

# Technical Tips



*Things you need to know  
to rock the virtual world!*



April 2021

# Introduction

**P**reparation, preparation, preparation! Prepare for a virtual meeting the right way. Even when you have a compelling message or a captivating story, it may not resonate with your audience if your surroundings (ex. background, sound, camera angle, lighting, etc.) are distracting. The more prepared you are, the better you can cope when you encounter an unexpected technical challenge.

*Be an effective self-advocate and present yourself as a professional.*

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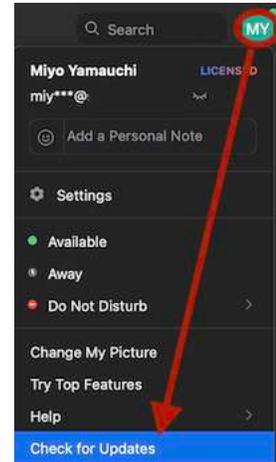
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## Things to do a day before the meeting or earlier

### Update apps and OS to the latest version

It's better to have the latest versions of apps (e.g. Zoom) and OS running. Sometimes updates are essential, and they may take time, so don't wait until the last minute. Do them ahead of time, and if something goes wrong, you still have time to find a solution.

To find out if your Zoom desktop client needs updating, open the app, and click your profile picture on the top right corner. (If you haven't set up your photo, the icon will appear as your initials.) Select "Check for updates," and follow the instructions.



### Location

Wired connections are better than wireless (Wi-Fi or cellular) connections. Wi-Fi is better than cellular. If Wi-Fi is your option, find a good location. Even in the same room, depending on the angle, the distance from the router/modem, the wall and other objects, the speed can vary.

Check your connection speed at <https://projectstream.google.com/speedtest> and pick a couple of good locations.

If your connection is not strong, find out how many other devices (e.g. printers, TVs, phones, games) are on the same Wi-Fi connection, and see if any of them can be turned off, at least during the meeting.

### Lighting

- For a business meeting, don't make a "shady face." No sidelight, backlight, or overhead lighting. Avoid sitting with your back to the window or with a lamp behind you.

For a storytelling show, a "shady face" can be effective depending on your story. Try different angles and strength of lighting and shining a light on your face and see which setting works for your story.

- Look for cast shadows. If shadows on the wall behind you are too strong, you may want to soften the light. If you don't have a shade, use a shower curtain, bed sheet, or pillow case.

- If you use natural light, be aware of where the sun is going to be during the whole meeting. Even if you have good natural light at the start of the meeting, it may not last until the end when the meeting is a long one.
- To avoid glare on your eyeglasses, clean your lenses, and change the height and position of your light.
  - Height: Raise the light higher than your eye level.
  - Position: Move the light off-center.
  - Don't look directly at the light.
  - Use a soft (diffused) light.

*Areas lit by soft light transition into shadow very gradually. To soften a light, bounce it off of a reflector, or shoot it through a diffusion panel.*

## Camera

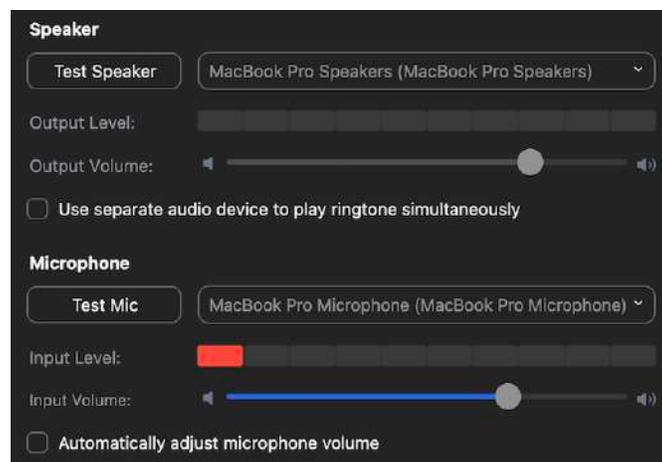
- Set your camera right at your hairline, and have it pointed downwards at your eyes. Use boxes and books to adjust the height as needed.
- Watch out for wall or ceiling lines, or wall decorations behind you. You don't want them to look like they are coming out of your head.
- Position yourself so that your smiling face fills up at least one-third of the space.

## Sound

To access the sound setting, open the Zoom client, click the gear icon below your profile picture/initial, and select Audio. (If you're in a Zoom meeting, click the upper button next to the Mute/Unmute button.)



- Test your microphone and speaker.
  - Click "Test Speaker" and "Test Mic" and make sure you hear and sound okay. Adjust the volume as needed.

