

# Video Conferencing Quick Guide



The Quick Guide is one of the outcomes of the Leonardo da Vinci project (2006-2008) entitled "Communication Technologies and Acquiring Academic and Professional Communication Skills - an Interactive Learning Infrastructure and New Methodology".

It is designed as a tool for videoconferencing skills training in both academic and professional contexts.



For more information about the project and other materials see the project website at: <http://invite.lingua.muni.cz>

Content: Invite Team

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## 1 Introduction

### Types of videoconferences

- A business meeting
- A discussion
- A lecture
- A lesson
- A seminar
- A demonstration
- A presentation of a topic
- ...
- Any combination of the above

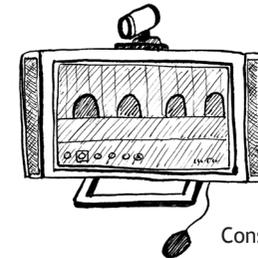


VC suite

### Specific vocabulary



Camera



Console



Document Camera



Eye-contact



Facilitator/Chairperson



Microphone (Mic)



Remote control



Turn-taking



Zooming

## 2 Preparation

### Presentation level

Essential parts of the preparation process:

- Determine your topic
- Carry out research
- Conduct audience analysis
- Set aims and objectives
- Plan your time
- Create audio-visuals and aids
- Write notes
- Rehearse

### Technical level

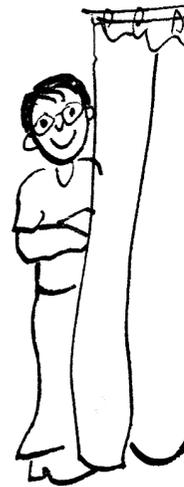
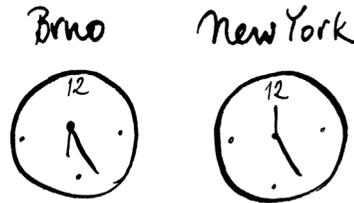
- Book the VC suite
- Check the compatibility of the video conference link equipment
- Make a trial call
- If inexperienced, engage the cooperation of an IT technician
- Practice operating the remote control/touch screen
- Check the schedule - different countries may have different time zones!
- Check the position of the camera for strategic eye-contact
- Check camera angles for inclusion of participants and effective use of audio-visuals and aids

### Setting an agenda

The agenda is a plan of exactly what is expected to take place.

It will include arrangements for:

- Seating
- Timing
- Use of equipment
- Roles of participants



## 3 How To Begin a VC Session

In most VC settings there is a split-second delay in delivery and response, which may cause inexperienced participants to think that a message has not been clearly received. It can also cause participants to interrupt when they think the other speaker is not going to say anything. Be patient with this as it takes time to become familiar with patterns of communication.



### Initial greeting

- Hello everyone./ Good morning.
- Can you see us?
- There are 5 people in our room.  
Can you see us all clearly?
- Can you hear us?  
(have a written sign ready in case there is no answer)



### Checking technical details

- I am going to switch to my presentation.  
Can you tell me if you can see it well?
- Now, I'm switching back, can you see me/us?
- Now, let's get started.



### Introduction & greetings

New people

- So once again, good morning to everyone.
- My name is ...
- I'm here to ...
- Let me introduce my colleagues ...
- To begin with, I'd like to ...
- Feel free to interrupt at any time
- I will take about 20 minutes for my part and then we can discuss it.
- I have divided my presentation into 3 parts ...

You know each other

- Hello again.
- Great to see you again.
- So today we are going to talk about ...
- What would you like to deal with first?
- I suggest that I take about 20 minutes to do my bit and then I will hand over to you and our discussion. Is that OK?



## Problem Solving



### Crackly line

- We can hear some parts of what you are saying, but not everything.
- We can hear a lot of rumbling noise.
- The line is very crackly.

### No sound

- Sorry, we can see you, but we can't hear you/a thing.
- It may be useful to have a written notice in case both sides can't hear each other.

### Frozen picture/no picture

- We can only see a white screen.
- Let's disconnect and call again.
- Sorry, we can only see a frozen picture of you smiling.
- Can you try to switch over to the camera.
- We can see a frozen picture of a computer screen.



