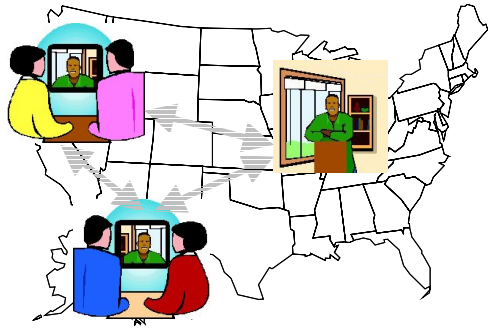


## Video Conferencing at UCLA



It seems like everybody's talking to everybody else over the Internet these days. We see warm and fuzzy commercials showing happy grandparents visiting with their adorable grandchildren half-way across the country by computer. So it's tempting to believe that it won't be long before none of us ever has to leave the office again to meet with anybody anywhere any time.

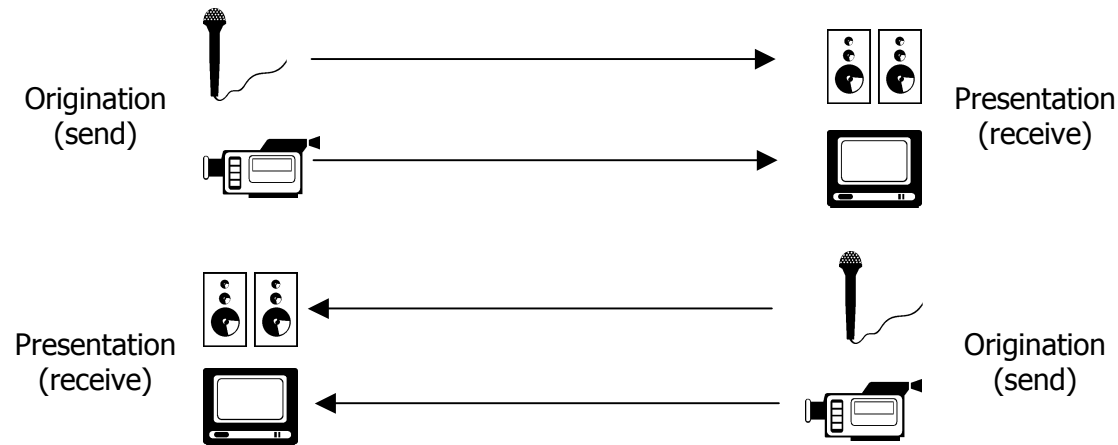
But even though some aspects of videoconferencing have changed for the better (the transmission of the signals), other aspects haven't changed at all (production values), and you should know what to expect before you decide to have your next staff meeting videoconferenced so you can stay home in your bathrobe.

### How it Works

It's really pretty simple. There are just four basic elements involved in videoconferencing:

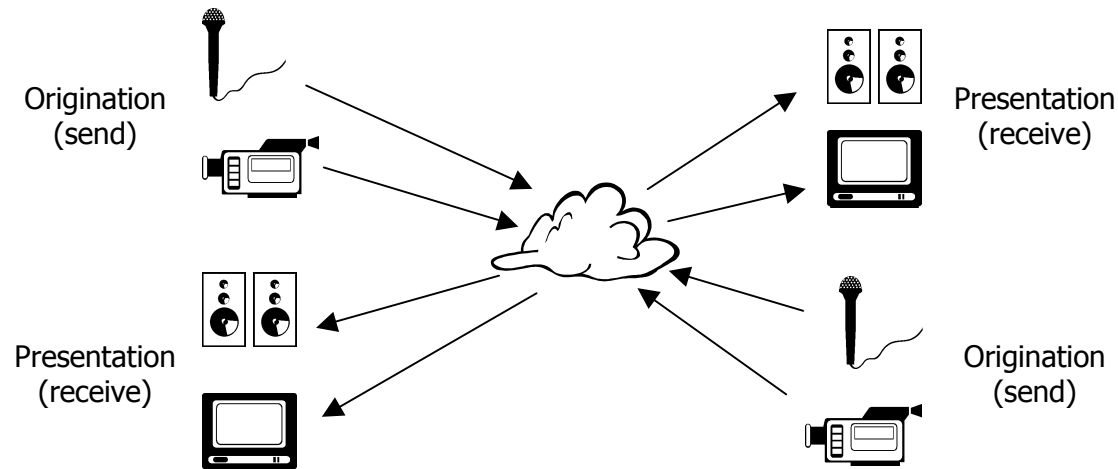
-  a microphone
-  a speaker
-  a camera
-  a tv monitor

Up until very recently, the connections going from one location to the other had to be dedicated, just like your phone line is dedicated. Dedicated connections can be expensive, as you know if you've ever run up a big long-distance bill.



