

Working Well: Guidelines for virtual meetings





UBC Health & Wellbeing

Working well: Guidelines for Virtual Meetings

Virtual meetings can sometimes be more fatiguing than face to face meetings as we work harder to process non-verbal cues, tone of voice, and body language, while being cognizant of our own communication and learning new technologies.

In light of an increased need for screen time in our professional and personal lives, the following guidelines act as a tool in managing screen fatigue – whether you attend or organize virtual meetings.

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Top 5 tips for wellbeing in virtual meetings:

1. Take a few moments before or after the meeting to connect socially.
2. Take five minutes before or after your meeting to review meeting information, refresh yourself, take a few deep breaths, and stretch.
3. Avoid multitasking during meetings as this takes additional mental resources, contributing to fatigue and eye strain.
4. Take frequent micro-breaks from the screen. Look 20 feet away, for 20 seconds every 20 minutes.
5. Computer monitors should be approximately arm's length away and the top line of text should be at your eye height. Monitors can be even further away if you can comfortably read the font size, which should be adjusted as needed.



If you're scheduling virtual meetings:

- Consider if the virtual meeting is necessary or if another medium may work better.
- Send out an agenda or purpose of discussion in advance.
- Schedule shorter meetings.

Accessing mental health supports:

- UBC [Employee and Family Assistance Program](#) (EFAP) plan members and their dependents can contact Lifeworks by Morneau Shepell at 1-800-387-4765



Tips for meeting attendees

Managing time

- Practice self-compassion: while working remotely you may be experiencing an integration of your work and personal life, while missing an in-person connection with colleagues.
- Block off chunks of time in your calendar to protect some working hours and lunches from virtual meeting invites.
- Take five minutes before or after your meeting to:
 - Review your agenda/purpose and notes
 - Refresh your water or coffee
 - Enjoy a nutritious snack
 - Stand up, stretch, go outside or move around. [UBC Recreation](#) has provided ways to help you stay active at home such as live movement sessions and virtual workouts. Join [Zoom Ergo Your Posture session](#) every Wednesday at 10am or access a recorded video any time. Review [Ergo Your Posture guide](#) for tips on stretches.
 - Take a few deep breaths.
- Take a few moments before or after the meeting to connect socially.
- Avoid multitasking during meetings as this takes additional mental resources, contributing to fatigue and eye strain. Minimize distractions by turning off notifications on your phone and other devices.

Visual Ergonomics

- **Screen breaks.** Take frequent micro-breaks. Look 20 feet away, for 20 seconds every 20 minutes.
- **Screen distance.** The closer your screen is to your eyes, the harder your eyes need to work to focus. Computer monitors should be approximately arm's length away and they can be even further if you can comfortably read the font size.
- **Font Size.** Increase your font size so that you can comfortably read the screen without squinting or leaning forward. Trying to focus on small font is not only more tiring for your eyes but is also more tiring mentally.
- **Screen height.** Your natural line of sight is slightly downward. Positioning your monitor or screen too high will cause you to look up which will decrease your blink rate and expose more of your eyeball to the atmosphere and this can contribute to dry eyes. The top line of text on your computer monitor should be at approximately eye height with your neck neutral and your ears over your shoulders. If your monitor can be angled back, you can position it a bit lower which will be a bit easier on your eyes.
- **Staying hydrated.** Your blink rate naturally slows down when looking at a digital screen and this means that your eyes are more susceptible to drying out. Staying hydrated is beneficial for general eye health and has the added benefit of nudging you to get up more frequently to refresh your water glass.
- **Screen Time & Circadian Rhythm.** There is ongoing research on the impact of blue light from LED screens on our eye health and circadian rhythm. Blue light before bed may interfere with sleep. At



present, it is generally recommended that we limit screen time 1 to 2 hours before bed. If this is not possible, try putting your device on nighttime mode or download software such as f.lux to limit the amount of blue light emitted from your device. Please note that the effectiveness of this is still being researched, and therefore the best advice is to limit screen time before bed.

- **Total Screen Time.** Most of us have significantly increased our screen time since moving to remote work. Try to make a point of planning non-screen time activities.
- **Healthcare Provider.** Follow-up with your healthcare provider, as needed.

For detailed guidelines on Visual Ergonomics review the [Visual Ergonomics Guide](#).

Tips for meeting organizers

- As with in-person meetings, consider if the virtual meeting is necessary, or if another medium (e.g. email, instant messaging) may work better.
- Consider the meeting purpose. Set and send an agenda or discussion items in advance. This will help you stay organized and determine the need for a meeting.
- Allow for space between meetings by scheduling shorter meetings and avoiding back-to-back meetings for attendees.
- Be mindful of when you are booking meetings, such as lunch hours, as well as scheduling meetings that fall outside of your team's core work hours.
- Open meetings with a check-in, an activity, or a quick movement break. During longer video meetings, quick movement breaks are encouraged. [UBC Recreation](#) can join meetings to lead a short movement break. Otherwise, consider walking meetings.
- Encourage cutting video feeds when and where appropriate. Not only can this improve the online connection, it may also help conserve the energy required to be "present" on video.

Tips for team leaders

- Rather than using videoconferencing for all meetings, consider cutting video feeds. Scheduling a non-video call may be more effective in 1:1 check-ins, supervision and quick updates with staff, as a call can be less intense than screen interaction.
- Consider using project management platforms and shared files to reduce the need for videoconferencing.



Available supports at UBC

There are a number of health and wellbeing resources available at the university to help you deal with the virtual meeting exhaustion and other accompanying health and wellbeing concerns:

- [UBC mental health supports](#)
- [UBC extended health benefits](#)
- [UBC Ergonomics](#)
- [Building Mental Health: tools and resources for managers, heads, and deans](#)
- [Helping a student in distress](#)
- [Helping a colleague in distress](#)
- [UBC Employee and Family Assistance Program \(EFAP\)](#) plan members and their dependents can contact Lifeworks by Morneau Shepell at 1-800-387-4765

Further Information

Learn about [Working During COVID-19](#) as well as [learning and development](#) during this time.

See <https://covid19.ubc.ca/> for university wide updates.

For external resources on virtual meetings fatigue visit:

- [Harvard Business Review](#)
- [BBC](#)
- [Ocean 5 Strategies](#)

Contact

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