



Online Video Conferencing.

What you need to know!

Before embarking into the world of online audio/video conferences, consider taking a few moments to familiarize yourself with some important nuances to improve the overall experience for you and your listeners.

Know your equipment:

Most laptops come with a built-in camera and microphone. For the most part these devices are ready to go out of the box. A few minor tweaks may be required depending on your personal preferences.

Desktop computers however will typically require an additional purchase as they don't normally come with a camera or microphone. The hardware choices available can be overwhelming but it's important to get the right tool for the job. An all-in-one solution such as a webcam with built-in microphone is always a good first choice as these devices are very easy to configure and rarely require troubleshooting. For audio only, some people may prefer a microphone that offers mobility such as a wireless blue tooth headset.

Know your environment:

With work from home being at an all time high, more people than ever are participating in audio/video conferences from the comfort of their home office. This can bring external factors into the mix that may affect your conference quality. Noises from appliances, pets, and other household members can often be heard over the conference by other listeners. If these factors impact you consider relocating to an isolated part of the house and investing in something like a noise cancelling microphone as part of an audio headset or a more directional microphone if it's not part of an audio headset. Ensure your desktop speakers are positioned away from your microphone, and the volume is set to a level that won't cause feedback over the microphone.

Know your audience:

While working from home, chances are you will mostly be participating in conferences that are comprised of your own familiar co-workers. If that's true the conferences may be held to a lower standard and external factors in your environment may be overlooked. If you find yourself in a more professional setting where the standard should be higher, it's good to keep yourself muted unless you're the speaker to reduce the chances of noise over the conference.

Know your application:

There are many conference software options available. Regardless of which one you or your company has chosen, it's good to familiarize yourself with the interface and options. For example most applications include a mute button and a camera disable button which are usually right next to each other but their location in each piece of software will likely be different.


General Tips:

Distance yourself appropriately from your microphone. If you're too loud, this can be off-putting to listeners or even intrusive to the conference. On a laptop you can simply move the cover back away from you or sit back farther from the microphone (which also applies to webcams with built-in microphone). With a headset, be sure not to put the microphone too close to your mouth as this may cause distortion. Adjust your microphone gain as appropriate if listeners report that you're too loud.

Check your prerequisites:

Before joining your first conference be sure to check your own settings and make sure things are configured and working properly.

If everything is plugged in and turned on, make sure Windows allows permissions for programs to access the camera and microphone (this is the default):

1. In Windows 10 click the "Settings" icon in the Start menu. It looks like this: 
2. In Settings, click "Privacy".
3. On the left side under "App permissions" click on both "Camera" and "Microphone" to make sure other programs have access to them:

Allow apps to access your camera

If you allow access, you can choose which apps can access your camera by using the settings on this page. Denying access blocks apps from accessing your camera. It does not block Windows Hello.