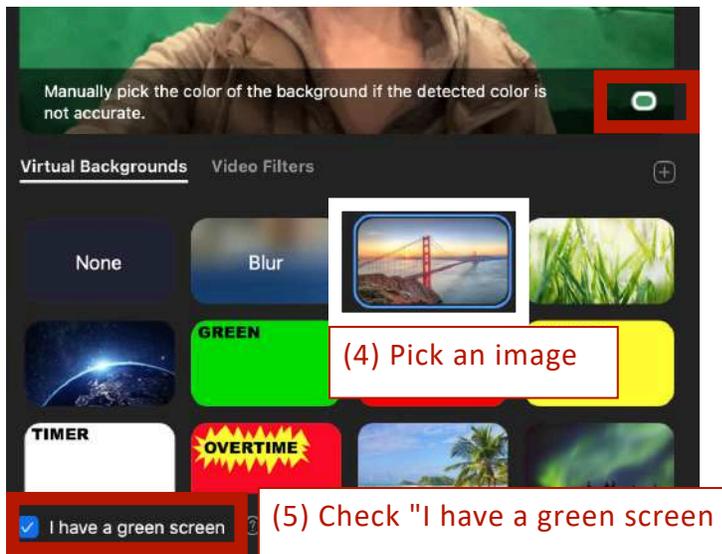


- "Automatically adjust microphone volume" works for many devices, but not all. Please make sure to test it out fully (not just for a few minutes).
- If you aren't getting good sound from your computer, use a headset or a microphone. When you change the input/output source, don't forget to test again.
- To dampen reverberant sound, add soft and curved surfaces, which allow the microphones to hear the audio source more directly.
- Pay attention to your background noises. If necessary, open the sound setting and adjust "Suppress background noise." By default, the setting for Suppress background noise is set to Auto. If Auto doesn't work, you may want to try the other three options:
  - Low: minimal background noise reduction, blocking only low levels of persistent noise.
  - Medium: reduces common noises such as fans or people clicking pens.
  - High: reduces sharper noises such as the crunching of paper or typing on a keyboard.

## Background

- Check your background by opening Zoom and clicking on "New Meeting." Cleaning up a little bit can make a huge difference. Declutter and keep your background simple.
- Zoom's virtual backgrounds can be problematic.
  - Don't use a video background unless it can complement your story. Most of the time, animation is a distraction for your message or story.
  - Pick a clean virtual background.
  - If your hands or face are disappearing...
    1. Pick a location that has a solid color behind you. If you don't have a plain wall, try hanging a solid color fabric (e.g. blanket or bed sheet) behind you.

Solid color: Avoid a background color that is similar to your skin color or the color of the clothing you're wearing.
    2. Open the Zoom client and click the gear icon below your profile picture/initial.
    3. Select "Background & Filters."
    4. Select the virtual background you want to use.
    5. If you have a solid color behind you, check "I have a green screen."
    6. Pick the color that brings the best result by clicking the background manually.



(6) Click the tiny button, which shows your background. Then, click your background. You may need to repeat the process until you get the best result.



Before

After

*If the above tip doesn't work for you, try "Blur" virtual background.*

## Practice

Record, analyze, record, analyze...the more you practice, the more you feel comfortable and natural with what you're saying. Get used to looking at the camera for eye contact. You can practice by yourself or with your friends.

## Things to do on the day — before the meeting

### Clean the camera lens

It's simple yet one of the most important things to do.

### Restart your device and/or close unnecessary apps

The more applications are open, the less bandwidth they will get because each of them keeps asking for attention from your CPU or broadband connection. If your computer has been running for days, it's a good idea to restart it. Make sure to close unnecessary apps. Also, don't start other bandwidth-intensive activities like streaming videos, cloud backups, cloud file synchronizations (e.g. OneDrive, Dropbox).

## Prepare Plan B for unexpected incidents

- **Headset**  
You can manage internal noises, but you can't control outside noises. Your neighbor may decide to start mowing lawns. The dog next door may start barking for no reason. To minimize the damage, keep a headset in your reach. It doesn't eliminate the noise completely, but it helps the situation tremendously. If you have only a wireless headset, make sure the connection is working in advance. And don't forget to charge it!
- **Connection**  
Disconnection can happen without any advance notice. Know your other options like hotspot, iPad or cellphone just in case. Charge your phone fully just in case you need it.

## Enable “Do not disturb” mode

*click each device title for more information*

- Windows: Select Focus Assist and set it to “Alarms only”
- Mac: Click the control bar and click “Do Not Disturb”
- Android: Swipe down from the top of your screen and tap “Do Not Disturb”
- iPhone/iTouch/iPad: Open Control Center and tap crescent moon icon

## Final check

- Check your video screen by using the platform that your meeting uses. Everything may look perfect in person, but a tiny object can be magnified on the screen.
- Review the meeting agenda. If it's an interview, review the organization's information again. Also, check your interviewer's name and the pronunciation of it if you can get that information.

## At the meeting/show

Now that you're prepared, just sit back and be your authentic self. Don't forget to look at the camera when you speak to the audience.

***Be present and have fun!***

# Checklist

<b>Things to do a day before the meeting or earlier</b>	
	OS and apps (Zoom)
	Connection
	Lighting
	Sound
	Camera
	Background
	Practice

<b>Things to do on the day — before the meeting</b>	
	Clean the camera lens
	Restart your device and close unnecessary apps
	Charge your devices (phone, tablet, notebook, headset)
	Prepare your plan B materials and keep them in your reach
	Enable Do Not Disturb
	Final video check
	Review the meeting agenda