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Streaming tips for job talks

Get the lighting right.

Your audience will find it hard to read your expressions if your face is in shadow. That human connection is important. You would not give an in-person talk while wearing a mask, or while talking from the darkest corner of the room.
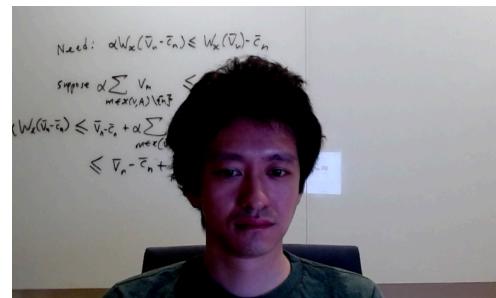
Good lighting is **soft** and **comes from the front**. You should face towards your window or other light source, and there should not be other light sources behind you.

If possible, avoid strong overhead lighting. This puts your eyes in shadow.
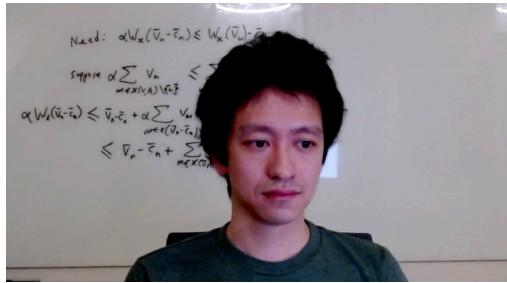
Examples:
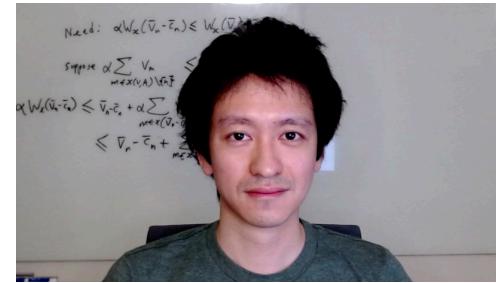
Bad lighting; light source behind me means face is under-exposed.

Bad lighting; light source directly overhead means face is in shadow.

Good lighting; light sources are in front of me, coming from a variety of angles.

Great lighting; I've supplemented the room lighting with a ring light.

Webcam positioning

Your webcam should be at eye level. Most other angles are not flattering. If you can't get it exactly at eye level, from above is better than from below.

If you're on a laptop, your inbuilt webcam is almost certainly too low. Try putting your laptop on a stand, or putting it on top of a stack of textbooks.

Ideally, consider buying a separate webcam that can be mounted on an adjustable desk stand. To go the last mile, consider mounting that webcam in the middle of a ring light.

When giving a talk, try to make eye contact with your audience. Counterintuitively, this means *looking into the webcam, and not at the zoom gallery*. Try to position the zoom gallery so that you can see it in your peripheral vision.

Audio

Your laptop's microphone is fine for many purposes, but why not have audio clarity when a job is on the line? Dedicated mics are perceptibly better than the mics on your laptop or phone. I recommend that you get either the Samson Q2U or the Blue Yeti.

Use a clicker, even on zoom talks. Avoid typing on your keyboard. These sounds will get picked up by your mic, and they are a lot louder over zoom than they seem in person. The exception to this rule is if you have an external mic in a shock mount, which will dampen vibrations.

For optimal clarity, mics should be positioned close (between six and twelve inches away from your face). All the time, Zoom's algorithms are trying to convey your voice and suppress background noise. When the mic is close, your voice is louder, so there is literally a higher signal-to-noise ratio. Record yourself talking at normal volume and play it back, tweaking the mic position until you are satisfied with the audio quality.

If you are placing the mic very close, you may record weird 'pops' or 'thuds' when you use words with plosive sounds. If this happens, add a pop filter.

Do a "technical practice talk" with a friend (an easy way to trade favors) in the exact setup you'll use.

Second monitor

Don't rely just on your laptop monitor — having a second monitor will help you see both your audience and your slides. Use Zoom's dual screen option. Open the chat

window in case the audience asks questions in chat. Consider using the full gallery view so you see as many participants as you can.

Internet connection

Assess the reliability of your internet connection. If you experience connection issues at all, troubleshoot whether the problem is local (weak wifi signal) or to do with your connection to your ISP. If the problem is local, connect your laptop directly to your router via an ethernet cable. If the problem is with your ISP, consider upgrading your bandwidth for the crucial two months.

Spare computer

If you have a second computer, get it ready and make sure it's working and capable of connecting to the same room. It's worth dusting off a mostly retired computer just for backup - again, it's worth buying insurance for important talks.