

Guidelines for Audio Teleconferencing

First, face-to-face meeting is always preferred. Even with the best high-quality HDTV, a remote site is still remote. The important thing is that where interaction is needed, *participation be invited, welcomed, requested, and appreciated.*

Moderators, Facilitators, and Chairpersons:

1. Have a contact person if the remote group is small (1 to 3 people) or a site facilitator if the group is larger.
2. Distribute an agenda and supporting materials (paper handouts, slide show, PowerPoint, video, etc.) to the contact or facilitator well ahead of the conference.
3. Have an agenda and follow it. Start and end on time! You may have timed phone access and could be cut off.
4. Other than for social requirements, stay on topic. Remember, line charges may be adding up.
5. Begin the meeting with a welcome to the remote site(s), and ask them to acknowledge themselves and briefly describe their setting and/or role. (“We’d like to welcome a group in Socorro who will be joining this meeting. Would you introduce yourselves, and tell us a bit about what you do there, please.”)
6. Make sure speakers identify themselves each time they talk if there is more than one person at the site (and their location if more than one remote site). Interrupt and ask, “Would you identify yourself and your location, please?” It’s important that everyone know who is speaking.
7. Have an agenda item (or more) from the remote site(s).
8. Use questions like “What do you folks in Socorro think about this idea?” “How will this proposal impact Socorro?” “Can we get some ideas from Socorro about how you might be able to participate in this idea?” “Socorro, are you still there—we haven’t heard from you on this?”
9. If the larger group divides into smaller discussion groups, have the remote site(s) form their groups, hit their “mute” buttons, do their group stuff, and report out like the other groups do.
10. “Thank you, Joan, for your input.”
11. Remind people to speak clearly and toward, but not necessarily into, the mikes.
12. But you don’t have to SHOUT!
13. If there are more than 3 or 4 participants at a remote site, have a local site facilitator and communicate with that person rather than the entire group. (“John, are there any questions from Socorro?”)

Participants:

1. If you’re using a handset, use a corded phone, not a cell or cordless phone.
2. If you’re using a handset, keep the mike away from your mouth when you’re not speaking, especially if you’re a “heavy breather” or a “teeth grinder.” (You probably don’t know if you are and it can be *very* distracting.)
3. If you do a lot of conferencing using a handset, consider purchasing a *headset*. It’ll prevent “ear fatigue.”

4. Speak clearly and with inflection (people cannot see your facial expressions or gestures—they only hear your words and how you use them. If you're excited, people cannot see your excitement, they can only hear your excitement through your words and inflections.)
5. If there is more than one person at your site, identify yourself each time you speak.
6. If there is more than one remote site, identify your location, as well.
7. Assume that all microphones are always open. Avoid local cross-talk, even whispered. ("That's one of the dumbest questions I've ever heard.") The remote side will probably hear you. Use the "mute" button for local conversations.
8. If there is a site facilitator, signal them when you have a comment or question.
9. Don't drum your fingers or tap pencils on the table or near the mikes, and *quietly* shuffle your papers.
10. Speak up, but you DON'T need to SHOUT!