Helpful Tips for Virtual Meetings

This document provides employees with information and tips on participating in virtual meetings, such as sound, video and presenting.

Testing

- It is always a good idea to test equipment to see what you sound and look like.
  - To test your audio, Skype has a test call feature you can use.
    1. Open your Skype contact list
    2. Click the gear in the upper right.
    3. In the settings menu that appears, click "Audio Device" on the left menu.
    4. Look for "Check Call Quality" on the right, and click it.
    5. Take part in the test call that occurs.
  - Skype can also test your video.
    1. Open your Skype contact list
    2. Click the gear in the upper right.
    3. In the settings menu that appears, click "Video Device" on the left menu.
    4. Your camera will turn on, and you should see yourself on the right.

- If either test fails, and you are unable to diagnose the problem on your own, please contact:
  - ITD Service Desk
    - Phone: (306) 787-5000
    - Email: itoservicedesk@gov.sk.ca

- When speaking, ensure you are both close to, and facing, the microphone.
  - If using a laptop or webcam, the microphone is typically right beside the camera.
  - ❖ As such, speaking 'into' the camera is most effective for clear audio.

- If using video, stay close to the camera, and ensure you are facing it. This ensures that any facial expressions and queues are properly picked up.

Meetings

- Make sure a clear agenda is available to all participants. The agenda should cover the goals of the meeting, roles within the meeting, and other useful information.

- Ensure the format of the meeting is understood in the agenda, as this can help participants understand the requirements for the meeting (video, presentation mode, etc.)
  - Is the meeting a:
    - presentation?
    - brainstorming session?
    - general meeting?
    - status update?

- If there are supporting documents, or a presentation, ensure these are distributed to the participants so that they may follow along.
  - This can be done via email beforehand, or during the meeting if you know how to share documents using your meeting tool.

- For presentations, ensure all relevant files are working ahead of time, loaded, and open on your computer for when the presentation begins.

- There are generic roles that can be assigned to people to help a meeting proceed smoothly.
  - Examples include:
    - Having someone coordinate who speaks and when.
    - A scribe to keep track of what is discussed.
    - A moderator who can touch base with absentees.
  - Ensure roles are discussed and clearly laid out before the meeting begins.

- If the participants are unfamiliar with each other, it is useful to have an icebreaker.
  - It does not need to be complicated, as simple introductions and/or small talk are effective at getting conversation started.

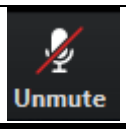
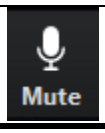
- If using Skype for your meeting, ITD have put together a Skype specific guide.
  - Located here: Skype Video Conference Guide

Voice/Speaking

- Keep yourself muted unless speaking.

- **IMPORTANT**: Computers do not always handle multiple speakers very well. If two people are speaking, one may be made quiet so that the other can be heard.
  - As a result, please double check that you are muted.
  - If you are not muted, even the slightest noise (such as a desk bump or clothing moving) can cause someone else to be made very quiet.

- The symbols for muting/unmuting are below for your convenience:

WebEx		Skype		Zoom	
Muted	Unmuted	Muted	Unmuted	Muted	Unmuted
					

- Do not be afraid to speak if you have something to add, but keep in mind you will need to allow space for others to talk.

- If you are unable to use voice, text messaging can still be a useful tool to communicate.
  - Remember that tone does not always convey properly through text, and that humor or satire may not come across correctly.

- If you do not have computer audio, WebEx allows you to dial into the conversation from a phone.
  - This will require the meeting ID, and possibly some form of passcode.
  - **NOTE:** Anyone phoning in will be unable to see video, including presentations and files.
    - This can cause difficulties and drag out a meeting.

- When in doubt, follow normal meeting courtesy. People want to be heard, seen, and respected.

Video

- An important thing to know is that video uses more bandwidth than simple voice.

- As a result, the more people using video in a meeting, the stronger your Internet needs to be.
  - This is because you need to download each person's video feed simultaneously.

- It may be a good idea for only the presenter to have video, while the audience does not. This eases the network load on viewers with weaker internet.

- If you find your own connection is slow or unstable:
  - Plug-in your internet using an Ethernet cable if possible. Wired connections are more stable.
    - Perhaps borrow the cable from your normal home computer, if you have one.
  - Wi-Fi can also reduce your speed depending on:
    1. Your equipment.
    2. The number of devices on Wi-Fi in your home.

- If you still encounter slow video, disconnecting the VPN may help.

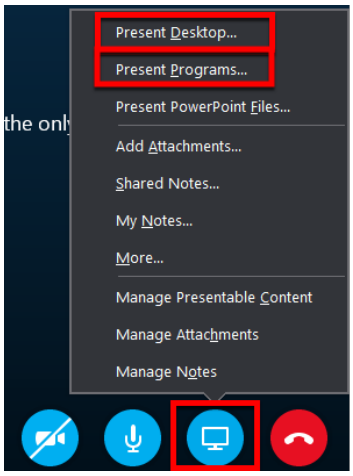
- Below are some tips to ensure your image stays sharp and in focus:
  - Stay in the centre of the camera view area.
  - Keep your background static and unmoving.
  - Try and have a solid background with no patterns.
  - Aim for solid colour clothing with no patterns.

- Remember, people can see you. Be mindful of your camera angle, and pay attention to self-view. You don't want to accidentally give someone a view of the inside of your nose.

Screen Sharing

- Screen sharing can be an important tool for remote meetings, especially for presenters.
- Methods to Screen Share are below:
  - WebEx:
    1. Click this:
    2. Then click a screen, like this one:

  - Skype



- In all of the above, you have the option of sharing specific programs/windows instead of your whole screen. This allows you to share documents or PowerPoint, but also see your fellow attendees.
  - For WebEx, you will see the programs as options after clicking the "Share" button.
  - With Skype, click "Present Programs…" as highlighted in the Skype section.