

# Video Conferencing 101

## Tips for the Early Childhood Field

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Examples of How You Might Use Video Conferencing	Ideas for your Application
1. Coaches, TA specialists, and PD specialists, and consultants might use video conferencing to deliver professional development, technical assistance, and coaching activities.	
2. Teams might use video conferencing for meetings. Such use might reduce travel time and costs, enable a team member to attend from a distance, enable a team to meet more frequently, enable a family to attend, etc.	
3. Supervisors might use video conferencing to observe services over a distance, host or participate in organizational meetings, or to provide reflective supervision.	
4. Home visitors might use video conferencing to deliver virtual home visits. These visits would not replace face-to-face visits, but might supplement them to enable more frequent contact, enable co-visits or consultation/coaching sessions, etc.	
5. Teachers might use video to enable children who are homebound to virtually attend classrooms.	
6. Families might use video conferencing to connect/network with other families for the purposes of family support.	
7. Other	

## General Tips:

Video conferences will be more productive AND satisfying when everyone on the call is prepared and ready to go. This checklist may help you prepare.

Technical Considerations
<input type="checkbox"/> Video conference from a location where there is adequate bandwidth. Whenever possible, use an Ethernet connection and turn off Wi-Fi. When using Wi-Fi, set up as close as you can to the base station.
<input type="checkbox"/> When video conferencing, turn off other computer applications that may be running in the background, including email and browsers, in order to devote all available bandwidth and computer processing power to the video conference. A good way to be sure that background programs are not running in the background is to restart your computer.
<input type="checkbox"/> Set up well, you can produce and receive good sounding, feedback-free audio using your computer's built in microphone and speakers. But you may get the best results by using either a headset with a built-in microphone or a combination microphone/speaker that is designed to eliminate echoing during conferences.
<input type="checkbox"/> Set up any headsets, microphones, speakers, etc. <u>well before</u> the video conference is scheduled to begin. Often, it's not enough to simply plug them in – you will likely need to use the control panel on a PC or the system preferences on a Mac to select the microphone and speakers you will be using and make adjustments. You also might need to select specific settings in the video conferencing application being used.
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes your computer's built-in webcam will work fine, but other times it is best to use an external webcam, for instance when you need flexibility in where you position it or when you need a wide-angle lens to include a number of people sitting at a table.
<input type="checkbox"/> When conferencing from a phone or tablet, keep in mind that you may likely not be able to access all of the features that are available on a laptop or desktop computer, e.g., screen sharing, recording.
Environmental Considerations
<p>Be sure to learn how to make adjustments for a variety of elements, including:</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Privacy:</b> Conference from a room with a door that you can close rather than in a cubicle or public area.
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Lighting:</b> Figure out how to provide the right balance of lighting so that your face isn't in shadows but also isn't overexposed. If your web cam is centered above your monitor (as it should be) the light emanating from your monitor is likely not going to be bright enough to adequately light your face; you may need to use lamps off to the sides or diffused natural lighting from a window to adequately light your image. Also, avoid having bright lights in back of you.
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Sound:</b> Participate in a location that is as quiet as possible and as free as possible from adjacent noise, preferably in a room with a door you can close. If you are not getting good enough results using your computer's built-in microphone and speakers, consider using a headset with a built-in microphone or a combination microphone/speaker that is designed to eliminate echoing during. If you use external speakers, place them behind, rather than in front of your computer. Adjust the volume so that your speakers do not create an echo (this happens when your microphone picks up the sound generated from your speakers).
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Perspective:</b> Adjust your webcam so that it is about eye level and maintain your posture parallel to the webcam; avoid slouching, being off the screen, or broadcasting a skewed or distorted perspective in which you are looking up or down.

- Background:** Participate in a location that is free as possible from distracting, or unsightly, backgrounds.

### Interactional Considerations

- When you are just starting out, spend time experimenting and practicing. Schedule video conferences with friends, family members, or colleagues to practice the technical, environmental and interactional skills needed for successful video conferences.
- Pay attention to eye contact. Position the video conferencing application's window on your display so that the images of the other people in the conference are centered just below your web cam; that way when you are looking at them, it will give more of an appearance that you are establishing eye contact. Important: when you speak, look into your web cam, NOT at the images of the people with whom you are conferencing. Practice alternating your gaze naturally from your web cam to the faces of others. Experiment with the different views that you are able to configure.
- Pay attention to non-verbal communication. Use eye gaze, nods, gestures, and facial expressions to let the folks on the other end know you're listening. Avoid rapid movements to minimize blurred images.
- Be sensitive to turn-taking during conversations. Some situations call for waiting a bit longer between turns than you would in a face-to-face conversation. When there are more than two people on a call, it may be useful to designate a facilitator, or ground rules for speaking. For very large video conferences, a facilitator might mute and unmute participants to avoid constant interruptions.
- Avoid multitasking (i.e., don't).

