

## Why and How Students should Turn the Camera On Video Learning Etiquette: Camera, Light, and Reaction



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### A Message to Students

Keeping your cameras on in class keeps the human connection alive, keeping you active and present in class. Most people don't like to see themselves on camera. By turning on the camera, we are showing up for each other and saying, "We're in this together." Please add a headshot as a placeholder when you need to turn off the camera for a short break. Remember to dress and groom appropriately. Let's take advantage of online benefits and combine them with a face-to-face presence.

#### 【学生の皆さんへ】

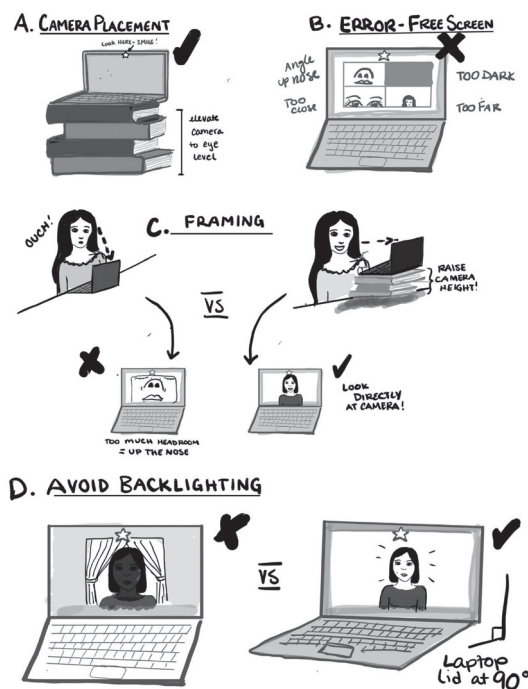
授業中はカメラをオンにして、人との繋がりを感じるようにしましょう。これは、授業に積極的に参加するという事です。確かに、自分の姿を画面に映すことには多少の抵抗があると思います。私もそうです。ただ、通常の教室での授業と同じように、お互いに顔を合わせて、一緒に楽しい授業にしていきましょう。席を外すためにカメラをオフにしなければならない場合に備えて、代わりに顔写真が表示されるように設定しましょう。服装や身なりを整えることも忘れないでください。オンラインのメリットを活用するとともに、オンラインでも対面にいるかのように感じられるよう心がけましょう。

# Visual Etiquette

FOR PROPER WEB CAMERA PLACEMENT

ビデオ会議の場合、机の上にノートパソコンを置いたままではカメラの位置が低すぎます。カメラアングルが低いと見ばえが悪く、適切ではありません。本などを下に敷いて、ノートパソコンのカメラを目の高さまで上げ、アイコンタクトが取れるようにしましょう。話すときは画面ではなく、カメラを見て話してください。

遠すぎず、近すぎず、腹部から胸のあたりまでがフレームに収まるように座ってください。反射光が最も顔の見ばえが良くなります。影ができるのを防ぐために、カメラには光源（窓からの日差しやデスクライトなど）が直接入り込まないように気を付けてください。



【図1】適切なウェブカメラの配置

## Why and How Students should Turn the Camera On

As a teacher, my aim is to ensure that I teach students something fun, new, useful, and interesting that they can use in class and the real world. I want to train my students to be confident and visible at all times. Considering the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially on physical meetings, many functions of business, learning, and other social engagements have shifted to virtual platforms. Technology has aided in the eventual facilitation of virtual meetings with various platforms, i.e. *Microsoft Teams* and *Zoom*, allowing for multiple users to engage while seeing each other. By offering the visibility function, learning for schools can be executed and business projects can also be discussed in settings that resemble face to face meetings (Giesbers et al. 2013). Despite the enhanced functionalities offered by the platforms, some users fail to turn on their cameras during online classes or work meetings, leading to ineffective engagement.

In synchronous learning classes, we can teach learners in the live class session as we would in an in-person classroom. The video interactions have become a way of maintaining and building society. However, there are rules of etiquette that the students need to be taught to make this synchronous communication a success. As teachers, we can create awareness and help students understand why we ask them to turn on the cameras.