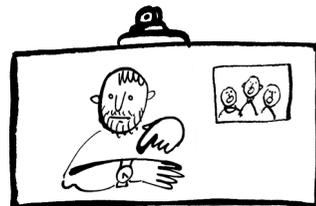
### Useful phrases for problem solving

- We are trying to fix the problem.
- We'll just get the cameras working.
- Do you know how to do that?
- Can you check your mic/camera?
- Is it on?
- The problem seems to be at your end.
- Use body language to indicate yes/no.
- Could you please wait a moment? We'll fetch some help/ a technician.
- Just press this. Still nothing?
- We'll be ready in 2 seconds.



### No clue as to what is going on

- Sorry, could you explain what you mean?
- Excuse me, but what does ... mean?
- What did you mean when you said ...
- Could you go over it again?
- What do you mean?



### Running out of time

- Sorry to interrupt, time is nearly up.
- We only have about 5 minutes to go.
- We are going to get cut off soon.
- Let's just say quick good-byes.
- We are a bit pressed for time, can we move on to ...
- We need to watch the time.

## Useful VC Hints & Tips



The microphone picks up everything so be careful what you say and do.



### Disturbance dos & don'ts

- Do be patient
- Do wait for the transmission
- Do look into the camera
- Do look attentive
- Do encourage with a smile
- Do mind your positive body language
- Do be tolerant towards cultural differences
- Do make sure you are in the picture.
- Don't shuffle papers close to the mic
- Don't tap your pen on the desk and don't click your pen
- Don't fidget throughout the VC session
- Don't engage in side talk (especially not in your native language)
- Don't whisper—it will be picked up.



### Delivery

- Speak normally, don't talk too fast
- Mind your audience (don't use too difficult/advanced language)
- Don't treat your image on the screen as a mirror
- Do use positive body language
- Mind politeness principles of conversation
- Listen actively (let people finish what they have to say and wait for a pause before responding)
- Focus on the camera, not the screen, as this facilitates eye contact.

### Appearance on the camera

- Colours matter - dress appropriately
- Always check the visibility and colour contrast for Power Point presentations
- It's advisable not to use red on green
- Wear light colours near your face
- When dressing for a VC, consider also the colour scheme of the VC suite. E.g. Blue is often used for background curtains as it doesn't conflict and allows other colours to be seen against it.
- Reflective clothes and contrasting patterns can cause viewing problems on the screen.

## 6 Questions ?

### In order to succeed

Time limits are very important and cross-cultural differences and misunderstandings need to be cleared up very quickly, so make sure you exchange as much information as possible before the video conference.

### Operational questions

- Time keeping: **When do we finish?**
- House keeping: **What shall we deal with first?**
- Make sure you follow the agenda.

### Polite requests via questions

- Indicate at the beginning that the Chair or Facilitator will remind participants about time limits before they run out of time.
- **How much time have we got to discuss that?**  
(Meaning: You should have finished 5 minutes ago)



### Asking for clarification

- What did you say?
- I think I misunderstood you. Did you say 'example'?
- I am not sure I fully understand ...
- I did not catch your question.
- There is one thing I am not clear about
- Could you go over that again?
- Can you be a little more specific?
- Can you explain that in more detail?



## 7 How to End a VC Session

Be aware that you may be cut off - most VC sessions are scheduled for specific times so, as opposed to face-to-face meeting, there may not be a chance for last minute extension beyond the time allotted.

If you finish before the allotted time or you made a longer booking, you may say your goodbyes and pleasantries at leisure.

The transmission may continue on the other side only, even though you are not aware of the fact - the fact that you don't see the others doesn't mean that they cannot see you!

Hang up after saying goodbye even if the VC is still running, it saves any potentially embarrassing comments as people leave the room and forget the microphones are still working.



## 8 You May Be Cut off

### Predicting the situation

- At this stage we'd better say farewell and close down the conference, we will see you all very soon.
- Are there any more questions from either side on any subject at the moment? Because we are drawing right on to 10:30. We originally booked the conference room for one hour and we've actually managed to finish everything within one hour quite perfectly here.

### Describing the situation

- Do we have a couple more minutes?
- I think we are going to get cut off soon. So, we'd better finish anyway.
- Oh, you are frozen. No, they've been cut off; actually, time is up.

### Offering a solution

- We have one minute left. Let's continue/finish the discussion by e-mail/forum/blog then.
- We'll be in touch.

