

STUDENT'S WORKSHEET · BUSINESS ENGLISH

Why do video calls make us so tired?

LEVEL
B2 · Upper-Intermediate

TIME
60 min

SKILLS
Reading · Speaking · Grammar · Vocabulary

Learning objectives

In this lesson, you can:

- understand a university news article about research
- explain causes and solutions clearly
- make recommendations with *suggest, recommend, advise, it's worth*
- propose better practices for online meetings

Key vocabulary

fatigue · cognitive load · nonverbal cues · self-view · mobility · peer-reviewed · default · exhausting · audio-only · gesture

Materials

- this worksheet
- article: *Stanford researchers identify four causes for 'Zoom fatigue' and their simple fixes* (Stanford Report)

1 Warm up

SPEAKING

Look at the pictures. What can you see? How are they connected to the topic? Then answer the questions with your teacher.



PICTURE A · a video meeting



PICTURE B · a tired, stressed worker

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1. How many video calls do you have in a typical week?
2. How do you feel after a long day of online meetings? Why?
3. Do you prefer cameras on or off? Why?

2 Vocabulary preparation

VOCABULARY

Part A: Match the words with the definitions.

peer-reviewed (adj) | self-view (n) | nonverbal cues (n) | mobility (n) | fatigue (n) | cognitive load (n)

1. _____ tiredness, often physical and mental
2. _____ the amount of mental effort needed to do something
3. _____ messages we send without words, e.g. gestures and facial expressions
4. _____ the ability to move freely
5. _____ the small window where you see your own video
6. _____ checked by other experts before it is published

Part B: Word formation. Write the noun.

Example: tired → *tiredness*

1. exhaust (v) → _____
2. mobile (adj) → _____
3. recommend (v) → _____
4. intense (adj) → _____
5. critical (adj) → _____ (the act of criticising)
6. solve (v) → _____

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3 Main input: read and learn

READING · GRAMMAR

In 2021, Stanford University professor Jeremy Bailenson studied why video calls are so tiring. Read the introduction and the four numbered causes with their solutions.

ARTICLE

Stanford researchers identify four causes for 'Zoom fatigue' and their simple fixes

Stanford Report (Stanford University) · Vignesh Ramachandran · 23 February 2021 · introduction + four causes (about 3 minutes) · free

https://news.stanford.edu/stories/2021/02/four-causes-zoom-fatigue-solutions

Read the introduction. Answer: Who is the researcher? How many causes of "Zoom fatigue" does he identify?

Language focus: making recommendations

Look at different ways to recommend solutions. Pay attention to the verb form after each one.

Structure	Example
suggest / recommend + -ing	Bailenson suggests taking audio-only breaks.
suggest / recommend + (that) + subject + base verb	He recommends that users hide self-view.
advise + person + to-infinitive	I'd advise you to use an external keyboard.
It's worth + -ing	It's worth turning off your video from time to time.
should / could + base verb	Platforms could change the default settings.

Practice: Complete the sentences with the correct form of the verbs.

1. He suggests _____ (take) audio-only breaks during long meetings.
2. He recommends that people _____ (use) an external keyboard.
3. I'd advise you _____ (exit) full-screen mode.
4. It's worth _____ (move) around the room during calls.
5. Video platforms could _____ (stop) showing users their own image.

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4 Reading comprehension

READING

Part A: Read again. Are the sentences true (T) or false (F)? Circle.

1. In video calls, everyone is looking at everyone, all the time. T / F
2. Seeing your own face on screen makes most people less self-critical. T / F
3. A fixed camera reduces how much we move during meetings. T / F
4. On video, we have to work harder to send and read nonverbal cues. T / F
5. Bailenson wants people to stop using video platforms. T / F
6. The ZEF Scale is a questionnaire that measures fatigue from video calls. T / F

Part B: Complete the table with the solution for each cause.

Cause	Solution
1. Excessive close-up eye contact	
2. Seeing yourself all the time	
3. Reduced mobility	
4. Higher cognitive load	

Part C: Think and answer.

1. Which solution would you try first? Why?

2. Bailenson suggests changes that video platforms could make. Which change would you ask for, and why?

3. Should companies have rules for video meetings? Suggest two.

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5 Speaking practice and discussion

SPEAKING

Part A: Choose TWO cue cards. Talk about each card with your teacher for 1–2 minutes.

Cue card 1: Meetings at my company

- How many?
- How long?
- Which are useful?

Cue card 2: Cameras on or off?

- Advantages
- Disadvantages
- My rule

Cue card 3: My home office

- Set-up
- Distractions
- Improvements

Cue card 4: Online vs in person

- Negotiations
- Brainstorming
- Feedback

Cue card 5: Digital well-being

- Screen time
- Breaks
- Notifications

Part B: Answer the questions with your teacher. Give reasons and examples.

1. How many video calls do you have in a typical week, and how do you feel afterwards?
2. Should cameras be compulsory in online meetings? Why? / Why not?
3. What makes an online meeting effective? Give examples from your experience.
4. What would you recommend to reduce video-call fatigue in your team?
5. Will new technologies such as virtual reality make remote meetings better or worse? Why?

6 Lesson takeaway and wrap-up

REVIEW

Complete the sentences. Then tell your teacher.

1. Three useful expressions from today: _____
2. The cause of fatigue I recognise most in my work: _____
3. I'd recommend that my team _____
4. It's worth _____

Takeaway: Video-call fatigue has clear causes — close-up eye contact, seeing yourself, staying still and extra mental effort — and simple fixes: a smaller window, hide self-view, move around and take audio-only breaks.

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+ Optional extension / homework

WRITING

Write an email (150–180 words) to your team proposing three new rules for online meetings. Explain the problem and use at least three structures for recommendations.

Alternative activity:

Prepare a two-minute presentation: “How to make our video meetings less tiring”. Present it to your teacher in the next class.

References

Ramachandran, V. (2021, February 23). *Stanford researchers identify four causes for ‘Zoom fatigue’ and their simple fixes*. Stanford Report. https://news.stanford.edu/stories/2021/02/four-causes-zoom-fatigue-solutions

Original materials: vocabulary, language examples and exercises were written for NATeacher for B2 learners.

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