any thinking from this whiteboard into your files for future reference or take a screenshot!



If you need instant feedback, then you can ask participants to use the thumbs up or hand icon to show they have completed a task, all okay, ready to move on etc



A large group meeting shouldn't typically last longer than 90 minutes



Remember to choose 'video recording' for meetings and flag to people that this will occur.

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The technical things for small meetings (typically 5-10 people)



For smaller meetings, many of the same guidelines apply when joining a meeting, however smaller meetings give an opportunity to create more trust and rapport



Don't use the mute button

- Encourage people to speak spontaneously
- A small group can quickly learn to recognise each other's voices if they don't regularly work together



Try to avoid having a mix of virtual and face to face participants

avoid having part of the group gathered around a speakerphone in one room and other dialling in individually. This can create an 'inner group' with eye contact and side jokes, which doesn't help overall engagement or support with building trust across the group.



Small meetings are more interactive and may last longer. If they are longer than 1.5 hours - build in short breaks with a minimum of 5 minutes every hour (listening and watching is tiring!)



A smaller group meeting or workshop shouldn't typically last longer than 2.15 hours. For these longer meetings, ensure a comfort break of at least 15 minutes is included.

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The human things



A virtual space is exposing - like being in a goldfish bowl! People listen more intently. Think about how you say things. Your tone and gestures are important.



Emotions are amplified too! You can be surprised by peoples' responses which can seem stronger than you might expect; allow for this, check out what they mean and don't overreact in response



Don't be afraid of silence. People are probably just thinking.



Remember the virtual nod. If people can't see you, you need to say something or make a noise to acknowledge a comment or so people know you're there



Incorporate the informal. Don't be totally task or agenda led. Allow time for people to share news, chat about parts of the meeting that spark interest, etc.



Also encourage people to still make phone calls as every interaction doesn't have to be on a virtual meeting



Remember to try and be in a quiet place when you attend a virtual meeting or remember to turn your microphone on mute if there is any background noise where you are



Remember to try and test your lighting so that your face can be seen on the screen to others with reasonable clarity



Relearn the basics of 'active listening'

Facts

Listen to the facts, data and specific details that people share

Feelings

Listen to the feelings expressed or implied through the tone of voice, or pace of delivery

Intention

Listen for any unconscious intention (listening for what else people are telling you, by 'reading' between the lines)