

General Instructions and Guidelines
for
Distance Learning and Video Conferencing

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Videoconferencing Guidelines

HM AHEC has compiled these guidelines for videoconference coordinators and participants to enhance your program and increase your likelihood of successful videoconferences. Its content includes an introduction to videoconferencing, how to place a video call, how to ensure on-time start-ups, best practices during conferences, troubleshooting procedures and information about videoconference, video-accessible, and Internet resources that we believe your organization will find useful.

While AANet has participated in the preparation of these guidelines it is important that you not consider them a substitute for the on-site training that is provided to all new Adirondack Area Network (AANet) members. That training in the use of the AANet calendar is essential to the effective use of your membership. It will be scheduled shortly after your equipment goes “on-line”.

Videoconference Basics

- ☞ Videoconferencing technology allows people at two or more locations to see and hear each other at the same time. A two-site conference is called a “point-to-point” connection. When three or more sites are participating it is a “multi-point conference”. In addition, it is often possible during a conference to share Internet pages, library catalogs and demonstrate computer software.
- ☞ Basic equipment at each site consists of a large screen video display, a small remotely controlled camera, microphone, speakers, a Codec (signal processor) and, of course, a special phone line.

Getting Connected

- ☞ If you can dial a phone, change stations on your television, or warm your coffee in the microwave oven, you can initiate a point-to-point conference with another AAN member. You simply dial the far site's 4-digit number to engage the call; similar to what you do when you use the telephone.
- ☞ Participation in a multi-point conference requires the assistance of staff at the Adirondack Area Network (AANet). They will provide the “bridge” that is needed to connect three or more participants.

Before the Conference

- ☞ First of all, it's rude to waste people's time, so make sure you test your equipment in advance, issue a clear agenda, and establish set times to start and finish. Send participants a list of the ground rules.
- ☞ Ensure that your presentation materials are properly formatted. When you plan to use an elmo or scan converter/laptop hookup consider the needs of the audience(s) at the far site(s) where your material will be displayed. A good “rule of thumb” is to prepare your materials in the largest font size that will fit on a standard transparency or letter size page on your computer keeping in mind that 32pt should be the smallest and 60pt the largest. Always test your document on your own video equipment beforehand!
- ☞ Arrive 10-15 minutes early to distribute materials, conduct a pre-conference briefing, and get comfortable with the facility and technology.
- ☞ Adjust the camera - use the zoom and pan camera controls. To show 1-2 people, show them from the waist up, centered in the screen; to show a group, adjust the tilt so that the faces are about 2/3 of the way up the screen. Set Presets on key people, groups and/or exhibits for smooth transitions.
- ☞ When presenting a formal conference dress conservatively. Wear “plain” clothes and accessories, no plaids, prints, "hot" colors, busy ties or large shiny jewelry. Light blues or pastels are preferred to white, which may glare. If wearing a white shirt or blouse, add a dark jacket to reduce glare. Avoid all-light or all-dark clothing. They can "trick" the camera's automatic brightness control. For everyday use and participating in EMS lectures, dress as you wish, keeping in mind the above guidelines for the best showing.

During the Conference

- ☞ Make eye contact and look directly at the camera.
- ☞ Identify yourself by giving your name and location if more than two sites are connected.
- ☞ There is a very slight audio delay. Give participants a chance to respond to questions and comments. Try to get in the habit of hesitating slightly before speaking to ensure that the other person has finished.
- ☞ Be yourself; speak naturally and imagine the participants are across the table from you.
- ☞ Be aware of where the camera is focused. You may instantly be on camera as a discussion evolves.

- ☞ Avoid coughing into microphones, drumming your finger, shuffling paper, or conducting side conversations. Microphones are extremely sensitive; they will pick up almost any loud or prolonged noise.
- ☞ Be aware that during all calls you can adjust the near site volume and camera views. During point-to-point calls only you can also adjust the volume and change the camera's view for the far site as long as both sides have compatible equipment.
- ☞ Most adjustments can be accomplished by pressing buttons on the remote control. A noteworthy exception is the TV/video button on the TV (i.e., if you walk into the room where your unit is located and see "snow" on the screen, hit the tv/video button on the tv until "video 1" shows up on screen).
- ☞ Follow agenda and time allotments for the conference. Videoconferences may not be able to be extended beyond the reserved time because of other video network scheduling commitments. However, if you are conducting a member-to-member conference using the AANet connection there is usually no (technical) problem with going past your allotted time. NOTE: This does not hold true when an ISDN site is involved.
- ☞ Encourage interactive participation by asking questions, polling sites, or assigning presentations from other far-end sites.
- ☞ Close-ups and changing camera positions are encouraged to promote a more dynamic and lively meeting. Close-ups of speakers are essential! With rooms full of people and a camera lens zoomed all the way out it's very difficult to determine exactly who is speaking. Try to achieve the effect that the person speaking is in the room with you.
- ☞ If you can't see or hear someone speaking very well, feel free to ask him or her to move into camera range or have them speak louder or get closer to the microphone. If the person is speaking too loud ask them to back away from the microphone.
- ☞ If it's obvious that a far-end site is having technical difficulties and may be unaware of it, ask them to get their facilities technical support person to assist them with the problem. The meeting can be stopped for a few minutes so the problem can be resolved.
- ☞ Use verbal and visual clues. Expressive gestures are good; exaggerated or overused gestures should be avoided since they can cause the projected image to momentarily "break up".

- 📢 Prompt comments if participants seem uncomfortable with a new medium. In general, fill the screen as much as possible with people rather than with tables, chairs, walls and ceilings.

- 📢 Keep your site on "mute" until you or someone at your location has a comment to share with everyone.

- 📢 Avoid side conversations that exclude the far-end site(s) from your conversation.