One of the primary reasons why students feel uncomfortable when they turn on their camera during online video classes is because they feel like they don't look good on video. Students' confidence can be affected by how they are judged on their appearance and their surroundings. However, we can assist them in understanding that enhancing a little bit of their visual

presentation and that of their environs can improve their professionalism. In videoconference, these aspects are crucial. Most students are used to seeing professionally produced video content and not video conferencing. Helping students understand that the main purpose of video conferencing is not entertainment, but achievement of the learning purpose, is crucial.

Being professional could go a long way in encouraging them to be more active and participative through turning on their cameras. Temptation for students to engage in non-class activities is high when the cameras are turned off. I want to help students grow that confidence and understand the benefits of looking better on camera, which will encourage them to turn on their cameras. This will help them get accustomed to video learning, while eliminating anxiety among students.

More importantly, in these modern times, new systems have to be researched and then integrated into functional systems that are adaptable by Japanese students. First, learners need to understand the basic principles such as courtesy and respect. People want to know who they are communicating with and thus an introduction is essential (Chun-hua, 2019). It is crucial to let the students know that manners matter in videoconferencing. After instilling these basic etiquettes, we then have consensus regarding expectations of classroom conduct.

The first objective is to create a learning environment that enhances learners' confidence levels. A collaborative online learning system is preferable as learners are flexible, free to engage, and free to participate. Enhancing how students interact, exploring new ideas, and showing their faces during video conferencing boosts their learning experiences (Hopper, 2014).

As a measure of courtesy and respect, students need to be mentally and physically prepared to interact in a two-way video class. Preliminary preparations (i.e. taking a shower, tidying up their space, applying makeup, shaving, or fixing their hair) readies the students for face to face encounters. In particular, routine face to face interaction can assist a student's psychological well-being. During these pandemic times, interpersonal interaction has been negatively affected, leading to smaller support systems.

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## Visual learning benefits to students

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There are multiple visual aspects involved in video conferencing: how the students see the instructor, their presence and body language interpretations in a class among peers, and eye contact. Videoconferencing provides visual contact amongst participants -- something which is far more impactful when compared to audio alone (Hopper, 2014). In addition, when a student has the inkling that he is being watched and observed on an online platform, he is likely to have a longer attention span, which translates to better assimilation of the subject matter. Maul et al. (2018) also noted that video technologies may strengthen collaborations between students and teachers, propelling students to persist in their program of study in an online video class. If students know what these expectations are and why they exist, they can focus and keep their webcams on at all times. This will more likely

succeed when there are consequences and implications to follow, as are often presented in the rules of engagement for an online class (Lenkaitis, 2019).

### Being present creates one-on-one communication

Video conferencing when student's cameras are off is similar to not being present in class. Students can be tempted to think they aren't in a real classroom. There is always a temptation for students to engage in non-class related activity. The instructor needs to maintain their presence at all times while also engaging students as in a face to face classroom. When students present a blank screen, they will tend to lose focus and ultimately not follow the online class (Akkil et al. 2018). As educators, we are required to train learners who are not driven to learn on their own, and this can be achieved when we are able to virtually see them during class. They might not have established self-learning practices and therefore simulating some of the real-class experiences would help them to pay attention and remain active participants (Wong et al. 2019).

With videoconferencing, learners are more approachable to their classmates and their instructors (Shahmohammadi, 2014). Students need to understand that by watching only and not turning the cameras on, it will disorient their focus and they won't benefit from the one on one communication. This could help some groups of students improve their understanding of subject matter. This can also help reduce the feeling of social isolation, which students may feel as a result of not being taught in-person. Alluding to this, Ali & Kohun (2007) noted that a major benefit of using video technologies for teaching is that it could mitigate feelings of isolation and generate greater student motivation, which may increase intrinsic motivation.

