Framing, lighting and recording guidelines

This is a guide on some basic principles to achieve the best framing and lighting for your pre-recorded presentation.

We ask that you please read through this guide and adhere to the filming requirements in as many ways as possible, so that all the videos created or live sessions will have the same and uniform high-quality look to them.

In short; we want you to be able to present your research in the best way possible!

Here are five tips and tricks for making your video and live presentation for the Q&A segment look professional:

1. Use a little less head room

When most people sit down in front of a webcam, they position themselves so their head is in the middle of the screen.

Paying particular attention to the space in your background view.

Head room is the space between the top of a subject's head and the top of the screen frame. In this shot, there is too much head room. It gives a feeling that the subject is sinking and it make you look small.

Too little head room will make you look like your head is stuck to the top of the screen.

The best way to get the right amount of head room is to imagine a grid laid over top of the screen – known as the golden ratio – following the principles of photography. Instead of placing your head in the centre square, align your eyes along that imaginary top third line of the grid. Make sure you can see your shoulders in the shot.

☑ This is the perfect amount of head room.
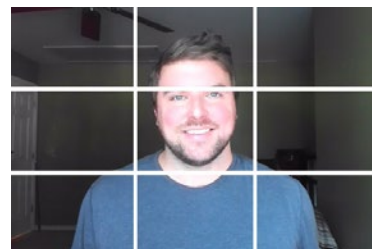
☑ This image shows an example of how to place yourself within your imaginary grid.

2. Raise the camera up to eye level

☑ Ensure that the camera on your computer, or device is raised up to your eye level, or better still even slightly above. If you need to, try stacking a few books underneath your camera set-up, or lowering your chair.

☑ Optimum ergonomic positioning will make you feel comfortable and relaxed.

☑ If the camera is slightly above your eyes you will lose any potential 'double-chin' or 'up the nose' shots.

☑ Choose a supportive bus small chair. Slouching on a couch or in a big armchair will make you look less polished. A low-backed chair that doesn't creak when you move is ideal

☒ Low camera angles are not flattering. This angle will distort your facial features and cast a shadow on your image; above all is not particularly comfortable.
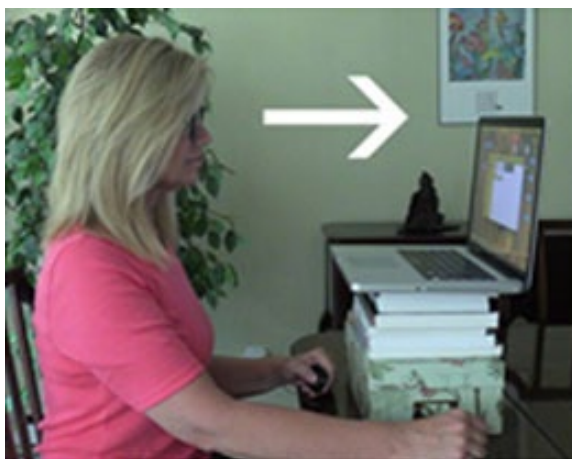
☑ Here is an example of how to raise your device to eyelevel to get the perfect shot.
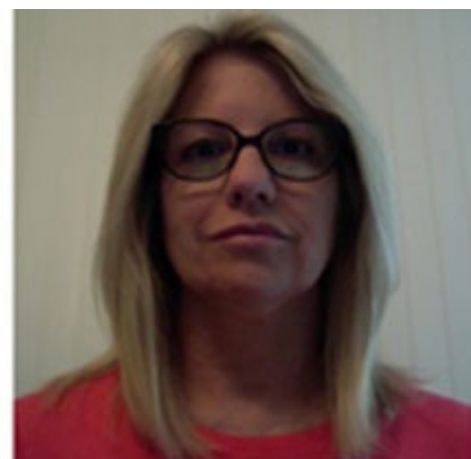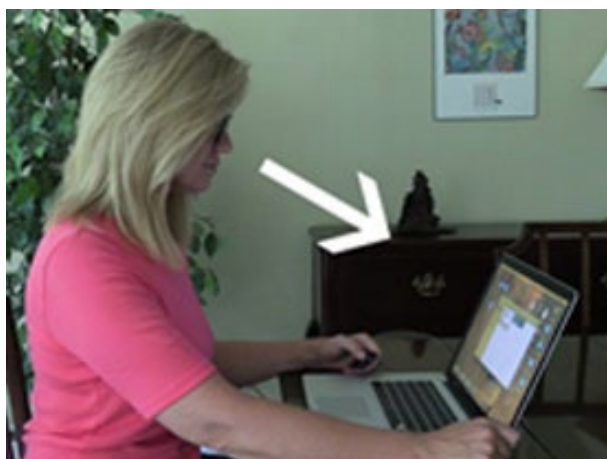
☒ Low camera angles are not flattering.
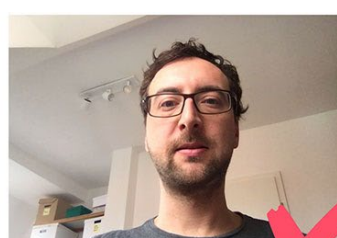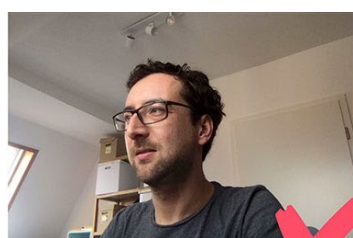
3. Light your face

