

HOW DO YOU MAKE VIDEO CALLING MORE FUN AND PROFESSIONAL FOR YOU AND FOR OTHERS? THE **75 ESSENTIAL RULES OF ETIQUETTE** IN THIS BOOK WILL ENSURE YOU HAVE SUCCESSFUL **VIRTUAL MEETINGS**.

Video calling — certainly because of the coronavirus pandemic — has become an indispensable part of all our lives.

- ✓ "Hello? Can you all hear me?"
- ✓ "I hear you, but I can't see you."
- ✓ "The report fr**WOOF WOOF WOOF**here."
- ✓ "I-i HEAR-hear AN-an ECHO-echo."
- ✓ "Is that a dishwasher or the coffeemaker?"
- ✓ "Have we lost Mary? Mary? Are you still there?"

Whether you're in a formal meeting or just chatting away with your friends or family, *How (not) to Video Call* will help you have the call be a success and make the best of it.

**Marlous de Haan** is an expert in the area of video calling. She guides online meetings and provides training in how you can successfully use video conferencing. As a physical therapy scientist, she studies the physical, mental and social problems that are caused by the use of mobile devices. In addition, she is specialized in *nomophobia*, the cause of smartphone addiction. She has previously published the book *How (not) to Smartphone, 125 essential rules of etiquette for using your mobile*. She published books and articles and gives interviews and lectures about nomophobia, smartphone etiquette, video calling etiquette, digital detox and digital wellness.



HOW (NOT) TO VIDEO CALL

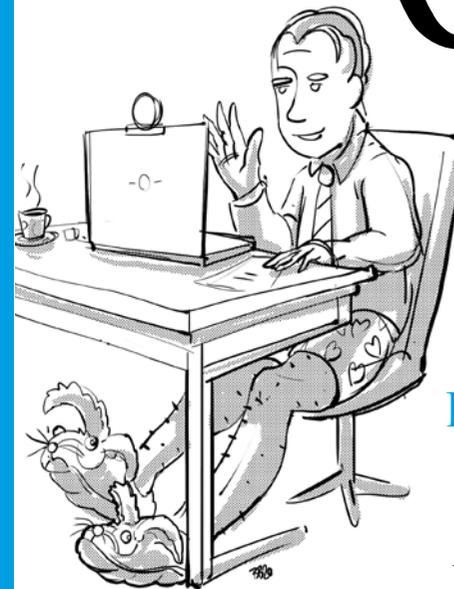
MARLOUS DE HAAN



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HOW (NOT) TO

Video Call



75

ESSENTIAL RULES OF ETIQUETTE

FOR SUCCESSFUL VIRTUAL MEETINGS

© 2021	Marlous de Haan
Title	How (not) to Video Call
Subtitle	75 essential rules of etiquette for successful virtual meetings
ISBN book	978-90-831-2384-4
Edition	First edition, February 2021
NUR	451 – Etiquette 450 – Lifestyle, general
BISAC	BUS009000 BUSINESS & ECONOMICS / Business Etiquette REF011000 REFERENCE / Etiquette
Keywords	video calling, etiquette, virtual meetings, online meetings, video conference, conferencing, social, rules of behavior, work, clients, contacts, lifestyle
Author	Marlous de Haan
Original title	Videobellen Etiquette, 75 niet te missen gedragsregels voor succesvol beeldbellen
Cover	Het Boekenschap
Illustrations	Bas van den Biggelaar
Translation by	LinQuake B.V. - Laurie Schiet-Heath
Publisher	Magic at Work
Website	<a href="http://www.hownottovideocall.com">www.hownottovideocall.com</a>



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MARLOUS DE HAAN

HOW (NOT) TO

# Video Call



75

ESSENTIAL RULES  
OF ETIQUETTE

FOR SUCCESSFUL  
VIRTUAL MEETINGS

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*If it weren't for the coronavirus pandemic,  
I wouldn't have been able to write this book.*

*Marlous de Haan*



# Preface

**I've been conducting two-person video calls for years. From time to time this has been alternated with an online meeting among several people or with a webinar. Then, in early 2020, the coronavirus COVID-19 arrived and suddenly we all became homebound. Which, for a long period, made it impossible to meet with more than one person at a time.**

Because I'm a people person and I'm involved in many social activities, I noticed that these activities were quickly disappearing — and that people were searching for new ways to maintain contact with others. Right away, I knew the possibilities that video calling and online meetings offered, and I encouraged my friends and people from work, clubs and associations with which I'm connected to also start using these new contact methods. And that's how I quickly became reconnected with my network — and many others with me and with each other. In just a short period of time, video calling has become a daily routine for many. Before the corona crisis, I often had physical meetings and met less often virtually via video calls. During the crisis, that ratio changed to exclusively virtual meetings.

