

Guidelines for Filming Interview & Webinars

We're excited to be producing an interview or webinar video with you, and would like to offer our "Top 5" tips to creating the most engaging production possible. We often record these sessions for later viewing, and want everyone who sees them in the future to get a terrific experience.

(Note: If you are recording a clip on your own – and *don't* need to be using Teams, Zoom, etc., to interact in real-time, please use either a dedicated recording app on your computer, or a mobile phone, with an external microphone, placed sideways, on a tripod, or even a stack of books. Using your laptop's webcam with software intended for *streaming* is simply the wrong tool – it can yield sub-standard, fuzzy, choppy results, usually with a frame rate of 8 frames per second, not a phone's standard 25 or 30.)

- 1) **KEEP YOUR CHIN UP!** *This is the most important guideline and makes all the difference in how engaging you are. The camera should be at eye level, so you aren't looking down/up at it.* Simple rule – MAJOR impact. If needed, place your laptop or portable webcam on a stack of books or other object on your desk. Then, when you look right into that lens (*not the screen – the little glass eye!*), it feels natural to the viewer, like you're talking directly to them and not someone off-screen or to ... a computer. **Tip: You don't need to record using a full-screen view! Shrink the whole webinar window, so you can slide it closer to your camera.**
- 2) **BACKGROUND CHECK** - If at all possible, **PLEASE don't use a virtual background.** It creates the well-known ugly, morphing "artificial hair," and sometimes has areas of the screen awkwardly appearing/vanishing. It's distracting, unpleasant to watch for long periods, and should *really* be only a last result. Your background can be a bookcase, an office setting, or even a living room. It just **shouldn't** be a brightly-lit window that will backlight (or "blind") the camera and make the subject's face dark, or *too* close to bookshelves or photos that themselves will be a distraction. Also: **TURN OFF AUTO FOCUS** in camera settings, so it doesn't jump between blurry and sharp if you move a drop forward or backward.
- 3) **SOUND GOOD?** If you have an external microphone to plug into the sound input jack on the computer, it'll make a *massive* difference. If you do these frequently, it's worth the \$15 investment (on Amazon, search "lavalier mic". For a easy, high-quality desktop mic, I recommend the ~\$100 Blue Yeti). Without it, depending on the shape and contents of the room you're in, the built-in mic may sound like you are far away/in a cave. We call it Zoom Echo. A room with plenty of furniture and other objects is actually better, as it absorbs and softens the sound, for less echo. An external mic (especially one clipped to your clothing) will also help avoid picking up background noise.
- 4) **WHAT GOES BEFORE "... CAMERA, ACTION!?"** The one downside of even a high-end, cutting-edge webcam is that **tiny little lens**, which doesn't allow in a lot of light – no matter how well designed it is. You don't necessarily need special lighting, but a window providing natural light to your face, together with room lights, is ideal. A simple desk lamp helps. Fluorescent lights often add an unnatural tone, so try recording without those ... even if the result is slightly darker.
- 5) **STEADY AS SHE GOES** – It's often subconscious, but we all do it: Don't rock forward, sway from side to side, or (the worst!) swivel in your chair. Also, if you're sitting at a table or light-weight desk, make sure not to touch or lean on it, which will make the camera vibrate and bounce. Also, turn off auto-focus on your camera! If you don't, every move has the potential to blur you momentarily.