

Zoom Anxiety: Feeling uncomfortable with zoom video

Some students feel anxious, exposed or embarrassed having the zoom camera on for classes. This can stop them from participating fully in study and from connecting with class mates. Try these tips and strategies to feel more comfortable with your camera on so you can succeed in your online studies.

The benefits of keeping your zoom camera on in class

Study success

Successful students are engaged students. Turning your camera on is like turning up for class. It helps you to be fully present and engaged. Turning your camera off creates a distance between you and the learning activity. It reduces your engagement. Everything you do to increase your engagement, increases your likelihood for academic success.



Improved memory

When you are more active in your learning you have improved memory recall. Having your camera on promotes active learning. Thinking about the content, asking questions and participating in class discussions are all aspects of active learning that help you to encode new information into your memory.



More self-confidence

Turning off your camera is a way of hiding. It makes you feel bad about yourself because, instead of overcoming your challenges, you allow your fear to control you. You also feel bad because you know you are not showing respect to teachers and classmates when you hide your face. You will feel more self-confident when you overcome your fears and respect others.



Making connections

Learning is more fun when you get to know your classmates. Turning your camera off in the virtual class reduces the opportunity to connect. Other students are more likely to initiate contact with you when they can see your face.



Understand your behaviour: Identify why you turn your zoom camera off

The first step to changing behaviour is to identify why you do it. Be honest with yourself and use the checklist below to understand what's driving your behaviour. If the reason for turning off your zoom camera is not on the list, write down your reasons on some paper to clarify this for yourself.

- I am self-conscious and do not like others looking at me
- I think I look ugly in the zoom video
- I am always anxious around other people
- I am shy
- I do not want others seeing my home or room and I want to protect my privacy
- I worry that other students will judge me for what I look like or how I speak
- I am not confident using zoom technology
- I do not want others to see me because I have acne on my face or my hair does not look good
- I hate looking at myself on zoom
- I feel uncomfortable with many students in the zoom class able to see me
- I do not want to study - I want to stay in bed, play games or do other things
- I am not confident speaking English and hope teachers will not ask me questions if my camera is off
- I feel awkward when I speak at the same time as another student (i.e., it is rude to interrupt)
- I am worried I will give a wrong answer and others will think I am stupid
- I do not enjoy studying online
- I am nervous speaking in large groups
- My laptop camera is not working
- Other students have their camera off, so I am doing the same
- I do not have a private study space so family or housemates can be seen walking behind me
- I sometimes need a break in class because zoom classes are exhausting



Zoom Anxiety: Strategies to feel more comfortable in online classes

Once you have identified why you turn your zoom camera off or feel anxious in zoom classes, try the strategies below to overcome your difficulties. Start using the strategies today. Changing behaviour can feel strange at first, but with practice you will feel more comfortable and confident.

Avoidance keep you anxious

One way students manage feeling anxious with the zoom camera on, is to turn it off. Although this avoidance strategy can make you feel more comfortable in the short-term, it stops you from mastering your fear and it actually just keeps you anxious. However, exposing yourself to the things you fear helps you get used to them, so your anxiety decreases and you feel more comfortable.



I feel self-conscious

If you do not like your appearance or you worry that class mates will judge you negatively based on your appearance, turn off zoom SELF-VIEW and focus on others in the class. Remind yourself, people are less focussed on you and judge you less than you think.



- Being on time for class reduces self-consciousness.
- Before class do your hair and wear clothes you feel good in.
- Remind yourself "other students also feel self-conscious - it is normal for adolescents to feel this way".
- If you need to work on improving your self-esteem, write a list of all the things you are good at.

Self-talk matters

The way you talk to yourself affects how you feel. You can talk to yourself in ways that make you feel happy and confident or in ways that make you feel anxious, stressed and afraid.



Notice your unhelpful self-talk and choose to use more helpful self-talk. Tell yourself, the more time you spend with your zoom camera on, the sooner you will get used to it.

