

The Presenter Prep Guide

How to look and sound professional on your next webinar — whether we're producing it or you're running it yourself.

From the team at **DFW Live Stream** · We've produced hundreds of hours of live events and webinars. This is everything we tell our presenters before they go live.

If you only have five minutes, do these six things.

- 1 Use an external microphone, headset or earbuds if possible.
- 2 Put your camera at eye level.
- 3 Put your brightest light in front of you.
- 4 Choose a clean, quiet background.
- 5 Use Ethernet if it's available.
- 6 Join early and follow your producer's instructions.

Got another 10 minutes? The rest of this guide explains why these matter and how to improve each one.

01 Audio first. Always.

Viewers will forgive average video. They will not sit through bad audio.

Use the best microphone you already have. A headset, USB microphone or lavalier (clip-on) microphone will usually sound better than a laptop microphone — simply because it gets the microphone closer to your voice. You don't need to buy anything expensive; you just need the mic near your mouth.

BEST

External mic or quality headset

USB mic, lav, or a headset you already own

GOOD

Earbuds with a microphone

Wired is the safest choice if you have both

LAST RESORT

Laptop microphone

Picks up your room as much as your voice

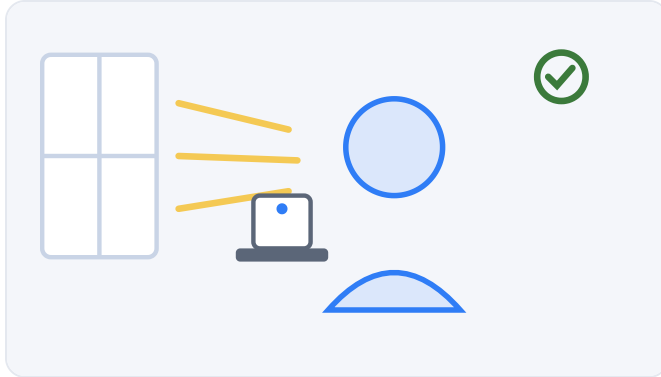
- **Get the mic close.** Around 6–12 inches from your mouth is the zone for most mics.
- **Reduce echo.** A rug, curtains, a couch, even a closed door make a bigger difference than any software filter.
- **Listen for background noise.** AC vents, fans, that fridge. Sit still for 10 seconds and actually listen.
- **Turn off notifications.** Phone on do-not-disturb, computer notifications off — pings live forever in recordings.

PRO TIP Record 30 seconds of yourself talking in the exact spot you'll present from, then play it back with headphones. You'll hear exactly what your audience will hear.

02 Face the light.

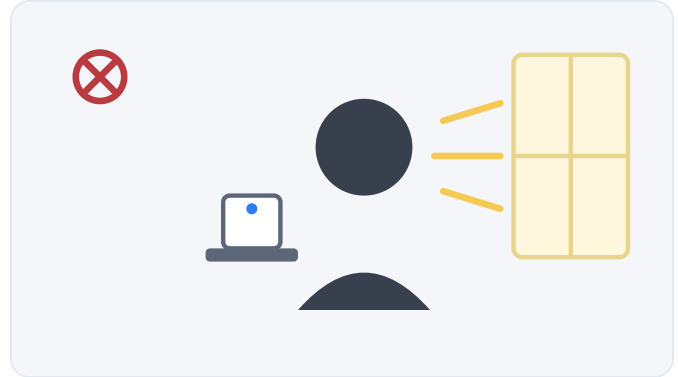
Cameras are only as good as the light you give them.

The brightest light in the room should usually be in front of you, illuminating your face. Avoid sitting with a bright window behind you.



