

Video Calling: A Report Card



THIS ZOOM BACKGROUND SAYS:

“I barely showed up for work this morning.”

OTHER ISSUES: Though the gleaming environment is a pleasant backdrop, his rumpledness contrasts unfavorably with it. We are looking up his nose, and the too-low camera angle focuses on his wrinkly shirt and on his hands, which appear oversize. The blue shirt contrasts nicely with the all-white foreground—but since he is rumpled, it attracts negative attention in an otherwise immaculate environment.

HOW TO IMPROVE: Swap out the wired headset from 2005 for a sleek Bluetooth model, and raise the camera to eye level. Consider adding books or tools specific to his profession. If he continues to be rumpled, create a more relaxed background.



THIS ZOOM BACKGROUND SAYS:

“I have a pole protruding from my head.”

OTHER ISSUES: Backlighting. Bright light streaming through the window directly behind her makes her appear to viewers like a shadow. Also, horizontal stripes are unflattering on camera.

HOW TO IMPROVE: Reposition so that **no window-frame lines intersect with her body**. To give the background more life and texture, add more plants to the already lovely selection. Choose a monochromatic shirt that contrasts well with the turquoise plant pot and mug. (Pro tip: look directly across the color wheel from turquoise for its complementary color, which is pink.) And of course, raise the camera to eye level.



THIS ZOOM BACKGROUND SAYS:

“Hey, stare into my bathroom mirror.”

OTHER ISSUES: Distraction alert! The viewer’s eye is drawn to things that are shiny, and the metallic toaster and mirror take attention away from the speaker. The viewer is further distracted by the awkward camera angle, which chops off the top of his forehead in a way that makes it appear to be very large.

HOW TO IMPROVE: Simply lift the camera and **put a curtain over the bathroom doorway**. Anything alive—plant, cat, etc.—would also help.

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