

Recruiting Netiquette Guide

Helpful tips to put your best foot forward in virtual employer presentations or networking sessions and how to communicate effectively in online recruitment events





This etiquette guide discusses the **best practices that you can adopt to maximize the value derived from virtual networking events** – be it a company presentation, virtual networking, or even a virtual interview. The best practices have been classified into three categories – pre-event preparation, event-in-progress, and post-event debrief.

Part I: Pre-Event Preparation

Tech Setup Take the time before each event to check the following:

The Strength of the Internet Connection – The bandwidth required for different virtual events is likely different. Check your internet and system capabilities to handle the requirements before each event. Perform the check at least a day in advance, giving you enough time to update the system or move to a location with better internet connectivity for the actual event.

The Audio and Video Equipment – Make sure the mic, speaker, and camera work well and that you are audible, as are other speakers in the event. Turn the devices on at least 15 minutes before the meeting and perform an audio and video test. *It is recommended that you do not use the default speaker and mic in your laptop.* Plugging in a headphone or external mic and speaker will ensure optimal audio quality.

Logging in and Display Name – If the virtual platform you are using gives you the option to upload a headshot, then consider uploading a professional one, like what you would use on LinkedIn. Always display your full name as your default settings in platforms such as Zoom. If logging in with meeting-specific credentials, sign up with a professional display photo and your name. In larger group meetings, you may have the option to add “Sanford, Duke” after your name. This addition will allow the host and audience to know what school you represent.

Screen Sharing and Tabs – When sharing screen or using a virtual whiteboard, close all other windows and tabs to minimize distractions. Doing so will increase the functionality of the platform and will also ensure your recruiters do not see what you do not want them to see. Share only the desired window.



The Presentation

Presentation is crucial to make a lasting impression. It is just as important to not be remembered for the wrong reasons. The simplest ways to make a good impression include:

Dress code – Wear “business casual” clothes, as appropriate or instructed for each event. Dress up completely – wearing a suit jacket with denim shorts can get you in trouble if you need to stand up for any reason. Working and logging in from home does not mean casual clothes are advised – avoid t-shirts, jeans, athletic wear, pajamas, etc.

Professional Appearance – Treat the virtual event just as you would an in-person meeting. The best approach is to choose a neat and professional appearance. For example, choose colors that contrast with the background and do not look overly bright in your setting. Solid colors generally work best, especially if you are using a virtual background.

Background – If not using a virtual background, remember to check what is behind you. Presenting appropriate surroundings is always important in every virtual session. Choose an unobtrusive background or a professional virtual background. Unless the meeting organizers have indicated so, do not go for ‘fun’ backgrounds.



The Surroundings

You need to be comfortable and more importantly undisturbed, during the duration of the event

- Dedicate your workspace for only your work. Have a specified part of your room set aside for work and keep only items related to your work in the space. If you are prone to distractions, take measures such as using a room divider or hiding the TV remote.
- Always have a writing pad handy. It might be critical to take notes during the meeting. If typing notes, alert the presenter(s) in advance that you are typing notes.
- There should be enough light on your face so that you are not in the shadows. At the same time, the light should not be behind you, or directly above you. Soft light in front of you, evenly lighting all sides of your face, is most appropriate.
- Try and prevent external noises and inform people living with you to not disturb you.
- Try to close windows and doors to minimize distractions.
- Turn off notifications on your laptop, your phone, or any other devices. It is very easy to be distracted during virtual meetings.
- Put your pets in another room. YouTube videos of cat tails peeking in during video calls might be funny, but such scenarios are not professional.



Wearing gGasses

If you cannot avoid wearing glasses, try tilting your glasses down just a little. Usually, the reflection of the laptop or monitor on the glasses would prevent others from seeing your eyes. In a virtual interview or event, with very little room for a personal connection, recruiters might rely on reading the sincerity or interest in your eyes to form their judgements. Without the ability to look into your eyes, it becomes difficult to build trust and to engage.