☒ If the light is brighter behind you, you will become back-lit and your face will be in shadow.

☒ If you set up with a bright light behind you the camera will see that big bright light and lower the exposure level overall to compensate. As a result, you'll end up looking like you're in shadow.

☑ If possible, position yourself so you are facing a window to take advantage of the natural light coming in, or set up an additional light source in front of you to make sure you are well-lit.

☑ Your camera will detect the correct amount of light and will increase or reduce the exposure to produce an image that is not too bright and not too dark.
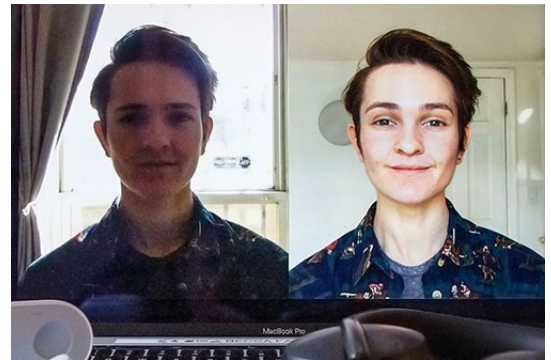
4. Simplify the Background

Now that you are set up, with adequate lighting and feeling comfortable, check your surroundings.

More than any other tip, pay careful attention to your background is absolutely crucial. A bedroom with a sloppy bed, a home office full of clutter, a kitchen table will distract from your sharing of research and knowledge.

The focus should be on you as the presenter, not what's going on behind you, so keeping the background as simple and uncluttered as possible is important.

☑ Ideally, choose a clean, bright wall, or a minimally cluttered/ tidied space for recording.


☑ Examples of a suitable background

☒ Avoid messy bedrooms, bookshelves or walls with lots of paintings or posters. Where you can't avoid them, make sure they are neat and tidy and close any doors that might be in the background

5. Clean Audio

☑ When filming, close the doors and try to ensure that there is minimal background noise.

☑ Eliminate all distractions, close the door and windows in your room. Shut off the TV down the hall. Silence your phone.

☑ Where possible use microphones that are located within headpieces or small lapel microphones that will cut out a lot of the additional noise around you.

☑ Try and record your video in a small room, this will avoid any echo.

☒ TV's, washing machines or people talking in the background will all detract from what you are saying and your message may get lost.

☒ Banish your pets. You know that barking dog who haunts every business meeting
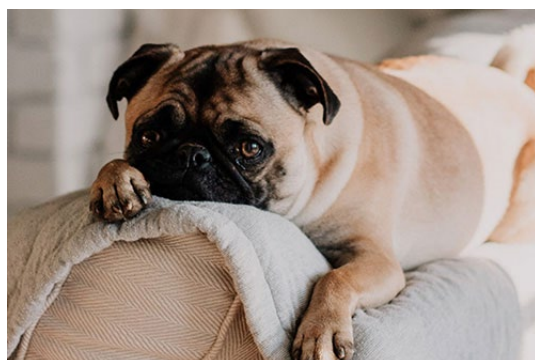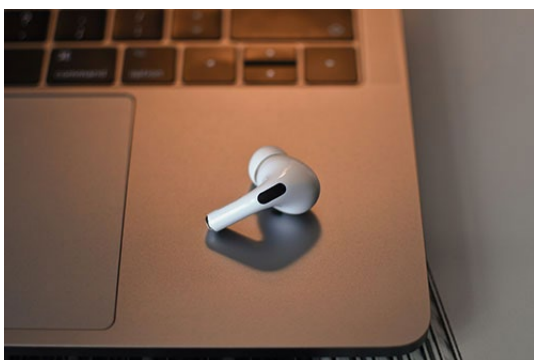
Maximising Accessibility in Designing Your Presentation

