



Best Practices for Online Presentations

Preparing for The Session:

- Internet Connection: Online meetings work great on Wi-Fi, but if you're giving a big presentation, your best bet is hardwiring in.
- Setting: Consider the setting that your audience will see and clean up your background - a plain wall, or a nice plant work well. The setting should be officelike and/or is nondescript (so no presentations from your kitchen, garage, backyard, etc). Less is more here.

We currently have one DIT and two GREAT-granted backgrounds (1, 2) you can use on Microsoft Teams. Use the DIT background for webinars and events that include HMTCs and ministers, or any other activity which is organizational/DIT related (especially references to COVID-19). Use one of the GREAT backgrounds for events that are promotional (in the same way you would use a GREAT-branded stand/collateral at a physical event). Also, to be aware: the branding is only visible when large and full size on screen, due to the aspect ratios that MS teams uses. When the tab is small the background is plain, which is the best solution at this time. We will keep you informed as we receive new backgrounds.

- Lighting: A poorly-lit face can kill your presentation. You should be lit from the front, not from behind (i.e. don't sit with your back to a window). Light can shift throughout the day so build in time to adjust the light by drawing a shade or turning on/off a light.
- Camera: Put your camera at face level (use a stand or stack of books if you are using a laptop camera) relatively close to you. Check that you are looking straight at the camera and your video feed is framing the upper part of your torso and your head. You want it to look as if you were sitting across the table from your audience.
- Sound: Make sure you are in a quiet area with no distractions. If noise is unavoidable, consider a headset with microphone (otherwise avoid headsets as they aren't aesthetically pleasing).
- Attire: Dress to represent the HMG/DIT/GREAT brand. Skip hoodies, sweatshirts, Hawaiian shirts, strapless tops, anything that could resemble a bathrobe, etc. And even though you will only be visible from the waist up, wear a complete outfit (no pyjama bottoms) as you may need to stand up quickly or the camera may droop. You don't want the conversation to pivot to your wardrobe, or lack thereof.
- Explore your conference platform settings and tools. Check out options to digitally touch-up your appearance.
- Plan: Structure is key. Online sessions don't allow for as much flexibility as face-to-face sessions. Thoughtful planning of your presentation, including interactive components, will minimize issues.
- Rehearse: Rehearse the presentation with your co-presenters and producer so all are clear on roles and you can fine-tune timing, pacing, flow, transitions, etc.
- Test: Test your software so you know things will be working when you're ready to go live.

During The Session:

- Look directly at the camera while speaking. This will make attendees feel included in the conversation. Position the 'active speaker' window on your screen directly under your camera to make this easier.

- Be careful about drawing your gaze away from the camera to glance at another screen. This can make you look distracted and can be off-putting to your audience.
- Engage your audience. Don't drone on for a long time without any audience engagement. Stop regularly to tell a (quick!) story, ask a question, take a straw poll, tell a tasteful joke, or give your audience a small task. Don't share too many text-rich slides, and try not to stray from your presentation to hold the audience's attention.
- De-emphasize the technology. The platform should support your presentation and not be central. Don't apologize for the technology if things are not perfect.

Present Like a Pro:

- Before your presentation, explore and test-drive the screen setup options available to you through your platform. Most platforms have options for customizing your layout so you can present and manage attendees at the same time.
- If you plan to share a PowerPoint presentation, make sure that you rehearse with a trusted colleague. Also ensure that your shared content is visible as the application content only, removing the possibility of accidental sharing of incorrect content.
- If you are sharing the presentation from your laptop you will not be able to view the presenter notes. Print out your notes before your session if you need them for reference.
- Plan to allocate one minute per slide. Best practice is to use one idea per slide and/or no more than 3-4 bullets. Use more slides with less content per slide if at all possible.
- Use a handout (shared via email or URL) if you have a lot of text that you want to disseminate rather than putting a lot of text on your presentation slides.
- Use your voice. Voice inflection is the way to gesture in the online environment. Use a full range of inflection and express emotion to keep the energy up.

Participant Management:

- It can be overwhelming to present, manage your participants, and monitor chat, all while continuing to have a dynamic conversation with your participants. This can be particularly hard if you are using full screen options for presenting or sharing videos. Plan to multitask, or, have someone help you follow the chat conversation and respond to raised hands.
- Get everyone on video (sometimes you have to insist). Avoid audio-only calls where all your audience members are just secretly multi-tasking.
- People engage when they can see their presenter. Get your face on video so people can see you and ideally you can see your audience too. This allows you to connect with your audience and monitor nonverbal feedback.
- Set participation expectations and ground rules at the beginning of your session. Online participants don't necessarily recognize their responsibility to participate or how to do so. For example, tell your audience if they should expect to be called on or participate in another way. Also tell them how and when to ask questions (ie should they raise hands, just speak out (and if so, ask them to say their name when they speak!), use chat or voice).
- If your platform allows, select the "Mute upon entry" option for attendees. This makes sure that participants join with their sound off so you don't get background noise.
- Ensure you know how to see your list of participants and are able to quickly mute (or disconnect) participants if needed.
- Build in some Q&A so that you allow others to speak. Calling participants by name is also a great way to engage the audience and keep things social and personal.