

The Home-Office Setup Checklist

Fix your setup in the order that matters: what people hear, then what they see, then how you feel at 4pm.

1. Connection: fix this first

A dropped call is almost always the connection or the dock failing.

- ☐ **Wire the desk if you can.** For calls, latency and stability beat headline speed.
- ☐ **Dead zones?** Mesh Wi-Fi with a wired link between nodes beats a more powerful single router. No dead zones means you don't need mesh.
- ☐ **Wi-Fi 6 is the sensible floor.** 6E/7 only matter if your devices use them and the airwaves are crowded.
- ☐ **Dock or hub: know which you're buying.** A hub adds ports on the go; a powered dock runs monitors, charges the laptop and stays on the desk.
- ☐ **Match the dock to the laptop.** Thunderbolt docks need a Thunderbolt laptop for full spec. Check dual-4K claims against your machine's chipset.
- ☐ **Laptop charging through the dock** should exceed your laptop charger's wattage, with margin.

2. Audio: people tune out bad sound in seconds

People forgive a mediocre picture. They don't forgive bad audio.

- ☐ **Use a dedicated mic or headset, not the laptop or webcam mic.** The mic in any webcam is worse than a basic USB mic.
- ☐ **Normal, untreated room? Pick a dynamic mic.** It rejects echo, keyboard noise and HVAC hum. Condenser mics sound richer but need a quiet, soft room.
- ☐ **USB is all most people need.** XLR needs an audio interface; only go there if you'll grow into it.
- ☐ **Get the mic off the desk.** A boom arm keeps it close and stops every keyboard thump.
- ☐ **Set up the companion software** (EQ, compression, noise reduction). It often matters more than the mic itself.
- ☐ **Headset or headphones?** A business headset's boom mic is built for voice; consumer ANC headphones are better for music and focus but have a weaker call mic. Pick the half of the job that matters more.
- ☐ **Two people on one call?** A full-duplex speakerphone lets both sides talk at once without clipping.

3. Light: the cheapest upgrade to how you look

One good light makes a cheap webcam look professional. A dim room makes an expensive one look like a laptop lid.

- ☐ **One key light, slightly above eye level, 30–45° off to one side, facing you.** Not behind you, not flat-on.
- ☐ **Bigger and diffused beats small and bright.**
- ☐ **Match colour temperature** to your room or window light so you don't look orange or blue.
- ☐ **A monitor light bar lights your desk, not your face.** Useful alongside a key light, not instead of one.

4. Camera: only after light and audio

- ☐ **Any dedicated webcam beats a built-in laptop camera.**
- ☐ **1080p is enough for calls.** Zoom and Teams compress to 1080p or lower anyway; 4K helps only if you crop or record for editing.
- ☐ **Dim room? Prioritise low-light performance** (sensor size, aperture) over resolution, or fix the light first.
- ☐ **A tighter field of view (about 65–78°)** keeps the focus on you, not the room.
- ☐ **No physical shutter?** Add a sliding cover.

5. Desk and chair: where money is most often under-spent

- ☐ **Chair: adjustability is the whole game.** Seat height, seat depth, armrests, lumbar and recline should all move independently.
- ☐ **A renewed premium chair** often beats a new mid-price one at the same cost.
- ☐ **Standing desk only if you'll actually alternate.** Otherwise a solid fixed desk at the right height is better value.
- ☐ **Desk depth of at least 27 in (70 cm)** so the monitor sits at arm's length.
- ☐ **Screen at eye height.** A monitor arm frees desk space; your monitor's weight should sit mid-range on the arm, not at the limit.
- ☐ **A single 27 in monitor** is the sweet spot; USB-C with power delivery means one cable to the laptop.
- ☐ **Mouse: shape and weight over button count.**

6. Power: consolidate, then protect

- ☐ **One multi-port GaN charger can replace several bricks.** Check the per-port split: a "100W" charger may only give the laptop 65W with a second device plugged in.
- ☐ **Surge protection on anything expensive.** A basic power strip is not surge protection.
- ☐ **Power flickers where you live?** A UPS keeps the router and desktop alive long enough to save and shut down.

What you can skip

4K for calls · webcam "AI" auto-framing · sample rates above 48 kHz · hi-res Bluetooth codecs for calls · RGB lighting · 240Hz+ screens for office work · charger wattage far beyond your devices