All around the world, you see these same initiatives developing. For the time being, virtual meetings are completely taking over physical, 'regular' meetings.

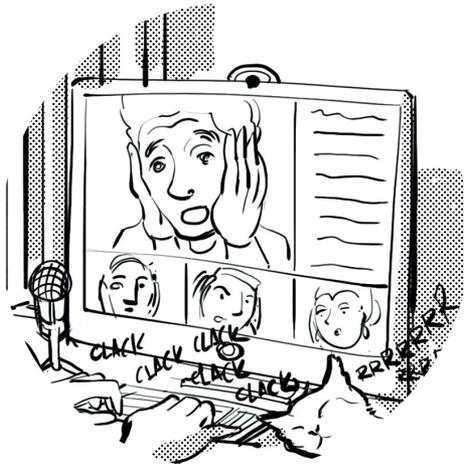
The exciting and interesting part, of course, is to monitor this movement during the coming years to see whether virtual gatherings are here to stay — and to what extent. Virtual meetings and calls offer clear advantages, but also disadvantages. As to how this online activity will develop over time, we'll just have to wait and see!

As luck would have it, my book *How (not) to Smartphone: 125 essential rules of etiquette for using your mobile*, (originally published in Dutch as *Smartphone Etiquette: 125 gouden gedragsregels die je zou moeten kennen voor het gebruik van je mobiel*) was published precisely during the first weeks of the coronavirus pandemic. Consequently, I was already very alert to the etiquette used, so I was keenly aware of what was being done in these new virtual means of communication. I see behavior rules developing right before my eyes during video calls and online meetings. Yes, of course, a number of written and unwritten rules have already been identified and described in recent years. Now, however, due to the enormous worldwide increase in the use of video calling with online meetings, you see that more and more people have an opinion about these rules. And due to the rapid growth in the number of global video callers in an extremely short period of time, it is super interesting to see this happening.

Intrigued by this phenomenon, I delved into the etiquette of video calling with online meetings. I have researched, collected and bundled the situations, behavior rules and tips.

I have written this book so you are able to have more pleasant video calls and more successful virtual meetings using video calling. Video conferencing has become a part of our lives, certainly since the coronavirus pandemic of 2020. This book aims to make you more aware of essential behavior rules, so your experience — as well as that of others — can be even more successful and fun.

*Marlous de Haan, February 2021*



# Introduction

**Video calling is a virtual way of being in contact with others: seeing each other or having a meeting, consulting, playing a game or just keeping in touch with each other, at a distance. Instead of physically being with each other, you see each other virtually by video calling using your computer, laptop, tablet or smartphone screen.**

Video calling — also called videotelephony or video conferencing — can be a simple conversation between two people but it can also be a large virtual or online meeting with many dozens of people at different locations around the world. The basis of video calling is the simultaneous exchange of image and sound, but it also includes the ability to forward such items as photos, documents and entire presentations.

Both video calling and video conferencing were already being used extensively in the pre-corona era — for example, when people are located far apart from each other and want to save time (and money) by not traveling, when people can't or don't wish to physically get together, or when people just want to see and talk to each other visually instead of only using sound, as is the case with a telephone call. In early 2020, however, there was a global outbreak of the coronavirus COVID-19 and the entire world was forced to deal with its far-reaching consequences. Many countries went into a lockdown, and people found themselves in forced quarantine for months.

Being with others physically — meeting, taking classes, working, and many more activities — was discouraged and often even forbidden. Because people were required to stay at home, they started looking for other ways to keep in touch, and video calling and online meetings turned out to be the ultimate solution. For many people, it's the only way to have visual contact with others and to be able to speak with and continue to meet other people. There has been an enormous increase in the use of software that facilitates this video calling. All of a sudden, video calling is practically the most normal thing in a world that has become anything but normal.

Video calling has many uses: Just chatting with your friends, your family or your neighbors; taking classes for school or study; work or organizational meetings that can simply take place as planned, so that current business matters can continue to be arranged; weekly meetings of associations and clubs that now conduct their business digitally... Suddenly, practically everyone is video calling and using their computer, tablet, laptop or smartphone to keep in touch with others. Video, as opposed to only calling, adds more to a meeting — namely, the visual aspect and the opportunity to be with multiple participants simultaneously. Besides having a discussion between two or more people, video also makes it possible to conduct meetings, give presentations, hold webinars and have gatherings. You don't need to physically

be together; you can remain at home and yet still see and meet everyone.

For most people, this is a new phenomenon. Many people are relatively unfamiliar with the rules of behavior involved when video calling in virtual meetings.

It's clear that a form of etiquette for video calling has quickly and automatically developed.