Slide Layout and Template

Your presentation should have a consistent theme, with a simple background and high colour contrast. Keep your slides minimal and simple, with a descriptive title on each page that refers to the content.

Although colour can be a great tool to visually convey information, it can create accessibility barriers. When using colour, it is important to have sufficient contrast between the background and text colour (dark text on a light background, or vice versa). Strong contrast between text and background mean people with low vision can access the content more easily.

If you would like to understand colour contrast further, you can download and run a Colour Contrast Analyser with your presentation. To make text more readable for colour-blind audiences, limit the use of reds and greens. If in doubt, we ask that you use one of these templates that Microsoft has identified as optimal for accessibility.

Large and Minimal Text

Please ensure that the fonts you use are easy to read, that the text is large and that any writing has a high colour contrast. Sans Serif is typically the most readable font (other examples are Arial, Calibri, Helvetica, Tahoma, Verandah). Be generous with spacing between letters, words and lines. Use bold for emphasis, rather than underline or italics. Use mixed case text rather than all caps. Text should be 18pt or larger. You can read more about font accessibility in this guide.

Provide Alternative Text and Image/Video Descriptions

Alternative text helps people who can't see the screen to understand what's important in images and other visuals. Briefly describe the images that appear in your presentation, conveying whatever information about the image is important. If you are playing a video in your presentation, describe what happens in the video. Read more about adding alternative text to visuals in Microsoft documents.

PowerPoint Checklist

- Good colour contrast with a consistent and clear template.
- Avoid cluttering slides with a lot of text.
- Do not use colour as the only way to convey information.
- Avoid GIFs, automatic animations and complex transitions.
- Give every slide a unique title and number your slides.
- Provide alternative text and image/video descriptions.

For further information, read this guide to making PowerPoint presentations accessible.

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Two Principles for Presenting

Please ensure to read to through to the last page on captioning your video presentations

Slow it Down

We tend to speak faster than usual when presenting. When preparing and presenting, keep pacing at the forefront of your mind and avoid writing a presentation that you need to rush. We suggest somewhere between 120 – 150 words per minute. Speaking slowly and clearly will help with automatic closed captions and ensure everyone can keep up with your content. Try to use plain language and avoid the use of acronyms, complex metaphors and jargon.

Describe What You're Showing and Flag Who is Speaking

It is fine to use visual information in your presentations, but you should be prepared to describe what is happening on your screen.

The platform will be showing your slides at the same time as your presentation, so that viewers will see what you are discussing in real-time, visually.

Please contact speaker@cospar21.org with any questions or concerns.

Three ways to automatically caption your pre-recorded Assembly presentations:

1. Upon uploading your video to YouTube

You will submit your videos to the Assembly by uploading them to YouTube. This means you can use the inbuilt YouTube captioning once you have enabled this feature:

Read this guide to automatic captioning on YouTube

Watch this video tutorial on how to turn on automatic captions in YouTube

Please note, YouTube's automatic captions can take some time to register after uploading. They will not immediately appear after uploading. They can take 1-2 hours for longer videos. As the video tutorial above notes, please allow sufficient time and then check the automatic captions for accuracy. You can learn how to edit the automatic captions in this instruction guide.

2. Use Google Slides while presenting on Zoom

Watch this instruction tutorial on using the Google Slides closed captioning function.

3. Use PowerPoint while presenting on Zoom

Watch this instruction tutorial on using the PowerPoint closed captioning function.

Speaker Enquiries

For all enquiries regarding virtual presentations

Emma McPartlan
Email: speaker@cospar21.org