1. **Before the Virtual Session**
* Clarify technical requirements ahead of the meeting
* Onboard participants beforehand
	+ Ensure participants are comfortable with the platform
	+ Allow a test session for those who may be unfamiliar with the platform and tools
* Email clear instructions
	+ Ensure all instructions can be found in on location
	+ Provide your contact information in case there are questions or concerns
* Ask participants to contact you if they have special needs
	+ Ensure special needs are considered
* Provide reminders
	+ Disconnect from VPN to improve connectivity
	+ Use headphones if you are in a noisy environment
	+ Mute yourself as a default to improve sound quality for all
	+ Turn camera on as a default to create better engagement
1. **Create Ground Rules**
* Consider email pre-established rules to participants
	+ Be present
		- Stay focused and in front of the screen
		- Avoid other activities
		- Turn off notifications and ringtones
	+ Be concise
		- Get to the point quickly with spoken contributions
		- Limit contributions to one thought each
		- Maximum 30 seconds
		- Mute people who talk for too long
	+ Be quiet
		- Mute should be default to prevent background noise and improve sound quality
		- Remember to unmute to speak
	+ Be on time
		- Log on 5 minutes prior to start time to ensure connectivity
		- If you are late, join quietly to limit interruptions and flow of conversation
	+ Be a human being
		- Activate the video function: make use of technology so we can see each other
		- If video slows the connection think about alternatives – participants select a picture or create a fun avatar to represent them
		- Be caring and patient with each other
* Ask for a sign of commitment for established ground rules
* Ask participants to note in the chat when they want to speak
* Allow the participants to monitor each other
1. **Inspire Engagement and Participation**
* Let everyone contribute at least once – those who speak once will have a greater likelihood to speak again
	+ Create a question of the day and let everyone respond
	+ Start with a Poll - Q. Did you review the prework? Yes/No
* Include social elements
	+ Celebrate birthdays or other events
* Be expressive
* Limit text and slides
	+ Voice is the ideal communication driver
	+ If slides must be used, have a big font for small screens so participants can focus on what is being said instead of being annoyed that they can’t read
* If a participant has a relevant experience or knowledge invite them to share on a topic
* Allow for periodic breaks
	+ Make people physically move
* Break the silence
	+ Ask questions to specific participants
	+ Talk with the participants not at them
* Alternate between input and output
	+ Talk and listen
	+ Share the screen if a participant has a visual to share
	+ Avoid long lecture moments
		- Encourage interaction every 3-5 minutes
	+ Use breakout rooms for significant discussions
		- Provide clear instructions, objectives and timelines
		- Request one participant to be the leader in each breakout room
		- Limit breakout room size to 6 members
* Minimize the threshold to contribute - Participants can waive their virtual hands or use emojis
* Use virtual whiteboards and other options to encourage active participation
* Ask participants a question to ensure you are talking with them not at them
* Allow participants to have the last word by posting one word in the chat
* Maximize and vary the rhythm (energy, momentum)
1. **Maintain an Efficient Virtual Session**
* Be stingy about time
	+ If the information is in one direction, it can be sent electronically
	+ Focus on the conversation or the clarification of information
	+ Consider sharing presentations in advance
		- Use the virtual session time only to discuss questions/implications.
* Use pre-surveys to gather feedback in advance
* Time management:
	+ Limit long talkers
		- Have a timer or clock available
		- Provide a visual timeout warning
		- Politely interrupt and ask a closed question to end their talking
	+ Plan for extra time in case this happens
1. **After the meeting**
* Use the post-virtual session time
	+ Delegate reading, tasks or other to be done after the meeting
	+ Leave online tools open so participants can continue working and discussing after the meeting
* Share slides, notes and resources
1. **Resources**
* apolitical [The public servants' guide to remote meetings](https://apolitical.co/en/solution_article/the-public-servants-guide-to-remote-meetings?utm_campaign=Online%20Event&utm_source=hs_email&utm_medium=email&utm_content=87585660&_hsenc=p2ANqtz--Bgg03eVC0OhzfJaoMZTot1iCaIosN6-8AR9lMTyNuxj5ANmRggG6ccTkBHoLnru0oiB8ujANod0oalej99RPn4IUFnderR3L1gEm4KleUQYAskd4&_hsmi=87585660)