What should you definitely do? What should you not do? What do you pay attention to, and what don't you have to worry about? The entirety of the behavior rules of courtesy and manners is known as etiquette. These rules are related to time, place and culture and are present in both written and unwritten form. They apply in all situations where people are together and interact with each other. These behavioral rules are based on taking into account the feelings of others and the customs in a society. Etiquette can have a practical use, it can avoid insults, and it can ensure that situations don't become unintentionally awkward. Basically, you'll always be 'safe' if you follow the etiquette. Rules of behavior, however, are always subject to change and further development.

It's difficult to identify the sources of etiquette. Rules of behavior are stated and heard in numerous locations and they are also so logical that the original source is rarely mentioned or found. After all, we ourselves — as people and users of the internet and video conferencing software, interacting with each other — are the source of etiquette. That's how rules of behavior are developed.

What is interesting about behavior related to video calling and online or virtual meetings is that these technologies have only recently come into existence, approximately two decades ago. The first behavior rules for these settings were formed during that period. Then, at the beginning of 2020, video calling became immensely popular around the world within several months.

This book describes various situations that you may find yourself in while video calling and participating in online meetings. It's a compilation of rules of etiquette that have been collected through gaining experience, by listening and questioning and reading, and from searching the internet. Its aim is to make you aware of the use of video calling as well as your behavior, posture and presentation during a video conference or virtual meeting. In this book, I discuss the written and unwritten rules of etiquette and the behavior that should be displayed when video calling. The rules that have existed for many years, along with the etiquette people are currently observing, are included here.

But don't let this etiquette deter you from (taking your first steps in) video calling! Enjoy it and, above all, have fun with it. Adopt the behavior rules, as described in this book, that are of use to you. By the way, where you read *video calling*, that can also mean *videotelephony* or *video conferencing*, just as the terms *virtual meetings* and *online meetings* can also be used interchangeably.

To remain neutral in this book, I haven't given any examples or the names of various programs or software you can use to

video call or organize an online meeting. You can find these on my website. Nor do I go into the advantages and disadvantages of video calling in online meetings versus physical meetings and gatherings. The book also has no fixed order and can be read per chapter. As a result, you may notice what appear to be repetitions; this has been done so that each chapter is complete in and of itself.

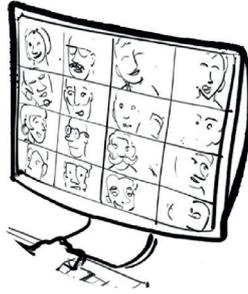
A distinction has been made between private, informal video calling between two people and group video calling with multiple persons or large groups. Most etiquette rules in this book are focused on the more public, formal and professional encounters but all can be applied to the loose, friendly and informal gatherings with family members and friends. The most important goal of this book is awareness. Think about how, why and in what way you present yourself during a video call. Realize what the impact of that is on the other person or people on the other 'side' of the screen. Be aware of your habits, appearance and manner of presentation and actions.

*More information can be found at*

**[www.hownottovideocall.com](http://www.hownottovideocall.com)**

and

**[www.marlousdehaan.nl](http://www.marlousdehaan.nl)**.



## Links

Many recordings of hilarious incidents and unusual bloopers while video calling can be found on the internet.

A selection of links to these videos can be seen on the website **[www.hownottovideocall.com](http://www.hownottovideocall.com)**.

Prior  
to a  
meeting

Before you initiate or join a meeting, it's useful to **prepare** and think about a few matters.

# 1. Donald Ducking

**Suppose you're in an online meeting and, during the break, your neatly dressed colleague stands up to quickly get something to drink. Suddenly you see that his lower half is clothed only by boxer shorts with red hearts. On the screen, you see a pair of hairy legs walking away.**

This phenomenon is termed *Donald Ducking* — wearing little or improper clothing from the waist down. The comparison with Donald Duck, who only wears clothing on his upper half, is quickly made. So, think about your clothing. And yes, that also means your pants or skirt, unless you're 100% sure — no matter what — that you don't have to stand up. Don't assume that others will only see your upper half so you can get away with not wearing any pants. After all, it's not inconceivable that you'll have to stand up in an emergency or you'll forget to turn off your camera after the meeting has finished.

Clothing that appears too 'busy' can also be very distracting. Especially the colors white, black and red, as well as striped or busy patterns, translate poorly to a screen. Pastel or lighter colors, on the other hand, have a calming effect.

For gatherings or work-related meetings, the rule is to wear proper clothing or, at the very least, what you would normally wear to work or a physical meeting.



## 2. Presentation

**A frumpy appearance stands out even more when video calling than it does in person. This is because — as opposed to a physical meeting — people on a video call now feel free to view and observe you to their heart’s delight. After all, you won’t notice them doing it. And, don’t forget: making a print screen or a photo is a piece of cake.**

Always spend some time on your personal grooming. Make sure you have shaved, your hair is neat, put on makeup if that’s normal for you, and wear proper clothing. It’s not difficult to just take a look in the mirror before going online. Of course, your appearance can be somewhat more casual for private conversations with family or friends.

