



# *Navanter*

*Knowledge Bites*

**Engaging online presentation skills  
cheat sheet**



## About the cheat sheet

This is a cheat-sheet to accompany our courses: [How To Deliver Effective Virtual Training](#) and [Running Effective Online Meetings](#). It also works as a stand-alone document to give ideas and best practice to make the transition from face-to-face delivery of training, presentations, and information, to online delivery.

## Key elements of an engaging online delivery

You'll remember from the training courses, that our key goal with virtual deliveries is to maintain, as closely as possible, the human element of your interaction. This is what's required to keep your audience engaged.

There are 5 key areas to focus on for successful virtual delivery:



ROOM LAYOUT



POSTURE AND  
CAMERA POSITION



TONE OF VOICE



INTERACTION



MATERIALS AND  
DESIGN



### Room layout

Although you're remote, room layout is just as important when working online as it is "in person". Delivering content online when you're squashed in between a chest of drawers and a desk is always going to be a challenge, so pay attention to your room layout to set yourself up for success. There are two key reasons for creating the right space around you:

1. It will help you to feel "in the zone" for your delivery, and this will be reflected in the way to speak.
2. Your body language will be more clearly communicated so that your message is more complete.



So, here are Knowledge Bites' top tips for creating space to engage your audience:

- Give yourself plenty of space
  - Ensure you have space to move around, shift position, and really engage with your audience. No-one likes to see a presenter who's rooted to the spot on stage, and the same is true of virtual deliveries. Think about outside reporters on the news – they engage their audience with gestures, indications with their hands, and moving their whole body.
- Keep your hands “liberated”
  - Connected to the previous point, make sure that you can make use of your hands effectively as you present. Keep them free of distractions and use them to add body language to your delivery.
- Keep your background uncluttered if possible
  - This creates a nice clean look, and, when people are looking at you in a small window rather than “real life” it focuses their attention on you rather than your surroundings. If a clean background is impossible, then ensure it is appropriate to the situation.
- Keep a glass of water handy
  - If your throat goes dry and you need a drink, this enables you to remain in camera shot. In a face-to-face delivery, people can follow you with their eyes as you cross a room to pick up your drink. Online, when you disappear from camera shot, you're suddenly absent and the rapport gets broken.
- Make notes on paper as necessary
  - Many people like to make notes on their computer if they think of things as they go through, but this has the disadvantage of creating tapping noises which can bleed into your audio. Keep it “old school” and use a paper and pen. This also becomes one less thing to go wrong technically.



## Posture & camera position

Building on the first element, let's look at how to work with your nearer environment, i.e. your laptop and camera:

- Stand up
  - If at all possible, this is the biggest single thing you can do to make your delivery engaging. Standing up increases your energy levels, helps you to feel like you're giving a "performance", and, in these days of *Zoom Fatigue*, is different to most other online events your participants have attended. If you're only going to make one change to your style, this is the one to make.
- Camera just below eye level
  - Keep your head centred in the camera picture, with it just below eye level, so that you look down very slightly. This increases your ability to use head movements as an expressive tool, and has a more professional look than, for example, looking upwards or to the side.
- Look at the camera (not the screen)
  - One of the hardest things to do, but also the most effective. You want to have eye contact with your participants, and the great thing about virtual delivery is that you can – with all of them at once. However, it's really tough to pull off, because your eyes are attracted towards the person you're talking to, who might be on the opposite side of your screen to your camera. Practise talking to your camera, and consider placing a brightly-coloured sticky note next to it to give you something to focus on.
- Stand a little back so you can use your hands
  - Ensure you can use hand gestures to add energy and punctuation to your delivery. Ensure you don't knock your laptop off your desk in the process. Nothing else to say!
- Exaggerate facial expressions
  - In a face-to-face presentation, it's natural that we exaggerate our facial expressions for those people at the back for whom we're 5cm tall. In virtual, we're that big (or less) to everyone. If you're happy, give a big smile; if you're making a serious point, exaggerate your frown. This helps you get the human element across, even if it feels odd as you do it.



## **Tone of voice**

The voice is our main tool when presenting to a virtual audience, so it's important we use it to its full capacity. Here are our tips to make the most of this important virtual delivery asset:

- Imagine you're talking to a "real" room
  - It's tempting to talk to your laptop, which might be 70cm away. Although people will hear you perfectly well, it leads to a very low-energy delivery, as we speak quietly and a little too calmly. Imagine you're talking to a physical room and project your voice to the back, and you'll be surprised what it does to your energy levels.
- Exaggerate your volumes and pitch changes
  - The technology used in virtual delivery compresses the dynamic range of our voices to get it across the internet. In order to maintain the same effect with your listeners as you intend, make your "louds" louder and your "quiets" quieter.
- Slow down just a little
  - Some people might have slower connections than others, and to ensure they don't miss things if you freeze briefly, speaking a little slower is a real help.
- Use pauses
  - This is a technique used by the best virtual presenters for dramatic effect. We want to suck our participants into our stories, and leaving them hanging on for a key point can really increase their engagement.



## **Interaction**

If we're looking to keep our audience engaged in what we say, managing interactions is vital, and harder to achieve than in face-to-face situations:

- Some people will dominate
  - Be aware of this, and consider how you will manage these more enthusiastic members of the audience.



- Use visual props if possible
  - Can you bring in any visual elements that you physically hold up to the camera? This increases the engagement the audience feels from you.
- Make use of the breakout rooms
  - The more content you can deliver in break-out rooms, the better, as small groups are naturally more engaged on an individual basis.
- Encourage speaking rather than chat
  - This depends on your group size, but if appropriate, it gives you one less thing to think about, and keeps the variety going for participants.



## Materials & design

If you intend to use PowerPoint™ slides, then there are a few things to think about as you put them together.

- In virtual, more is less
  - This sounds odd, but in fact, having more slides is a good idea, but make each one simpler. If you have a complex slide which can be broken down into four simple slides, then do it – it will help hugely to keep people engaged, and provides a welcome “change of scenery” when you need it to.
- Use subtle animation
  - Don't over-do the animations, but a few light-touch transitions and effects can provide engaging movement for the audience.
- Get used to annotating
  - Writing on a slide is a lot harder than writing on a whiteboard or flipchart – buy a [pen mouse](#), practise using it, and be creative with what you do!

## Further support from Knowledge Bites

As well as offering a wide range of training courses, we offer the following support services at Knowledge Bites:

- Expert facilitation of your virtual sessions to your clients
- Virtual course design
- One-to-one coaching

For more information, please email [info@knowledgebites.co.uk](mailto:info@knowledgebites.co.uk) or use the [contact page on our website](#).



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