I am uncomfortable with the whole class watching me

You will feel less intimidated if you use SPEAKER VIEW because you only see the person speaking. When you build up confidence with this, go a step further and use GALLERY VIEW so you see the whole class again. Over time you will get more comfortable with this too.



I am nervous public speaking or using English

Many people feel nervous speaking in large groups or when using a second language. Remind yourself that only practice will help you feel more confident. Avoiding speaking just keeps you anxious.



- Your teachers want you to participate in class - they will not judge your English language skills.
- Try deep breathing to help you feel calm.

I am not motivated to study

If you turn off your camera to leave class and do other things (like gaming or playing on your phone), spend some time reflecting on why you are studying. Relaxing and playing games or watching movies feels good at the time but, in the long-term, instant gratification stops you from achieving your goals.



Write down all the ways that study helps you to have a good, productive life. Ask family or friends if they have ideas about why study is good for you.

Technology skills and tech issues

If you need to improve your zoom or other technology skills, ask a friend to teach you or search online for useful resources. Contact e-Solutions for help if you have problems with your laptop camera. Do not delay – solve tech issues today so they do not stop you from doing your best in study.



Create a zoom meeting with friends and play with the settings until you feel more familiar using zoom. Contact e-Solutions for IT help: servicedesk@monash.edu.au

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My family or housemates can be seen in my room

Not everyone has a private space for study. Talk with the people you live with to negotiate times when you can use a space for class, without distractions.



- In video options, select the **BLURRED** background.
- Try not to worry too much. We have all had times when someone walked in during a zoom class or meeting.

I get tired in zoom classes and need a break

Many people say that working and studying online is exhausting. One reason is that we have to concentrate more to read other people's non-verbal cues when video-conferencing. Try the tips below rather than turning your camera off to leave class for a break.



- Check if you are getting enough sleep and make changes to your sleeping habits if needed.
- Short bursts of exercise can help you feel alert (e.g., 10 push-ups and star-jumps)
- Talk with teachers about long classes and ask if it is possible to have a small break in the middle.

It is awkward if people speak at the same time

Try not to feel too embarrassed if you start talking at the same time as someone else. It is common in zoom classes because we cannot see non-verbal cues and there are often time lags in video-conferencing.



- Use the **RAISE HAND** icon to signal you want to speak
- Tell the other person "You go, I'll talk when you've finished".
- Observe your teacher to see how they manage this common event.

I worry about privacy

If you do not want others seeing your house or room, choose a **VIRTUAL** background or a **BLURRED** background in the zoom video options.



Alternatively, think about decorating your room in ways that show other students the things you are interested in. This will help them connect with you and students who like the same things might message you.

Other students have their cameras off

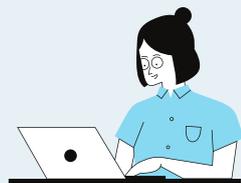
You want to do your best in study so focus on what you can do to support your learning. Do not worry about what other students are doing. Having your camera on will help you engage with your learning.



Be an influencer: Having your camera on will encourage other students to turn theirs on too. Be a good role model for your classmates.

I do not like studying online

Remind yourself, it is normal to feel like this because online study is still unfamiliar. Most of your previous study was on-campus. Rather than only focusing on the negative, identify any advantages of online study.



It is likely that working online will be a part of future work and study. This is a good time to develop your skills in online communication.

Need more convincing to turn your camera on?

Try conducting your own social experiment.

- Observe which students keep their cameras off and notice how engaged they are in the class.
- Now, do the same for students with cameras on.
- Who is more engaged in the class?
- Who would you most like to work with on a group task?
- Would you rather get to know students with their cameras on or off?



I do not feel like I am part of the class

This is a classic "what came first, – the chicken or the egg?" scenario. Having your camera off keeps you feeling distant from class-mates and keeps you feeling shy with them.



You will identify more with class-mates and feel more like you belong in the group, when you have your camera on.