Wearing a lot of jewelry, necklaces, long dangling earrings and trendy items such as decorations in your hair can be very distracting. Reflective sunglasses are also discouraged, due to the reflection of your screen and also because they give an impersonal impression.



### 3. Surroundings

**An acquaintance who is an artist hangs a different painting behind him each week. This is a conscious choice to display and share something with his 'viewers'. Conversely, a friend of mine doesn't straighten up at all; he video calls from an incredibly cluttered office where everything is stacked on top of each other.**

Whatever your personal preference may be, think about your surroundings before you turn on the camera. What do you want others to see or not to see? Do you want that mountain of wash or dirty dishes in the distance to be on full display? Or will you straighten up ahead of time? Check whether that poster, photo or specific painting on the wall behind you is appropriate. Having a mirror behind you is not very handy because it reflects the image on your PC or laptop. And are there no personal items in view that are for your eyes only?

The usual rule here is that the more boring and calm the surroundings and background are, the better. If there is something that distracts attention, it will be seen by other participants in the online meeting. That can be desired or undesired. Always realize that others have a direct view into your personal surroundings.

Choose a different background if the program you are using allows it. Using a photo of yourself, a video or your company's logo is an option for hiding your background. Some programs can also replace your entire background, which eliminates attention to your (real) surroundings.

## 4. Camera position

**I won't soon forget that magnificent lunar surface that turned out to be my colleague's balding head. Since I had to look at it for quite a while during that somewhat boring online meeting, I fantasized about entire moon landings.**



Not all of us are accustomed to suddenly having our head on prominent view. During a test session, carefully look at the location of the camera. Position your camera correctly so you don't just see the ceiling and your forehead or, conversely, the table and your chest.

Try to have your head in full view as much as possible, but also back up a bit. A head that fills the screen can come across as threatening, as if you are entering someone's personal space. An image of your head with some of your chest and the surrounding area is more pleasant to look at.

Video calling using a laptop with a built-in camera is even more difficult. Because the camera is always linked to the position

of the screen, it can be a challenge to position the camera correctly, since you also want to have a good view of your screen.

When using a smartphone or tablet, the tip is to set these smaller devices against or on something that is at eye level on the table in front of you, such as on top of a stack of books.



# About the author

Marlous de Haan is a veritable nomophobe, a person who suffers from nomophobia (no-mobile-phone phobia) — the fear of, or anxiety caused by, not having a working mobile phone. She is addicted to her smartphone and can be found on the internet on a daily basis. She's also a people person.



Marlous loves to have contact with others and enjoys having meetings, making arrangements and organizing.

Given all this, it was then logical for her to take the lead in her network during the coronavirus pandemic and organize gatherings via video calling, make people enthusiastic about using this new method, and — as the author of *How (not) to Smartphone* — quickly focus on the etiquette of video calling.

In recent years, Marlous has studied and inventoried 'the phenomenon of smartphone use.' As a physical therapist and physical therapy scientist, she had already signaled this development several years ago. In her professional practice, Marlous came into contact with the physical complaints that can develop when using smartphones and other mobile devices: tablet neck, smartphone thumb, shoulder and neck strains,

headaches and sleeping disorders. The (long-term) posture adopted while using these devices can also cause a wide variety of physical complaints.

From this approach, Marlous also studied more closely the physical, emotional and social consequences and delved into nomophobia. One of the steps in this study was the development of written guidelines and rules of etiquette for using a smartphone. In the spring of 2020 Marlous published her findings in *Smartphone Etiquette* (full Dutch title: *Smartphone Etiquette: 125 gouden gedragsregels die je zou moeten kennen voor het gebruik van je mobiel*) and its upgraded and revised English translation is expected in the spring of 2021. From smartphone use, it's just a small step then to focus on the use of etiquette when video calling. Video calling — certainly because of the coronavirus pandemic — has become an indispensable part of all our lives. Etiquette for video calling makes us aware of the rules of behavior while using this medium. How do we want to deal with it, how do we want others to see us? Many of the now customary rules of behavior have been bundled in this book about video calling etiquette.

Marlous de Haan can be found in various media: TV, radio, newspapers, magazines as well as online. She is an expert in the area of video calling. Marlous guides online meetings and provides training in how to successfully use video conferencing. As a physical therapy scientist, she studies the physical, mental and social problems that are caused by the use of mobile devices. In addition, she is specialized in *nomophobia*, the cause of smartphone addiction. She has previously published the book *How (not) to Smartphone*. Marlous has published books and articles and gives interviews and lectures about nomophobia, smartphone etiquette, video calling etiquette, digital detox and digital wellness.