- 📢 Eating on camera should be avoided. It is evidence of both poor manners and selfishness (it's impossible to share with folks 100s or 1,000s of miles away!).

- 📢 When you are finished, hang up. It is preferable to leave the equipment on when it will not interfere with other conferences utilizing the same room. This way, if any network changes are made, AANet can check on the status of your unit without interrupting your workday.

***Remember, these Skills are Vital to Success in this
Medium***

- ☞ **PERFORMANCE** – Most successful videoconferences occur when presenters/leaders engage participants with their energy, presence, vocal variety, facial expression...
- ☞ **PRESENTATION** – Effective presentations are tightly organized, have visual variety and impact.
- ☞ **INTERACTION** – Keep the audience involved and the meeting active...overcome couch potato conditioning.

Everyone can learn them, and with practice, use them effectively.

Happy videoconferencing!!

Viewing A Past Program

In order to view previously aired programs your personal computer must be loaded with the Real One Player videostreaming software. Any computer with a decent internet connection and Real One Player get these programs. With those provisions met, the options are as follows:

Programs That Are Available To The Public

1. On the **AANet homepage**, scroll down to **Web Site Additions** and click on **EMS Lecture Series**.
2. Click on the **CLICK HERE** link.
3. Identify the program you wish to watch and click on **View Conference**

Programs For Members

1. On the **AANet homepage**, click on **MEMBERS VIDEOS**.
2. Type in your member Name and **Password** not the calendar **Name** and **Password**.
3. A **Members Only Store & Forward Video** list will appear
4. Click on the program that you wish to see
5. **Real One Player** will automatically load allowing you to use view the program

Participating In A Future Program

Future programs are listed on the AANet Website www.AANet.org. Upon accessing the **AANet homepage**, follow these steps:

1. Click on **Conference**
2. In the drop down box click on **Future Events**, or click on conference → video calendar
3. After identifying a program of interest click on the **Title** to see the details of the program
4. If you wish to participate in that program, call the conference contact listed on the calendar page first. If that person is not available, then try Sara at AANet (518)479-1226 at least 24 hours prior to the scheduled program. ALSO: Sara @ AANet emails announcements (to a list of members and other interested parties) that are of interest to a majority of AAN member sites, i.e., Albany Med offerings, CDC Satellite broadcasts, and various other programming. She strongly recommends providing her with your email address in order to be on the list.

Planning Your Own Program-Getting It On The Calendar

1. To access the calendar, use address: <http://www.aanet.org>
2. Click on PC or Mac, depending on which type of computer you have.
3. You'll see "Directory" on left with seven categories listed *. Most of the fields will be drop down boxes with a list inside them to choose from.
4. Click on Members
5. Inside Members is another list of categories.
6. Click on Calendar Manager
7. Login/password box with then appear, you will need to log in and use the password AAN assigned to you during calendar training.
8. Login: xxxxxxx Password: xxxxxxx
9. Calendar will then appear. Choose the month you want. (**Note:** if you do not choose a month for the event, you will not be able to post the event or go to the next screen).
10. Choose point-to-point call or multipoint call
11. Choose: New Event
12. Choose: the day of the event in the month chosen
13. Choose: a start time for event
14. Choose: an end time to the event. (**Note:** For a **multipoint call only** you will be prompted to enter a pretest time. For an ISDN and more than 3 sites, it is recommended that pretest time should be at least ½ hour. For point-to-point calls you will not be prompted to enter pretest time but you should still enter one.) For point to point calls, there is not a spot for you to enter a pretest time, but you should plan on rebooting your unit, if necessary, and connecting to the other site a few minutes before a planned program.
15. Choose: pretest time (commonly the ½ hour)
16. Choose: participating sites. See drop down list. Include and list ILEMS first
17. Enter the name of the event in box.
18. Enter a description of the event in box (**Note:** all pertinent information has now been entered)
19. Now, preview the event (**Note:** if you have left any blanks you will not be able to preview the event. If you need to change any information, do it now.)

After you have completed all of the above, you will have the option to:

1. **Post the Event:** (if so, it will be indicated that the event has been posted). You will want to do this before anything else. Remember when you post the event it can be viewed by anyone who has access to the calendar- that is, anyone with internet access. (**so don't put anything in writing that you don't want seen**).
2. **Edit the Event:** (if you need to change anything including mistakes, or if you need to add additional sites.)
3. **New Event:** (to enter only new events)

EVENT UTILITIES

This screen will tell you whether or not your event is active or inactive. If you have scheduled an event and did not make it active (or you thought you made it active **but** you don't see it on the calendar), to activate it click "activate event" here. If you cancel an event that was previously activated, you may inactivate it even if it has been posted. Otherwise, there usually is not a need to inactivate an event in order to make changes, unless you've created the event on the wrong date.

COPY THE EVENT

This makes re-occurring monthly or weekly meetings easy to post.

* This is the menu where you will also find the ISDN form for connecting to non members. Click on Main and you will find it listed there. A yellow box indicates some kind of error has occurred with your posting. The error can include:

1. Over-scheduling the satellite. If this happens, first check the calendar to see what else the satellite is being used for at that time. There's a good chance that it's the same program that you're trying to post. If that is the case, contact the person that posted the event, or contact Sara at AAN. If that is not the case, contact Sara at AAN to see about arrangements for another satellite.
2. You have scheduled an ISDN site. This is not an error, but you will need to contact Sara at AAN for further assistance with this.
3. You have scheduled a site that is already in a conference.

Troubleshooting

The Adirondack Area Network has a qualified staff of engineers and technicians who can address your needs. For any of the following, **call Sara at (518) 479-1226**

Technical Problems

Initial Connection

Lost Connection

Loss of Video

Loss of Audio