

Should You Have to Keep Your Camera On?

Remote learning is tough for everyone. Does showing your face make it better—or worse?

Dear students,

I would like to announce a new rule for remote learning. Starting next Monday, March 15, all students must keep their cameras on while in Zoom meetings with their class.

The primary purpose of this rule is to make your teachers' jobs easier. Can you imagine giving a presentation in class with everyone's desk turned around? That's what it's like for teachers facing a screen of black boxes. They can't tell when someone looks confused. They also can't tell who's paying attention. A student with the camera off might be on TikTok—or not even in the room!

Another reason to keep your cameras on is that it helps you all connect with each other. Building a community at school is important—and it's difficult to do when you don't know what your classmates look like.

I'm confident that you'll all take this new rule seriously.

Sincerely,

Principal Willis

ACTIVITY #1 Prewriting: Is the “Cameras On” Rule Fair?

What to do: Use evidence from the letters to support each side of this debate. Write the information on a separate sheet of paper.

Yes! Being on-screen helps everyone.

No! It just adds to students' stress.

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ACTIVITY #2 Response: Is the “Cameras On” Rule Fair?

Dear Principal Willis,

I'm writing to let you know that I think your new rule is a bad idea. Remote learning is challenging enough, and being on camera adds to that stress. Not having to worry about how you look every day makes things a little easier.

But that's not the only problem with the rule. Some kids are embarrassed to turn their cameras on—maybe because their house is a mess, or maybe because they live in a shelter. Students don't ordinarily have to share their home life at school, and they shouldn't be forced to while remote.

Finally, there's a practical reason why some kids keep their cameras off: slow internet. Seeing other people get blurry or freeze up is really distracting for everyone!

I understand that there are advantages to having our cameras on, but making it a rule feels unfair. I really hope you'll reconsider.

Sincerely,

Maria Gonzalez