Videoconferencing at its most basic

But because of a new videoconferencing technology called H.323, you no longer need dedicated connections that go directly from one location to another. Instead, if you can just get connected to the Internet at both ends, you can use it to transmit your audio and video signals. Voila! Videoconferencing just became (for now, anyway) a lot more affordable and easy to access.



H.323 has made connectivity cheaper, but it still requires planning and good production values to make it work.

## Seeing and Hearing the Other Person

H.323 is not a magic bullet. When you videoconference over the network, you have to be willing to sacrifice some quality and reliability.

You might notice some freezing, tiling or latency effects, and it's important to keep in mind that internet connections are not as reliable as phone connections – you might lose the connection altogether, or it might suddenly become so slow that it might as well be lost.

## Useful Numbers & Links

### Desktop Videoconferencing

Contact your department's Computer Support Coordinator (CSC). You can find out who your CSC is by consulting this web site:

[www.csc.ucla.edu](http://www.csc.ucla.edu)

### Portable and Room-Based Videoconferencing

Contact the Office of Instructional Development:

310-206-7449  
[www.oid.ucla.edu](http://www.oid.ucla.edu)

### Desktop Videoconferencing Technical Details

Contact your CSC (see above) or Academic Technology Services:

310-825-6635  
[www.ats.ucla.edu](http://www.ats.ucla.edu)

# Which type of videoconferencing is right for your event?

## We've put together some guidelines to help you sort it all out.

### Basic Questions You'll Want to Ask:

Despite the great step forward that H.323 has given us, real-time audio and video capture/broadcast technologies have not changed significantly. You still have to worry about the four basic elements that have to be present at each videoconference site: microphones, speakers, cameras and video display. Here are some of the questions you'll need to ask in order to have a successful videoconference:

- Is there enough light for the camera to be able to pick up people's faces?
- Are there enough microphones and are they distributed adequately?
- Are there enough cameras to be able to capture everyone in the room without having to pan back and forth?
- Are the camera and video display located next to each other in order to simulate natural interaction?
- Have the participants been coached about how to act in front of the camera?
- And, finally, what's your backup plan in case something goes wrong with the connection?

### For casual videoconferencing with a small number of participants...

Desktop videoconferencing, or videoconferencing by using your computer, may be just right for small, informal meetings.

Most computers today are equipped with a microphone, and there have always been monitors and speakers as part of the package, so the only basic element that might be missing is a camera.

Reasons to choose desktop videoconferencing:

- Small number of participants at each location (how many people can comfortably sit around your computer?)
- Participants don't mind that network problems might cause the connection to slow down or die altogether
- Possibly mediocre quality of sound and picture are acceptable
- Participants do not need to walk around, away from the microphone and camera

Examples of use:

- Visit with a long-distance colleague in a format that is friendlier than a phone call
- Consult with a colleague and compare notes almost anywhere in the world
- Create a virtual meeting with several individuals participating from different locations

If you're interested in desktop videoconferencing, contact your Computer Support Coordinator.

### For relatively informal mid-sized gatherings...

Portable videoconferencing is videoconferencing using a portable device connected to a portable tv monitor set up in any room that has a campus network backbone connection. 80% of the general assignment classrooms on campus have campus backbone connections.

Reasons to choose portable videoconferencing:

- 20 – 50 participants
- Participants don't mind that network problems might cause the connection to slow down or die altogether
- Relatively high-quality sound and picture required
- Participants may move around a bit
- Inconvenient or impossible to reserve space in a dedicated facility

Examples of use:

- Invite a colleague in a remote location to give a guest lecture to your class
- Arrange for work groups in distant locations to meet together occasionally
- Accommodate overflow crowds at special presentations and events

If you're interested in portable videoconferencing contact the Office of Instructional Development Videoconferencing and Distance Learning Services or your Computer Support Coordinator.

### For more formal mid-sized gatherings...

Room-based videoconferencing can be accomplished by going to one of the campus videoconferencing facilities in order to videoconference with a remote site.

Reasons to choose dedicated room-based videoconferencing:

- 20 – 50 participants
- Network problems are not well-tolerated by participants
- High-quality sound and picture required
- Participants may move around a bit
- The dedicated facility may have special amenities not available elsewhere

Examples of use:

- Distance learning
- Ongoing collaboration with distant colleagues
- Special events and presentations

If you're interested in room-based videoconferencing, contact the Office of Instructional Development Videoconferencing and Distance Learning Services.