## Some Features to Look for in a Video Conferencing Platform:

- ❑ Although free platforms are easy on the budget, they often do not provide all of the features that are needed. You may need to budget for a platform that has a cost.
- ❑ Be sure the platform can accommodate the number of people you need to include on a given call.
- ❑ Be sure your calls can be long enough to meet your needs (some free programs have time limits).
- ❑ In some instances it may be useful to record a video conference. If you find this feature useful, choose a platform that enables you to record readily editable video files. Some platforms, such as Vidyo, enable you to record in a variety of quality settings.
- ❑ Be careful about platforms that are supported by advertisements. The ads might not be appropriate for your users.
- ❑ If you need a high level of secure conferencing, choose a platform that can be password protected, locked, and/or encrypted.
- ❑ If you need to be HIPAA compliant, choose a platform that can issue a BAA (Business Associate Agreement). Some applications use HIPAA-grade encryption technology, but do not issue BAAs.
  - HIPAA Regulations: <http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/>
- ❑ Education agencies need to be compliant with FERPA regulations. FERPA regulations have not kept up with the pace of digital communication. It is expected that new regulations and/or clarification of existing regulations pertinent to video conferencing will be forthcoming. In the meanwhile, you can review existing regulations.
  - FERPA Regulations: [http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=25d40e6f3db54bf8154be4f574812b0d&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title34/34cfr99\\_main\\_02.tpl](http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=25d40e6f3db54bf8154be4f574812b0d&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title34/34cfr99_main_02.tpl)

## Sample Video Conferencing Platforms

### Some free video conferencing applications:

- ❑ ooVoo: <http://www.oovoo.com>
- ❑ Skype: <http://www.skype.com>
- ❑ Zoom: <https://www.zoom.us/>
- ❑ Facetime (Apple devices only): <http://www.apple.com/mac/facetime/>
- ❑ Google Hangouts: <http://www.google.com/+/learnmore/hangouts/>

### Many web conferencing applications provide video conferencing functionality, for example:

- ❑ Adobe Connect Pro: <http://www.adobe.com/products/adobeconnect.html>
- ❑ WebEx: [www.webex.com](http://www.webex.com)
- ❑ GoToMeeting: [www.gotomeeting.com](http://www.gotomeeting.com)

### Some video conferencing applications requiring licensing:

- ❑ Zoom: <https://www.zoom.us/>
- ❑ Vidyo: <http://www.vidyo.com/>
- ❑ Nefsis: <http://www.nefsis.com/>

- ❑ Polycom: <http://www.polycom.com/>
- ❑ Cisco: <http://www.cisco.com/c/en/us/solutions/collaboration/video-collaboration/index.html>

## Other Resources

### Illustrations of using video conferencing to virtually include children in preschool classrooms:

- ❑ Ruairi Goes To Preschool:  
[http://www.cde.state.co.us/resultsmatter/RMVideoSeries\\_PracticesHereAndThere.htm#top](http://www.cde.state.co.us/resultsmatter/RMVideoSeries_PracticesHereAndThere.htm#top)
- ❑ Collaborating to Support Aiden:  
[http://www.cde.state.co.us/resultsmatter/RMVideoSeries\\_PracticesHereAndThere.htm#top](http://www.cde.state.co.us/resultsmatter/RMVideoSeries_PracticesHereAndThere.htm#top)
- ❑ Getty's Window To Inclusion: The Chance To Be Just Like Any Other Kid:  
<http://draccess.org/videolibrary/>

### Illustrations of using video conferencing for early intervention home visits and team meetings:

<http://ddc.ohio.gov/video-ei-series>

- ❑ Using Video and Video Conferencing to Enable Team Meetings over Distances
- ❑ Using Facetime to Enhance Team Collaboration
- ❑ A Virtual Home Visit with Liam's Family
- ❑ A Virtual Co-Visit with Straton's Family

### Other sources of tips for videoconferencing:

- ❑ <http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/look-good-on-webcam/>
- ❑ <http://www.ivccommunications.com/tips.asp>
- ❑ <http://www.it.northwestern.edu/videoconferencing/tips.html>
- ❑ [http://anrcs.ucdavis.edu/Information\\_Technology\\_Services/Videoconferencing/Video\\_Conferencing\\_Etiquette\\_and\\_Tips/](http://anrcs.ucdavis.edu/Information_Technology_Services/Videoconferencing/Video_Conferencing_Etiquette_and_Tips/)
- ❑ <http://aut.sagepub.com/content/early/2015/04/18/1362361315575164.abstract>

## For Zoom Users:

Zoom Support Center: <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us>

Zoom Technical Support: <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362003-Zoom-Technical-Support>

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