### Eye contact has been shown to improve engagement

Increased engagement is vital for achievement of learning objectives, and with an efficient online class engagement, instructors can offer efficient lessons based on the perception of students' understanding. We commonly make the mistake of looking at the person on the screen instead of looking at the camera when communicating. Eye contact has been shown to improve audience engagement and, in some instances, creates a sense of authority while the teacher is speaking and ensures the students are more focused on learning (Sutterlin, 2018). Just like in face to face meetings, when the camera is well-aligned to the eye level, the audience perceives it as an eye to eye engagement, increasing communication efficacy (Sutterlin, 2018). In most cases, this requires that teachers encourage their students to put their devices at that eye level and turn on the cameras. This creates direct communication connections.

Students are more likely to remain focused and feel more engaged in the class, and thus enhance their learning, as the teachers can effectively recognize students' body language and adjust online lectures accordingly. Notably, eye contact is a crucial element in an online setting, just as in interpersonal encounters. So this is enhanced by looking directly at the camera on your laptop at eye

level or at least being close-by. When on video, teachers should look at the webcam, not their screen. This is the virtual equivalent of making eye contact.

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## Body language and reactions enable instructors to understand student comprehension

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Body language is essential while communicating. The instructor has to maintain their body language to professional standards and students need to use their body language to show the lecturer if they understand (i.e. nodding their heads). This can only be achieved if the camera is turned on (Sutterlin, 2018). Body language can include use of gestures, both facial and hand gestures, and how students use these gestures can inform the instructor about the student's level of comprehension, enabling the lecturer to alter lessons as needed (Lim & Pyun, 2019). The distance from the camera also matters. It's important that the students align themselves at distance where their head and shoulders are visible, somewhere between mid-abdomen and mid-chest (Hopper, 2014).

## Lighting provides the ambience necessary for learning

Light is very important to ensure that everyone can see each other and interact with each other. Proper lighting enhances video quality. Students must ensure that no light is directed towards the webcam (Akkil et al. 2018), as this darkens the video. It should be directed towards the face from either behind the camera, at an angle that is slightly behind the camera, or on top of the camera. A moderately diffused light (desk light with the light bouncing off the wall) is most useful. Use of natural lighting when applicable (i.e. sitting while facing a window) is also efficient. With this, students can feel more confidence turning their cameras on as they won't feel like their camera quality is low, thus increasing engagement (Akkil et al. 2018).

## Backdrop organization increases confidence levels

To avoid being ridiculed by peers, some may decide not to turn their cameras on. Ask students to consider their background before the camera is on (Giesbers et al. 2013). What does it communicate? What can you do in 15 minutes to stage the space? Environments behind the student need to be as plain as possible, removing the fear of students that the camera is showing a personally messy background. Students can use a virtual backdrop if needed. However, some students prefer having a staged context showing their interests and hobbies, which is perfectly okay as long as it enhances their confidence and doesn't negatively affect learning objectives (Giesbers et al. 2013).

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## Conclusions

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Teachers are responsible to initiate new learning systems and visual leaning etiquette that

contributes to a better learning environment. A comfortable learning environment can be encouraged where students feel more visually present. Also, they can be heard in video learning engagements, eliminating the notion of students wanting to hide behind dark screens. This new culture and etiquette will prepare students for online job interviews and provide skills for online job hunting techniques. Professionalizing class experiences will create a foundation for students to succeed in the future. They can learn online engagement through visual art preparedness, which also enhances their confidence levels. Essentially, the instructors are able to effectively enhance the confidence levels of the learners as they learn remotely. Furthermore, there is evident improvement in perception of academic learning and contributing to knowledge gain among the students who are introduced to various technology and social concepts in the course of learning through video conferencing.

Students who turn their camera off during class sessions may suffer from low self-confidence. They may be uncomfortable engaging in video sessions, though with time, and through the encouragement of their instructors and faculty, they can gain confidence.

This could be included in the syllabus: Online Etiquette Guidelines. Just like a formal class, rules and etiquette are essential to ensure students succeed. If faculty haven't drawn up rules and guidelines of etiquette, the instructor needs to write them and encourage students to engage effectively within the rules.

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