Telecon Etiquette

Connect a couple minutes early. This gives you a chance to deal with technical issues.

Choose a location for yourself with little background noise. If some background noise is unavoidable, use the mute button on your mic/phone when you’re not speaking. Simply turn off the mute feature when you want to contribute to the conversation, and don’t forget to start with your name, e.g. “This is Tom…”

Keep your phone/mic on mute except when you’re actually talking to the meeting.

On webinars, use the Chat feature to communicate unobtrusively. Many online sessions are done with all the audio input from attendees disabled so as to reduce background noise during the meeting. In this case, using the Chat feature is your only way to communicate with the speaker.

Identify yourself before speaking, every time. The lack of visual cues makes this practice essential.

Speak loudly and clearly.

If you arrive late, don’t immediately cut into the conversation to introduce yourself (unless asked). Wait until there’s a pause, and then simply say, “This is so-and-so just joining.”

Pay attention to the telecon. Don’t let all the distractions around you keep you from “being present” in the telecon meeting.

Don’t let “dead air” happen. If you’re getting ready to say something, explain what you’re waiting for “on air” as a radio announcer might do, e.g. “as soon as I find that quote in my notes, I’ll…”

Address people by name when you speak to them. Again, because you have no visual cues, if you simply ask a question or make a remark without indicating to whom you’re speaking, other participants may have trouble determining who’s being addressed.

When appropriate, direct questions to a specific person instead of posing them to the audience at large. Doing so helps prevent confusion and helps ensure that your question is met with an answer rather than just silence as everyone tries to figure out who is going to respond.

Ask questions that will elicit the minimum number of responses you might expect. Generally, this means asking in what appears to be the negative, e.g. “Does anyone disagree?”

Avoid making noise (shuffling papers, talking to other participants, eating, etc.). Any noise you make will distract the other participants.

Do not talk on and on, do not repeat yourself. Do not give sermons. Do not advertise. Do not say the same thing over and over, in a slightly different way each time. These things are just as annoying on a telecon.
If you’re on a phone…

**Never, ever put your phone on hold during a teleconference.** Doing so forces the participants left on the call/meeting to listen to the music your telephone system plays to those on hold, effectively ruining the discussion. If you absolutely must step away from the call, put the phone on mute and set it on your desk instead.

**If possible, select a phone with the handset attached.** Cellular and cordless phones often add annoying static to the call. Speakerphones are a pitfall because they pick up a lot of background noise. In addition, when using some speakerphones, you sound as if you’re speaking in a tunnel, adding to the remoteness of this communication medium.

**Turn off your call waiting.** Everyone on the teleconference can hear the beep as someone tries to reach you on another line, which is distracting and annoying.

**If you’re on a battery-powered phone,** make sure there’s plenty of charge before the telecon starts.