

Basic Definitions for Video Conferencing

analog signals

Audio/video signals currently used in broadcasting where the signal is represented by variable measurable physical quantities (such as voltage). Current TV and radio signals are analog, as are many telephone lines. (Contrast with digital)

bandwidth

In casual use, the amount of information that can be transmitted in an information channel. High bandwidth Internet access means those web graphics load quickly on Netscape. High bandwidth videoconferencing means that the picture and sound will be clear. In computers, the speed at which data can be transmitted on a communications frequency.

In telecommunications, the maximum frequency (spectrum) measured in Hertz or cycles per second, between the two limiting frequencies of a channel.

codec

Coder-Decoder. Videoconferencing hardware that codes the outgoing video and audio signals and decodes the incoming signals. Prior to transmission, the codec converts analog signals to digital signals and compresses the digital signals. Incoming audio and video must be decompressed and converted from digital back to analog.

compressed video

When the vast amount of information in a normal TV transmission is squeezed into a fraction of its former bandwidth by a codec, the resulting compressed video can be transmitted more economically over a smaller carrier. Some information is sacrificed in the process, which may result in diminished picture and sound quality.

desktop videoconferencing

Videoconferencing on a personal computer. Most appropriate for small groups or individuals (compare with room-based videoconferencing). Many desktop videoconferencing systems support document sharing.

document sharing

A feature supported by many desktop videoconferencing systems that allows participants at both ends of a videoconference to view and edit the same computer document.

echo-cancellation

Process of eliminating acoustic echo in a videoconferencing room.

H.320 standard

A widely-used video compression standard that allows a wide variety of videoconferencing systems to communicate.

ISDN

Stands for Integrated Services Digital Network. ISDN is essentially a digital network that will provide seamless communications of voice, video, and text between individual desktop videoconferencing systems and group videoconferencing systems. ISDN is expected to replace current telephone lines.

multipoint videoconference

Videoconference with more than two sites. The sites must connect via a video bridge. (Compare with point-to-point videoconference.)

point-to-point videoconference

Videoconference between two sites. (Compare with multipoint videoconference.)

room-based videoconferencing

Videoconferencing using a sophisticated system. Appropriate for large groups (compare to desktop videoconferencing).

videoconferencing

Communication across long distances with video and audio contact that may also include graphics and data exchange.