

# Eight Tips to Help You Bloom on Zoom

Scott J. Allen

Educator, Speaker, Author/Scholar, Entrepreneur, Podcaster

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My 12-year-old and I were excited to participate in an online lecture and discussion this afternoon. The topic was something we both love, and the speaker is one of the top experts in the field. We settled in to have our minds blown. But after five minutes of listening, my son moved his face out of the screenshot and whispered, “*Dad, can we turn this off?*”

And I immediately knew why. The speaker’s delivery was dry, fumbling, and confusing. He was slow, monotone, and nervous - this may have been his first Zoom rodeo - but he felt underprepared and, frankly, unprofessional.

Like you, I have become intimately familiar with Zoom in these last few weeks. From a friend’s male colleague who entered a Zoom chat with his shirt off to a student who sat in front of a bright window (rendering her frame a spooky shadow) to people who forget to mute their mics or let their cat walk across the keyboard nonstop... I’ve learned that the ability to lose credibility on Zoom is greater than it is in real life.

So, as someone who teaches business and coaches leadership and presentation skills for a living, let me share a few suggestions that might help you be an ace Zoom-er.

1. **Prepare your space** — Your space should be clean, warm, and well lit. People tend to go one way or the other here, plopping down in front of the whitest wall in their house or setting up in the middle of their messy kitchen. Finally, make sure the camera is well-spaced from your face and at the correct angle (no one wants to look up your nose).
2. **Test your sound** — If you are using your computer's audio, it can create a cavernous effect - especially if you are in a bigger room. If you have AirPods or a headset, listeners can better hear you present. When you are not speaking, mute your microphone.
3. **Know your non-verbals** — Be sure your verbals and non-verbals are aligned. If you say you're excited, it makes perfect sense to smile! Avoid touching your face, rocking back and forth, or habitually staring off to the side. Make eye contact with the audience - this means looking into the camera when speaking.
4. **Voice is critical** — Vocal variety (variation in pace, tone, pause, volume, and pitch) is critical. You are telling a story and working to engage the audience. Scroll through your audience and see whether or not they are engaged.
5. **Switch it up** — If you are leading the meeting or have a presenting role, share visuals, website pages, slides, videos, and ask the audience questions. Just like a face-to-face experience, people want to be involved and engaged. It's easy to share your screen - use it to present visuals that enhance your messaging.
6. **Warmth & energy** — Your warmth and energy will transfer to the audience. If your energy is low, the audience will be low energy as well. Be intentional about how you show up.
7. **Hand gestures** — Use of hand gestures is a great way to keep the audience engaged. Just remember that similar to when you are at a podium, they need to be a little higher than usual - near your chest.
8. **Space fillers** — Similar to a presentation with a live audience, be aware of your space fillers (or [filler phrases](#)). Words like Um, Ah, Like, So, or Annnd can distract from your message.

One final note. Remember YOU are always “on” as a participant as well. Your non-verbals matter. Your participation matters. Your attention matters. Everyone can see if you are locked in or checked out. And that could have ramifications for you and your career.

We are *all* learning rapidly. And I will write again soon as I observe more and more. For now, keep this list next to your computer and start practicing. I know I will be.

**What are you seeing? What suggestions do you have? I would love to hear your thoughts!**

*“Light travels faster than sound. That’s why certain people appear bright until you hear them speak.” – Albert Einstein*