DeBerry Group

At Home Video Shoot Tips and Tricks

Recording Better Videos on Your Phone

Check Camera Settings

For optimal results, record at the highest setting possible. Be sure to clear enough storage space on the phone to allow for multiple clips.

Location

Find an area of your home that has clean and minimal elements to act as the background while recording. Clear areas from clutter but keep some objects and/or furniture in the background to add some interest. No need for a stark solid color as the background.

Setup

Unless there is no other option, use the rear-facing camera of the phone, instead of the front-facing, for higher quality. In other words, do not record as a selfie. Have another person, if available, to assist in working the camera.

Place the phone horizontally so that the videos produced allow for more flexibility in editing and usage. Never hold your phone vertically while recording. That should be reserved for social platform specific videos where vertical space is needed.

Framing

Completely fill the frame with your subject but allow enough extra space on both the right and left sides so that editors can crop and zoom freely and still have the primary focal point in the center. Review the sample framing guide to the right to help position.

Lighting

Be sure not to stand in front of a light source (window or lamp). Instead use those sources to provide light behind the camera.

Click the box that appears on screen to focus. After setting the focus of the video, the automatic exposure control will have an easier time making small adjustments if the lighting condition begins to change.

Stabilizing

Keep your phone as steady as possible while recording. If you have a tripod that holds your phone, use it for maximum results or have someone hold your phone with both hands as close as possible to their body as they record the video.

Zoom

Stay physically close to your subject to ensure better image quality and better focus. Do not zoom in while recording, it is harder to control and you will have an opportunity to edit later.

Audio

Remember to keep the phone's microphone that is recording the video completely clear from obstacles (including hands).

Speak clearly and with enough volume to transmit effectively. Try to remain consistent in volume throughout.

Test

Try recording a quick clip to test video and audio quality. Play it back and check to be sure it looks and sounds good before you continue recording.

Webcam Video Best Practices

Visual

The average viewer can tell the difference between a thought out production and somebody who just turned on their computer and started filming themselves.

Visual Insight: Put some thought into it.

Do we expect our webcam videos to be professionally lit and composed? No, but there are ways to make your webcam video look better, and taking some consideration of lighting and composition goes a long way to differentiate your content from the rest.

Visual Don'ts:

- Don't face away from your camera during a webchat.

    - Facing the camera might seem obvious, but sometimes subjects are tempted to read from a second monitor as they conduct a video chat giving their profile instead of looking directly into the camera.

- Don't set the camera below eye level with the subject looking down.

    - Most people sit at a desk and look down at a laptop. Shooting this way only gets your viewers a front-row seat to the subject's nostrils, odd lighting, and baggy eyes.

Yes, your video is not going to look as good as a studio setup, but just the camera position alone can make a huge difference in someone's appearance on a webcam.

Visual Dos:

- Do use objects like a stack of books to raise your computer's webcam to eye level or higher to create a more flattering shot.

Quick Tip: An easy way to tell if your camera is not at eye level is if you can see any part of the subject's nostrils. The less you see of them, the more flattering your shot will be.

Also, think about your background. Having a bookshelf as a background may be fine, but make sure that whatever the viewer sees isn't distracting. Instead of paying attention to the message, viewers might be easily distracted by what's behind the subject.

Visual Don'ts:

- Don't incorporate a funny or trendy virtual background.

  - It's fun to use a virtual background on a video call with coworkers, but if you're creating something professional, a virtual background can come across as unprofessional and distracting.

- Don't have a window as your subject's background.

  - You could probably get away a window behind the subject with a professionally set up camera with proper lenses for depth of field. But with a webcam, external daylight directly behind the subject only produces harsh lighting.

Visual Dos:

- Do use a branded background if available.
  - Now might be a good time to break out your company's branded step and repeat for produced videos for public consumption. It can give your video a professional look.
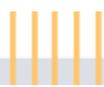
Quick Tip: Displaying your brand logo on a flatscreen television behind you like many of the light night talk shows are doing during quarantine is an excellent way to present a clean, professional look for your background.

Audio

With webcam video, we understand that the result can look a little pixelated. The viewer is willing to forgive a less polished visual considering that it's shot on a webcam. But the number one thing that can't be compromised is the audio.

**Audio Insight:** If they can't hear it, it doesn't matter if they can see it.

Unless you're doing a visual demonstration or communicating with your hands, viewers are just looking at you as a means to hear what you have to say. That's why good audio is vital to your content.

Audio Don'ts:

- Don't sacrifice your audio to prioritize your visuals.
    - If you move away from your camera to get better framing, that means you're moving farther away from the computer's microphone, which can diminish the audio quality.

Audio Dos:

- Do test your computer's microphone first when preparing to do a live recording.
    - Some of these platforms, like Zoom and Microsoft Teams, have tools to test and hear playback on your microphone.
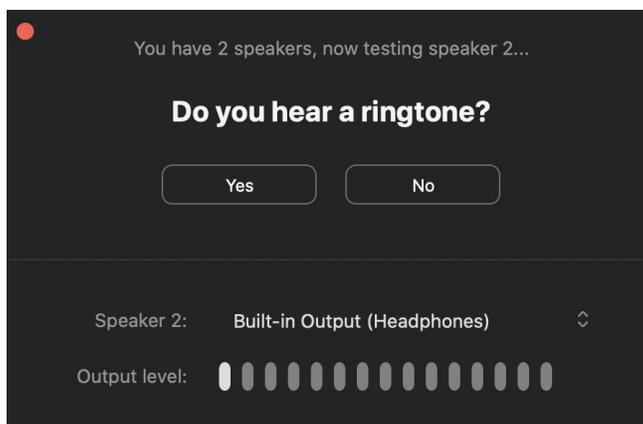
Quick Tip: Test the quality of both the audio and visual on a dry run with a coworker before you do a live presentation.