Top Tips for a successful videocall

I. Don't panic

This is a learning curve – so don't beat yourself up if you hit problems and don't panic! There's usually a simple reason why something isn't working. Try to work through your setup and figure out where the weak link is; one common problem is that your microphone is muted and/or that your speakers aren't connected/switched on – particularly if they aren't integral to your device (as they are on an iPad).

II. Background noise and lighting

1. It's the camera of the person making the loudest prolonged sound that becomes the main (dominant) view for everyone on the videocall. This means it's important for your to run your call somewhere that doesn't have background noise. If there is background noise, you will become the dominant view even if you aren't speaking. Another way around this is mute your microphone.

2. Headphones reduce the possibility of feedback loops that can make it very difficult for everybody to hear what is going on. So if you can – use headphones or earphones. These usually connect using a mini-jack. On iPads, the mini-jack is the small circular hole that is found on the short side of the tablet. Headphones don't have to be an expensive purchase - a good pair should cost £30 approx.

3. Remember this is a videocall – so make sure your webcam isn't facing a light source – as it will make your face look very dark! Ensure also that it's pointing on your face or whatever is important to the session and that you aren't sitting in a very dark room.

III. Problem Solving if the picture quality is poor and/or breaks up

1. Test the speed of your broadband: For a great experience, you will need an absolute minimum upload & download speed of 2Mbps. However, the faster the connection, the better. If you are unsure of your broadband speed try taking this test. Take the testing in conditions as close to those you will be using for your session e.g. location and time of day.

2. Move your router clear of other electrical devices: Particularly those which operate wirelessly e.g. Cordless phones, baby monitors, halogen lamps, dimmer switches, stereos, computer speakers, TVs and monitors. Did you know that microwave ovens also reduce Wifi signals? So don't use the microwave when you're taking on a call! Also, place your router on a table or shelf rather than on the floor, and keep it switched on.

3. Lower the demands on your connection: The more devices attached to your Wifi, the lower the speed you get. Devices like tablets and smartphones often work in the background, so try switching Wifi reception off on these when you're not using them. You might also want to manage your family's online activity, so that different people aren't carrying out data-heavy tasks (like HD streaming, gaming or any type of online video) at the same time.

4. Try wired rather than wireless: For the best broadband speeds, use an Ethernet cable that is directly connected to your router rather than WiFi. This is a computer networking cable (that can be almost as long as you like) and will give a faster, more reliable connection. They're available from as little as £3, although the higher quality the better. iPad's can't use Ethernet cables as they work solely with WiFi.

5. Plug your router directly into your main phone socket: Where possible, try not to use a telephone extension lead to connect your router to the line, as these can cause interference which could lower your speed. If you have to use an extension lead, use a new, high-quality cable with the shortest possible length. Tangled and coiled cables can also affect speed, as can interference from your phone line.

IV. Screen Mirroring

You may be asked to perform "screen mirroring" on your iPad when making a videocall – this is commonly used in an App called "Zoom". See here for more details. This can be really useful on some calls BUT it doesn't work on older iPads so first check your iPad is using Software iOS 10 and above. You can do this here. NB. This doesn't mean you will be unable to use "Share content" which is a completely separate function.