GOOD

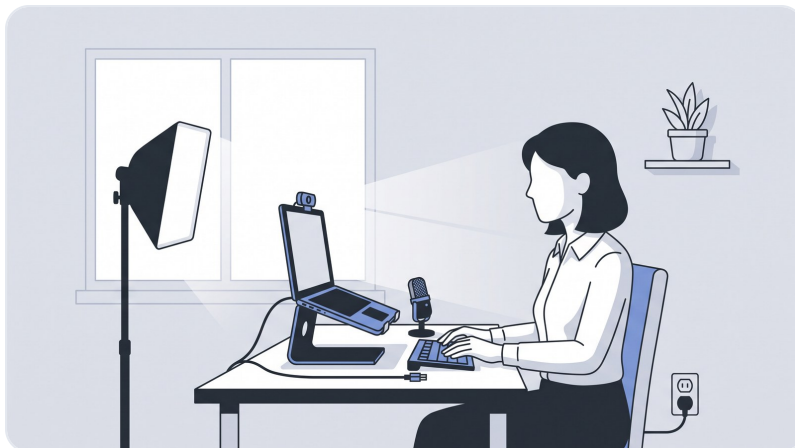
Presenter facing the window or light — face is lit



AVOID

Bright window behind you — you become a silhouette

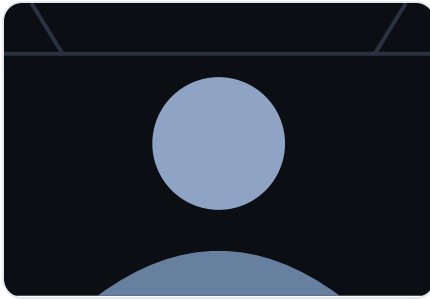
- **Face a window if you can.** Soft daylight from in front is the best free light there is.
- **No window? Put a lamp behind your laptop**, pointed at your face. Bounce it off a wall if it's harsh.
- **Watch for overhead lights** — they cast shadows under your eyes. Turn them down if your face light is doing the work.



The whole setup in one picture: camera at eye level · brightest light in front · mic close · Ethernet and power plugged in · clean background with a little depth.

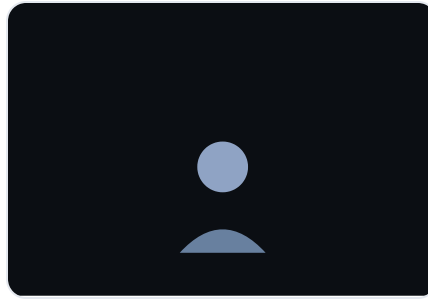
03 Camera height & framing

Ten seconds of setup can separate "professional" from "laptop in my lap."



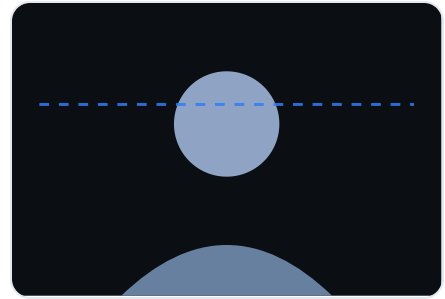
TOO LOW

Camera looks up at you



TOO FAR

You lose connection with the audience



JUST RIGHT

Eye level · shoulders in the shot · a little headroom

- **Camera at eye level.** Stack the laptop on books if you have to. A camera looking up at you always reads as casual. Raising a laptop? Use an external keyboard or mouse if needed so you're not reaching awkwardly upward.
- **Frame yourself like a professional interview:** eyes about a third of the way down the frame, a little headroom and shoulders visible.
- **Arm's-length distance.** Too close is uncomfortable; too far loses connection.
- **Clean background.** Tidy beats cluttered; a little depth behind you looks best. Use a real background when possible — virtual backgrounds can create edge artifacts around hair and movement.

If you have more than one camera

Use the camera that gives you the cleanest image at eye level. A technically better camera placed too low is often worse than a simple webcam positioned correctly.

Check your video settings

Use the desktop app whenever possible and confirm the correct camera is selected. If your organization has HD video enabled, make sure HD is turned on. Your producer can confirm the appropriate setting during the technical check.

PRO TIP Look at the *lens* when you're making a big point — not your own picture on screen. It reads as eye contact to your audience.