Know Your Audience, Recruiter or Alumni

The importance of researching the employer and its representatives before the meeting goes without saying. Know the agenda of the meeting, the participants, check their LinkedIn profiles, and read up on the employer. Know about the positions that they are recruiting for and speak with alumni or career strategists to gather as much information as possible. Prepare a few questions that you would like to ask during the event.

One advantage of a virtual event is that you do not have to be apparent about referring to your notes. If you want to highlight key questions that you wish to ask the recruiters, or other talking points, you can place them at eye level, behind the camera and refer to the notes while seemingly looking at the other participants in the meeting.

Part II: Event-in-Progress

Rules of Engagement

The most common question asked by students is “*How do I engage and make an impression when I am not meeting my recruiters in person?*”. Recruiters understand the limitations of virtual networking and engagement; at the same time, they expect you to follow certain basic etiquette and make the effort to connect with them.

Arrive Early – A good way to connect is to login a couple of minutes before the event time. You will be one of the first people in, when the host lets participants in and may be able to make polite conversation with the recruiters. This is a good ‘informal’ way to make an impression. Remember that once you login, it is “go time”. Be certain you are ready before you click enter.

Camera – Keep the camera on. If the recruiter is making a presentation, they (or others from the employer) are likely looking for visual cues that you are following along. Nod, smile, and when prompted, show them that you can hear them well. Active listening is even more important virtually, remember to pay attention, show excitement, and respect the speakers as well as the audience. Keeping the camera on, especially in early presentations, is also important because it allows the recruiter to connect a name with a face. This enables the relationship to continue through all company events and during the interview. The “gallery” view can also help you gauge other participants’ reactions to the presenters, if you might find that valuable.



More Rules of Engagement

Eye Contact – When using dual monitors, be careful about which monitor’s camera you are using. Speaking while looking off to the side and not directly at the camera can be disconcerting for other participants. Remember, “eye contact” in a virtual setting means looking into the camera during an interview, coffee chat or presentation, and not the individual image or other thumbnails while you speak. Maintaining appropriate eye contact means looking into the camera. Practice makes perfect before an interview, etc.

Speak Up – To build rapport with the recruiters, it is important to keep your name and face in their attention. Find multiple ways to engage and do not be afraid to speak up – ask questions, participate in chats, and in polls. At the same time, follow the rules of engagement. For example, during a presentation, if the employer representatives state at the beginning of the presentation that they will take questions after their presentation, do not interrupt them during the presentation with your questions. Remember to always mute yourself when entering a virtual session.

Give Room – Be mindful of the fine line between professional participation and too much talking. Knowing when to allow others to speak and being respectful of your peers or other participants is just as important as knowing when to speak, for how long, etc. It is a good practice to mute your mic when not speaking.

Choose Your Words – In a virtual setting, there is less reliance on non-verbal cues. This means that sarcasm and wit might not come across as effectively as you would like them to. Be careful about what you say and think about your choice of words.



Wine and Dine

The best advice regarding eating and drinking during a virtual event is try avoiding it. Having a sip of water is acceptable – have a glass of water or a coffee mug near you. It is not a good practice to drink out of a bottle with the camera on. If you must eat something, it is better to turn the camera off temporarily. Finally, avoid getting up and moving while your camera is on.

Chat Precautions

When using the “private chat” function on a platform, confirm that the feature truly is private. Verify the private chat is on before sending out a chat or private comment. Avoid using the chat feature to make inappropriate remarks that may distract you or your peers from the presentation





Part III: Post-Event Debrief

To successfully transition from one virtual event to the next, remember the following:

- If you are the host of a virtual meeting, it is only polite to be the last to sign out. If you have another meeting, you can always explain that to the participants and end the meeting. Otherwise, do not “kick” participants out of the room. Wait to make sure they have nothing to add, especially in informationals and coffee chats with alumni and company representatives.
- After a virtual event, listen to the recording of the session (if available) and compare with your notes. If there was any information that you missed, you can add it to your notes afterwards and it also helps to verify the names of the employer representatives and/or alums and portions of your conversation with them as a reference for follow up conversations.
- The Sanford/Duke network is known for supporting one another. Compare notes with your peers to support each other. You can form small groups to debrief one another following an employer event.