

Interpersonal Skills for a Virtual Work World

Basic interpersonal skills are not enough for virtual work. How and what you communicate will affect the way your interactions will be received, whether you participate in virtual meetings or send technical work by virtual transmittal.

Attending virtual meetings

When speaking face to face with another person in the same physical location, you see facial expressions and hear voice changes that help you understand whether the meeting is going well. In a virtual video meeting, only partial body language is seen, and you can't view subtle behaviors that give clues to how the meeting is going.

Virtual audio meetings hinder conversations even further. Not seeing any body language limits your ability to evaluate how other participants react to what you say. For example:

- A coworker's shaking foot or twisting hands can signify nervousness or anger.
- A flushed face and frequent swallowing are detectable.
- A slight smile or frown can be observed.
- Changes in tone and rhythm of voice are less noticeable.



Expanded interpersonal skills needed for virtual meetings

Active listening is the No. 1 skill needed for virtual meetings. To listen actively, concentrate fully on what each speaker says.

1. **Avoid making judgments.** Don't make assumptions that can damage the conversation.
2. **Give feedback such as "I agree," "I understand," or "What do you think of this idea?"**
3. **Be sociable.** Virtual meetings can become dull without some social interaction. Ask a neutral question such as, "How is your day going?" to get started.
4. **Ask who is speaking if the name is not shown on the screen.** Don't try to guess who is speaking.
5. **Do not interrupt.** Since you can't always determine when another person has stopped talking, allow a few seconds to pass before you speak.
6. **Do not check out mentally.** If you do, you may lose important details.
7. **For video meetings, sit in front of an organized bookcase, framed diploma or picture with a nice scene.** Trade in your pajamas or slouchy tee-shirt for a pressed top and casual pants.

Electronic transmittal of information

When you scan, FAX, send an attachment or transmit information by any electronic method, always prepare a cover sheet that explains what is coming. Show your name and the date, use proper English and format attractively, so you will be viewed as a professional.

Action: You have probably attended several virtual meetings or classes, both video and audio. Name three things that make the meetings easier or more difficult than in-person meetings. Explain why you think this is the case.

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Note to teachers: *Job Ready Career Skills* and *It's for Real Workplace Ethics* focus on skills that improve interpersonal relationships. [Click here](#) to see a Teamwork lesson from *Job Ready Career Skills* and [click here](#) to see a list of all lesson titles. To see a list of topics covered in *It's for Real Workplace Ethics*, [click here](#).

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