Video Selfies: look better in webcam videos

1. Have more light in front of you than behind.

Windows. Avoid recording with a large, bright window (or any bright source of light) directly behind you. This confuses the light meter in the camera and your face will appear dark. The camera will also have a harder time focusing. Close the blinds or curtains. Better yet, if you are using a laptop, turn and face the window, (assuming the sun is not shining directly into the window).

Lamps. Ideally, try to use two lights, each one slightly above and to the right or left of your screen. If you don't have a lamp, see if you can borrow one. If you wear glasses, check for distracting reflections bouncing off them. Or consider taking them off if you can. If the lamp light seems too bright, you can clip a tissue to the lampshade to soften it. If you have a second monitor, it can also add light on one side of your face. Pull it toward you, open a blank Word document and turn up the brightness.

More light behind you means that you will not be well lit.

2. Place the camera just above eye-level.

Place the camera just above eye-level for a natural perspective.

Perspective. Having the camera at eye-level and the lens at 90 degrees will make the perspective seem more natural and reduce distortion (e.g. big forehead or big chin). If you are using a laptop, try placing it on a box to raise the height of the camera. You can usually adjust the height of your monitor and don't forget that you can raise and lower your chair.

3. Cameras are people too.

Eye contact. Remember that you are talking to humans, although it may not feel like it. Even if you are making a recording, it feels the same to the viewer. As much as you can, look at the camera, not at your keyboard or notes. This will take practice. To remind yourself, try placing a sticky note with a smiley face or tape a photo of a family member very close to the camera lens.

Get closer. The closer you are to the camera, the better it can see you (i.e. meter for correct exposure and focus). You don't want to make people uncomfortable by being too close, but you also don't want your head to be tiny in relationship to the rest of the shot. Don't move back and forth a lot or that will throw the camera in and out of focus and distract viewers.

4. What IS that thing?

Background. Remember to take a moment to look at what is in the background of your shot. You don't have to clean the whole room, just move things that could prove distracting or look unprofessional out of view. Keep in mind that human eyes are drawn to brighter and moving objects, (it's not just true for babies).

5. Watch this nifty video.

It has good illustrations of the difference these tips can make. http://wistia.com/blog/snazzy-on-webcam

Need More Help?

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