

## LIGHTING FOR VIDEOCONFERENCING

The way you set up your lights will make a big difference in the way people on the other end of your call perceive you. You don't have to imitate Hollywood, but a few basics will go a long way to improve communication. Remember, communication is the point: if people can't see your facial expressions, or read your body language, you might as well be making a phone call.

Here are a few basic rules:

- The first point isn't about lighting *per-se*, but without this point, any lighting you set up will go to waste: make sure the people on your end fill up a good portion of the frame. If it's just you, that means your face. If it's your classroom, it means the students. You can either bring the camera closer to your subject or zoom in the lens. However you do it, you want your callers to see this:



and not this:



- Make sure there is light on the *front* of your people, not just the *top*, and especially not just the *back*. Ceiling lights make your hair glow, but they don't do much for your face. Of course, if you put a bright light right on top of your viewing screen, it's going to blind the people on your end. A good rule of thumb is to make sure there is a light no more than 45 degrees off to the side and no more than 45 degrees above eye level.
- Any light is better than no light. A table lamp placed at the front of the classroom can make a big difference. In fact, a table lamp is more pleasant and just as effective as twisting a desk reading lamp so that it glares at your students.
- A neutral background is best. The camera in your Polycom or similar video conference endpoint has an automatic exposure control. A bright background tends to make faces go dark, and a dark background tends to make faces wash out too bright. Try not to have a window in back of the people. Of course, you can't always control the background, so what do you do? Go back to the first point above: the more your face and body (or faces and bodies) fill the foreground, the less you have to worry about the background.

- **Finally, before the meeting takes place, look critically at your own image on the screen. Can you see your own face? Can you tell if you are smiling or frowning? People like to be able to see the eyes and the mouth of the person they are talking to. Can they see yours? Try a few experiments with the lights in the room. You'll make a much better impression on the people at the other end of the call.**