

Jansen Strategies Netiquette With Zoom

What a joy it is that we live in a time when physical distance is all but overcome by technology! As the whole world has come together virtually, much has been learned in recent weeks about how to make the experience of virtual meetings as fulfilling as possible. There are some challenges to overcome. While working, studying and communing from the comfort of home, the temptation to relax personal habits and protocols is almost irresistible, and this can detract greatly from the meeting and learning experience.

What follows is a suggested protocol and set of behaviors that we would ask everyone to aspire to, to make our meetings the best they can be. It represents a collection of suggestions from Center participants and others, based on one overarching goal: to respect the effect of our virtual meeting behaviors and practices on the experience of self and others, and to join together in creating a loving, learning virtual environment.

Prior to Meeting

Be prepared.

Just as you would for an in-person meeting, arrive a few minutes early, with your toolset ready and working. Zoom is quite easy to use, but a live video conference with your peers is not the time to explore its features. This link will provide an easy process for testing your system: <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/115002262083-Joining-a-test-meeting>. You may wish to make video appointments with friends to get used to Zoom.

If you are having technical difficulties of any kind, please contact the meeting host. He may want you to arrive early or consult privately prior to the meeting. Don't be shy about this. No one was born a Zoom expert.

Dress still matters.

It's easy to give in to the temptation to wear your oldest sweatpants and t-shirt (or no shirt at all) because you're joining from the comfort of home. Your comfort clothing may be just fine with some of your friends and colleagues - others may not be ready to know you quite that well. Dress for your video meeting with that in mind. If you're not sure, wear what you would in an in-person meeting.

Prepare for best video and audio quality.

If you have a choice, use the device that offers the best quality webcam and microphone. The network matters too. Wi-Fi networks tend to provide better quality audio and video than mobile phone transmission, so even when using your phone, try switching to Wi-Fi mode. Keep your device plugged in so you don't lose power. Find a quiet, indoor location to control ambient noise. If your technology is older than you are, you may want to disable your video to make the best use of bandwidth and speed.

Adjust your lighting.

Don't sit directly in front or beside a bright light source, or else all the audience sees is a bright light and a shadowy figure (ala witness protection testimony). Experiment with moving lamps and your camera until you can see your beautiful brightly lit face on the screen.

Think about your background.

Try to provide a nice, plain background. If your treadmill is in your office and its primary use is to catch and store laundry, and actually doing the laundry is not a viable option, you might want to consider relocating. Alternatively, you can create a virtual background from your settings menu, but these tend to reduce video quality somewhat. You can't control everything in a mobile environment, but you should give some thought to background prior to your meeting.

During your meeting:

Be Present.

There may be more distractions in your home environment than at the Center. Still, your fellow students want and need your full participation. Here are a couple of tips on presence:

- Have at hand the same things you would bring to the meeting, so you don't have to get up to retrieve them. Have your tea or water at hand prior to start of the meeting, your tissues, notepad and book.
- Tell family or others around you that you will be in a meeting for the duration. Ask that they hold all non-emergency interruptions until after the finish of your meeting.
- Try to participate as you would in-person. Share your comments, reactions and questions.
- If and when you do need to leave your "seat", mute audio and disable video to minimize the distraction.
- By all means, take the opportunity to enjoy the company of your pet, when to do so would not be distracting. If you are living with Marmaduke, you might want to rethink that. If you do keep a pet near you, take care to keep your mic muted.

Think about your actions on camera.

Always remember that everyone can see you. Someone is watching as you take a big, wide-mouth yawn, stretch, wander around the room, change your clothes, snore, dance to the music... you get the idea. Even exaggerated movements are distracting to the audience and the speaker. Try to stay still and be (or at least appear) attentive!

Mute your microphone when necessary.

Zoom's "Mute Microphone" option cuts down on ambient feedback for the audience. Remembering when to use it can be a challenge. Your host is able to control your microphone, so when you forget, she can assist.

General rule of thumb - When there is a lot of back-and-forth discussion, turn your mic on; banter, commentary and sharing are just as valuable on-line as in person. You should mute

yourself when listening to a presenter, or whenever there is ambient noise from your location. Don't be offended if you are requested to mute your mic – you may be unaware of some of the sounds from your location.

Use Zoom's chat function.

You can send a question, or comment, or paste a link to everyone at the meeting, or privately to an individual participant or host.

When in doubt...

Would I do this in person?