

TEACHER'S GUIDE · 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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Teacher's guide

Learning objectives. By the end of the lesson, the student can: understand causes and solutions in an article about research; explain them in their own words; make recommendations with the correct verb patterns; propose practices for online meetings.
Total time: approx. 60 minutes — Warm up 6 · Vocabulary 7 · Main input 10 · Comprehension 14 · Speaking 18 · Wrap-up 5. The extension is optional homework.

▶. Main input: about the resource

Resource: *Stanford researchers identify four causes for 'Zoom fatigue' and their simple fixes*, Stanford Report (Vignesh Ramachandran, 23 February 2021). Free; no login. https://news.stanford.edu/stories/2021/02/four-causes-zoom-fatigue-solutions

What to read: the introduction and the four numbered causes with their solutions (about 700 words, 3 minutes). The final part about the ZEF Scale is optional.

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Key information: Jeremy Bailenson (Stanford professor of communication) published the first peer-reviewed article that breaks down 'Zoom fatigue' from a psychological perspective (Technology, Mind and Behavior, 23 February 2021). He doesn't criticise any platform; he suggests easy changes. 1. Excessive close-up eye contact is highly intense: everyone looks at everyone all the time, and faces appear very large → exit full-screen, reduce the window, use an external keyboard to sit further away. 2. Seeing yourself constantly is tiring and makes people more self-critical → use 'hide self-view'. 3. Reduced mobility: we must stay in the camera's field of view → external camera further away; turn video off at times. 4. Higher cognitive load: nonverbal cues need more effort (e.g. exaggerated nods) → audio-only breaks and turning away from the screen. ZEF Scale: Zoom Exhaustion & Fatigue Scale, a 15-item questionnaire.

1. Warm up

6 mins.

Show the pictures. Ask the questions and encourage the student to describe feelings and reasons.

Possible answers: "The pictures show an online meeting and a tired person — the topic is why video calls are tiring."
Support: give phrases: *I find it..., What tires me is...* **Challenge:** ask "Are online meetings more productive than face-to-face ones?"

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2. Vocabulary preparation

7 mins.

The student completes Part A and Part B alone. Check together, say the words aloud and ask the student to repeat the difficult ones.

Part A

1. fatigue
2. cognitive load
3. nonverbal cues
4. mobility
5. self-view
6. peer-reviewed

Part B

1. exhaustion 2. mobility 3. recommendation 4. intensity 5. criticism 6. solution

British and American English: British *tiring / exhausting* are used in both; British *criticise*, American *criticize*. *Zoom fatigue* is used for all video platforms, not only Zoom.

3. Main input and language focus

10 mins.

Open the article on screen. The student reads the introduction for the gist questions, then the four causes. **Answers:** Jeremy Bailenson; four causes.

Present the language focus in 1–2 minutes: elicit the rule from the examples, then move to the practice.

Practice

1. taking
2. use
3. to exit
4. moving
5. stop

Common mistakes: “He suggested me to take a break” → “He suggested **that I take** / **taking** a break”; “It’s worth to try” → “It’s worth **trying**”; “recommend to use” → “recommend **using**”.

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4. Reading comprehension

14 mins.

The student reads again and works alone. Check together and ask the student to explain each cause in their own words.

Part A

1. T 2. F (more self-critical) 3. T 4. T 5. F (he suggests changes, not stopping) 6. T

Part B

1. Exit full-screen, make the window smaller, use an external keyboard to sit further away · 2. Use "hide self-view" · 3. Use an external camera further away so you can move; turn video off sometimes · 4. Take audio-only breaks; turn your body away from the screen

Part C

1–2. Open answers with reasons. 3. e.g. "Meetings longer than 45 minutes should include an audio-only break." "Cameras should be optional for internal meetings."

Accept: paraphrased solutions with the correct idea. **Support:** give the four cause headings and ask the student to read one at a time. **Challenge:** the student explains the four causes in two minutes without notes, using cause-effect language.

5. Speaking practice and discussion

18 mins (cue cards 6 · questions 12).

The student chooses two cards and speaks for 1–2 minutes on each. Then ask the five questions one by one. Let the student finish, then ask follow-up questions: "Why?", "Have you experienced that?", "What would you recommend instead?"

Model answer (Q4): "I'd recommend that we keep internal meetings under 30 minutes and that people turn off self-view. It's also worth doing some calls by phone while walking."
Evaluate: correct verb patterns after recommendation verbs; clear cause–solution explanations; examples from experience; range of vocabulary; fluency.
Correction: note mistakes while the student speaks and correct 2–3 of them at the end, so you don't interrupt fluency.

6. Lesson takeaway and wrap-up

5 mins.

The student completes the sentences and says them aloud. Ask: "Which change will you try in your next video call?"

Possible answers: "cognitive load, nonverbal cues, hide self-view"; "Seeing yourself all day is tiring."; "I'd recommend that my team takes audio-only breaks in long meetings."

+. Optional extension / homework

Check: 150–180 words; clear structure (problem, proposals, benefits); correct forms after *suggest, recommend, advise, it's worth*; polite, professional tone.

✓. Did the student reach the objectives?

- Can the student explain the four causes and their solutions?
- Does the student use *suggest / recommend / advise / it's worth* with the correct forms?
- Can the student give examples from their own work?
- Can the student propose clear rules for online meetings?

✔. Resource verification log

Resource	Institution / URL	Type · length	Checks (21 Oct 2026)	Result
Stanford researchers identify four causes for 'Zoom fatigue' and their simple fixes	Stanford University (Stanford Report) https://news.stanford.edu/stories/2021/02/four-causes-zoom-fatigue-solutions	Article · introduction + four causes, about 700 words (3 min)	Page loads; content matches the exercises; free, no login; suitable for B2; university news, not a language school	**Approved**

Photos: credits listed in the references (Unsplash). No image links are included in the worksheet.

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

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