Images from *The New York Times* article *"How to Look Good on Camera, According to Tom Ford"*

In the face of the global COVID-19 pandemic, virtual meetings, conferences, lectures, and gatherings are becoming more frequent. Here are a few tips for producing professional-looking videos at home.

THE TECHNICAL-ITIES

Ideally, recording yourself at home would involve a professional or prosumer-grade camera with a full audio board to record the raw footage and then software like AVID, Final Cut, or Adobe Premiere to edit the footage. If you have those capabilities, certainly use them. Unfortunately, we're not all videographers.

You can get decent-looking video using whatever camera, phone, or tablet you have. Desktop/laptop webcams will also work but are typically lower quality. For direct screencaps, OBS or HyperCam work as well. The most important thing is to use equipment and software with which you feel comfortable.

Footage can be recorded in various sizes and file types. **Always try to record in landscape orientation, preferably in a 16:9 ratio**. Footage should be edited/finalized in a high-definition (HD) format. Resolutions of 4K or 8K at 60fps are best, but lower quality can work down to 720p. Keep in mind - it is always better to record at higher resolution and compress as needed, rather than shoot original footage at a lower resolution. You can always compress from high-to-low resolution, but going the other way is much harder.

Preferred file types are MPEG-4 (.mp4, .m4p), .mov files, and .avi files.

STEP ONE: SET THE STAGE

A few things to think about before you start recording
- Think about what you want to say. Jot down notes, talking points, or a full script and practice it. If you can, memorize your speech (but don't worry if you wind up ad-libbing a bit.)
  o If you plan to read your script while on camera, position the text just below your camera, to maintain your eye line with the lens. Do not put a sheet of text too far to the side.
- Make mindful sartorial choices. Stick to solid colors or loose prints – nothing too bright or busy.
- If you have foundation or face powder, apply some.

- Make sure whatever technology you are using to record (phone, laptop, wireless microphone, etc) are either fully charged or plugged into power.
- Make sure all connections between devices (Bluetooth connections, wireless internet connections, etc) are stable and working correctly.
- Make sure other devices in the room (phones, alarms, etc) are on silent or shut off.
- If you are recording with your phone, tablet, or computer, make sure no programs are open that will make noise, ring, or pop-up on the screen.

STEP TWO: SETUP

Make sure the camera you are using is on a stable surface and elevated slightly higher than your head.
- If you have a tripod for your camera or phone, use it.
- If you are using a laptop web camera, stack books under the laptop to elevate the camera to the proper height.
- If you are using a phone, make sure you are either a) using a phone stand or tripod, or b) prop the phone against something solid, so it will not slide or shift during recording.

Make sure your face is lit from the front, and there isn't too much light behind you.
- Advice from *The New York Time's* Tom Ford: "[…] take a tall lamp and set it next to the computer on the side of your face you feel is best. The lamp should be in line with and slightly behind the computer so the light falls nicely on your face. Then put a piece of white paper or a white tablecloth on the table you are sitting at but make sure it can't be seen in the frame."

Good sound quality is essential. Use a wireless microphone or lapel microphone if available. You can find them at a relatively low cost [for computers and phones](). Also, be sure to control the ambient sound.
- Bigger rooms are better.
- Make sure surrounding devices are set to silent or turned off.

STEP THREE: RECORD

Record a test run or two, and view the test recording, to see if any equipment needs adjustment. Be sure to check your cadence while speaking (not too slow, not too fast), your sound level (not too loud, not too soft), and your framing in the shot (your position on the screen).

When you record your final cuts, be sure to:
- Leave at least 5 seconds of silence at the beginning and the end of your recording (don't start speaking immediately and don't turn off the camera immediately after finishing.)
- Record your video more than once. It's always good to have options.
- If you have editing capabilities, you can choose the best moments from various takes to splice together later. If not, you will need to choose one clean, unbroken take as your final video.