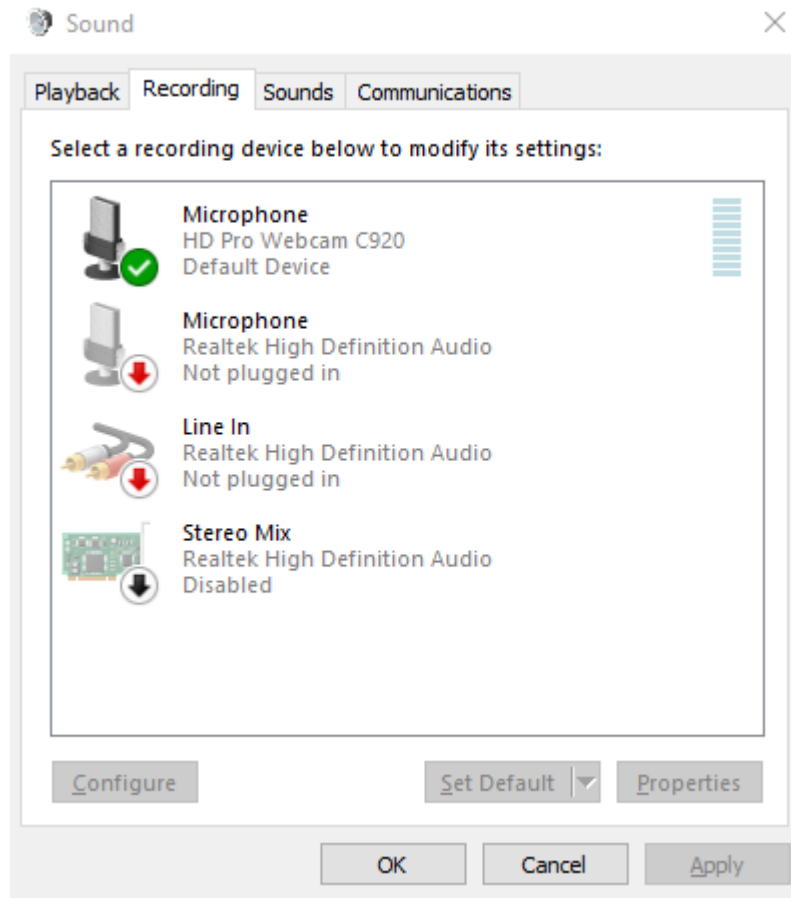
Allow apps to access your microphone

If you allow access, you can choose which apps can access your microphone by using the settings on this page. Denying access blocks apps from accessing your microphone.



Confirm your microphone is set as the default communications device:

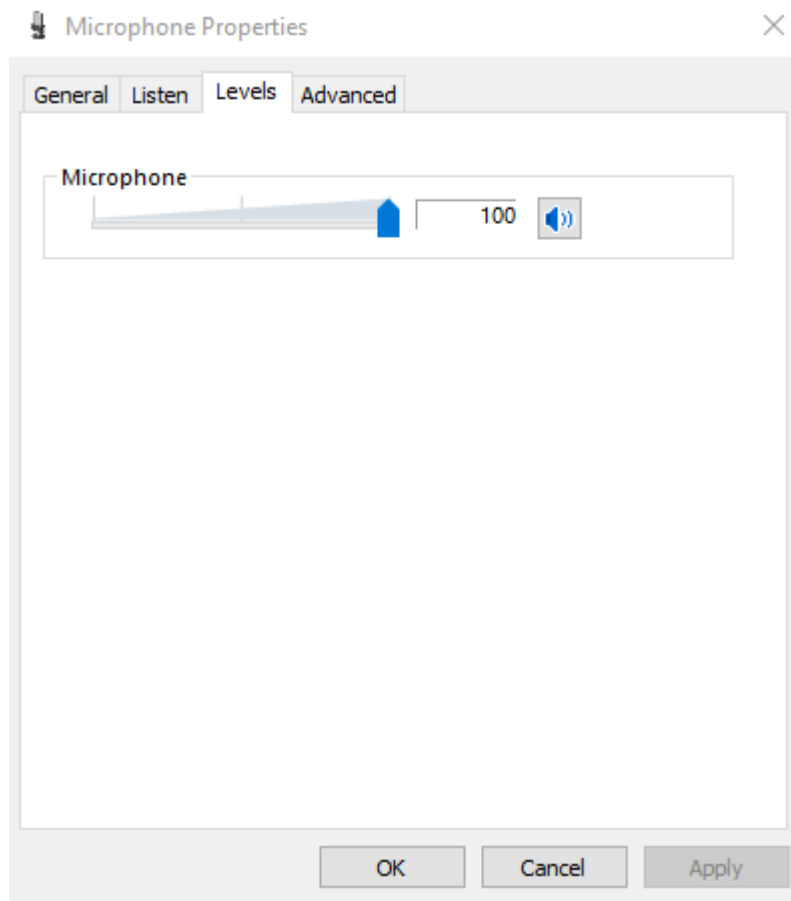
1. In Windows 10 go to the Control Panel and click “Sound”.



2. Click the “Recording” tab.
3. Right click the microphone you want to use and click “Set as Default Communication Device” if it doesn’t already have a green check box next to it.

Confirm your microphone is not muted and the level is appropriate:

1. While still in the “Sound” Control Panel, double click the microphone you want to use and click the “Levels” tab.



A muted microphone looks like this: 