

Working from home: Tweaking this can help you sound sharper in video meetings

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Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

Working from home now means taking lots of virtual meetings. And if you find that your colleagues can't hear you very well, or complain about distracting background noise (think kids, music, doorbells), we've got a great tip for you.

Do what pros do: Invest in a microphone.

Think the cast of "Friends" was captured by the [internal microphone](#) on the [video cameras](#)? Of course not. Every actor wore a microphone, and there were other mics all over the set as well.

You're not in "Friends," but you are co-starring in a [video production](#). Let's call it "The Office....at home."

You can't network in the office, show off, suck up, corner a superior one on one. So this is your only real avenue to shine.

Why not invest just a little in yourself to be better represented with improved audio?

"If you want to come across being your best, audio is the single most important thing in video," says

Larry Becker, the author of "Great on Camera." "If people can't hear you, they'll get frustrated and tune you out. Bad video, and they'll muddle through, just to listen to you. A microphone will make a big difference."

There are several models available, and we've got some favorites. Remember that whatever video [meeting](#) program you use, all have an audio/video section in Preferences that lets you switch from the built-in webcam video and microphone settings to your external pick.

What microphone to buy? Let's start at \$20 and work up the ladder.

Options:

Movo LV1

At just \$19.95, this is a wired lavalier microphone that clips to the top of your shirt. The bad news is it's a wired microphone that can connect to your laptop or smartphone (with an adapter) and you could end up tangled in wires. Additionally, it's powered by batteries, and if you leave it on by mistake, your mic could be dead by the time of your next meeting. Becker recommends buying an 8-pack of LR44 batteries (they cost as low as \$6) and stuffing them in a drawer, just in case.

USB microphone

If you've watched any streaming how-to videos in recent times, you've no doubt seen the ever-present microphone sitting on the hosts desk, as they do on some late-night talk shows. The beauty of a USB standalone mic is that it will sound way better than your webcam, and you won't be tethered to a wired mic that will prevent you from moving around. Two really popular choices for young podcasters in recent times has been two models from Blue Microphones, the Snowball (\$50) and the Yeti (\$99.) The more expensive Yeti has

additional condensers for improved sound, says Blue. Unless you're planning to record music or host a podcast, it might be overkill as a meeting mic. One big tip: Once you've plugged the mic into your USB computer port and placed on your desk, be sure to get real close and "kiss the mic." You can't expect to be picked up from the mic is you step away from it. Other brands make great USB mics as well, including Rode, Shure and IKMultimedia in the \$100 to \$200 range.

Wireless lavalier

If you love the idea of not having a distracting microphone in your shot and want to wear a lavalier that's wireless, you have many choices. But you will spend, as they are not cheap. My favorite, which I use for video, not for meetings, is the Rode Wireless Go (\$199.99.) I connect the transmitter box (the microphone) to my lapel and receiver atop my camera. This would be overkill for meetings, but if you wanted a mic to use for [video](#) making, and podcasting and meetings, you couldn't go wrong. Similar setups from Sony and Audio-Technica sell for \$500 and up.

Headsets

What about that pair of Bluetooth AirPods or even the wired headphone with a built-in microphone? Why not just use those? You already own them, after all. You can, and they will be a massive improvement over the built-in [microphone](#) from the computer, notes Becker.

"But sometimes you get a little bit of a connectivity problem," he notes. "And it still usually sounds a little bit distant. It is better than a built-in laptop mic, and always better than the built-in mic on a webcam."

So there you have it. Spend \$20, \$50, \$100 or \$200, and watch your audio improve dramatically, or just clip on your headset and hope there's not a break in the connection.

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