04 Your internet is part of the show

The best-lit, best-mic'd presenter in the world still freezes on bad Wi-Fi.

Reliability matters more than maximum speed. A steady, ordinary connection beats a fast one that hiccups.

- **1. Ethernet — best option.** A wired connection is the most reliable choice when it's available.
- **2. Strong Wi-Fi near your router or access point** — usually fine if Ethernet isn't practical.
- **3. Mobile hotspot — backup only.**

- **If your connection is limited or unstable,** avoid large downloads, cloud backups and heavy streaming during the webinar.
- **Restart your computer** within the hour before the webinar. It clears more mystery problems than anything else.
- **Plug into power** and close unnecessary apps and browser tabs.

Five minutes before you join

- ☐ Plug your computer into power
- ☐ Close unnecessary apps and browser tabs
- ☐ Pause heavy cloud sync/backups if necessary
- ☐ Turn on Do Not Disturb
- ☐ Silence your phone
- ☐ Open your presentation/materials
- ☐ Have water nearby

05 Slides that work on a screen share

Slides that look great on a projector often die on a webinar. Small screens change the rules.

- **Bigger text than feels natural.** Part of your audience is watching on a phone. If it feels slightly too big to you, it's right.
- **One idea per slide.** Dense slides make people read instead of listen — and you want them listening to you.
- **16:9 format, high contrast, simple animations.** Transitions that shine in the boardroom stutter over a stream.

VIDEOS IN SLIDES If we're producing the webinar, send video files to us separately. Don't rely on playing embedded videos from your slide deck unless we've tested them beforehand. We'll choose the cleanest playback method for the platform.

06 On camera

Three rules cover most of it.

Energy up 10%.

Be yourself, just slightly more engaged. Cameras tend to flatten energy.

Slow down.

Your pauses feel much longer to you than they do to your audience. Give important points time to land.

Look at the lens when the point matters.

That reads as eye contact to the audience.

- **Have water within reach** — and off camera.
- **Say people's names during Q&A.** "Great question from Maria —" makes a broadcast feel like a conversation.
- **When something small glitches, keep going.** Audiences take their cue from you: if you don't treat it like a crisis, it wasn't one.

SKIP THIS MISTAKE Don't open with five minutes of housekeeping and "we'll get started as more people join." Start strong, on time, with the reason everyone showed up.

07 Don't rehearse the speech. Rehearse the seams.

Every smooth webinar you've ever watched was smooth because of what happened before it started.

You know your content. What actually needs rehearsing is the *seams* — the moments where things change hands:

- **Who opens** the webinar, and how.
- **Speaker handoffs** — who follows whom, and on what cue.
- **When slides begin** and who advances them.
- **When videos roll** and who plays them.
- **How Q&A works** — who's watching the questions.
- **How the webinar closes.**
- **What happens if someone disconnects** — who carries on, and how they get back in.

HOW THE PROS DO IT On a professionally produced webinar, the producer owns this entire workflow — they join you early, check every mic and camera, walk everyone through the run of show, and drive the broadcast live. The presenter does exactly one thing: presents. That's why professionally produced webinars feel organized instead of improvised.

● The Day-Of Checklist

Print this page. Ten minutes of checking beats an hour of apologizing.

60 MINUTES BEFORE

- ☐ Restart computer
- ☐ Plug into power
- ☐ Close unnecessary apps
- ☐ Turn off notifications
- ☐ Connect Ethernet if available

30 MINUTES BEFORE

- ☐ Join using the link your producer provided
- ☐ Test camera and microphone
- ☐ Confirm framing and lighting
- ☐ Test slides/media if required
- ☐ Confirm the run of show

5 MINUTES BEFORE

- ☐ Phone silent
- ☐ Water nearby
- ☐ Final camera check
- ☐ Take a breath
- ☐ Energy up 10%
- ☐ Look into the lens for your opening

And if you'd rather have someone handle the production side for you —
presenter prep, graphics, playback, switching, run of show and the live
broadcast — that's what we do.

You talk. We produce.

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