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)