

Virtual Interview Tips

The Center for Career & Leadership Development offers virtual mock interviews. Visit mga.edu/ccld on how to schedule an appointment.

IN WHAT WAYS ARE VIRTUAL INTERVIEWS THE SAME AS IN-PERSON?

- **STILL DRESS PROFESSIONALLY:** To look your best on camera, avoid bright colors and patterns and opt for softer colors instead. If you are wearing a tie, wear a solid color rather than a patterned one. If you wear glasses, adjust the lighting in the room to reduce glare from the lenses. While it's likely that the interviewer will only see your upper half, it's still a good idea to wear professional pants or a skirt in case you need to stand up for any reason. Plus, there are personal benefits as well as people tend to feel more comfortable, confident, and competent when wearing business attire.
- **DO YOUR HOMEWORK:** You still need to make sure to research the company/organization before the interview using the organization's website, Handshake description, LinkedIn, news articles, and other resources to conduct your research
- **PREPARE TO ANSWER COMMON INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:** While the interview set-up will be different, the questions asked should be the same. Questions related to your strengths, weaknesses, why you want to work for us, what you bring to this position, and how you handle conflict or difficult situations are common questions. Also, always have at least a couple of questions to ask them at the end. Not asking questions at the end of the interview shows a lower level of interest, as it is very unlikely you will receive all the information for the job based on the job description and interview.
- **HAVE ALL NECESSARY PAPERWORK NEXT TO YOU:** Similar to an in-person interview, you should have a copy of all of your application materials (resume, cover letter, references) right next to you during the interview to be able to easily refer to if needed. Just like an open note test, you need to know the material on your documents so you aren't searching for information during the interview. You should also have a notepad and pen to write down any important information or additional questions you may think of as the interview progresses.
- **FOLLOW UP AFTER THE INTERVIEW:** Send a thank you, by either email or a written note, to the interviewer(s) within 24 hours after the interview. This is your first chance to follow-up. You may want to mention different pieces of information and tidbits of relevant conversation from the interview. An additional follow-up via phone or email would be appropriate 1 or 2 weeks later, depending on when they told you they would contact you.

SETTING THE ENVIRONMENT FOR YOUR VIRTUAL INTERVIEW

- Find a room with optimal lighting, preferably a well-lit area near a blank wall to guarantee you are the focal point of the conversation. Be mindful of sitting near windows as too much light coming through the windows can make it difficult to see.
- Make sure to tidy up your surroundings. It's hard to convince employers you are detail-oriented and organized when there's piles of clothes or books all around you.
- If you have pets, move them to another room, if able. Pets can potentially be a distraction for both the interviewer and interviewee.
- If others are living with you, it may help to put a note outside the door to remind them you are currently interviewing to help avoid accidental walk-ins during the interview
- Make sure to eliminate other distractions by turning off the TV, silencing your cell phone, and closing any nearby windows to help eliminate outside traffic noise.
- Set out a bottle or glass of water next to you in case your throat gets dry during the interview.

TECHNOLOGY TIPS

- **BECOME FAMILIAR WITH THE TOOLS COMMONLY USED:** While there are quite a few videoconferencing tools being utilized for interviews, there are six that are the most common for virtual interviews. These are: Zoom, Webex, Google Chat, Microsoft Teams, Skype, and Blue Jeans. With some of these, you may need to go ahead and make accounts ahead of time in order to use that tool. Luckily, you will likely receive a link to the interview meeting days before the interview. So, make sure to research that specific tool and set up anything you need to ahead of time (e.g. you need a gmail account for Google Chat).
- **TEST, TEST, TEST:** It is imperative that the day before the interview, and then again half an hour or so before the interview, to check and test every aspect of technology that you will be using. This includes internet speed, webcam, audio, microphone, and battery life. If you are able to set up a test meeting in the virtual conferencing tool being used, find someone to test that out with so that you know how to properly log in and join the interview meeting when it is time.
- **ANGLE YOUR CAMERA APPROPRIATELY:** Don't sit too far or too close. To be well proportioned, make sure there's a bit of empty space on the screen above your head and check that your shoulders and upper chest are visible.

BODY LANGUAGE

- **Maintain eye contact.** Eye contact is very important in interviews, though with virtual interviews it can sometimes be tricky. While you will be tempted to look at the screen while you answer a question, try to direct your gaze at the webcam when you are answering questions as this will align better with the interviewer's eyes on the other end. After you have finished answering, then look back at the screen. When listening, nod and smile to show you are engaged, but be mindful of how often you nod. You should nod so that your interviewer knows you understand what they're saying, but nodding your head too much can across as though you're not really listening
- **Use hand gestures sparingly.** While hand gestures can be used to help emphasize a point, waving hands in front of a screen repeatedly can become a distraction if overdone.
- **Be mindful of the nervous habits you may have.** Nervous habits like twirling hair, playing with jewelry, and tapping or picking your nails will be noticeable and distracting in an interview and can indicate a lack of confidence.
- **Maintain good posture** by sitting in your chair with your back straight and your shoulders open. Feet should be planted on the floor and arms can rest in your lap or on the desk.

PHONE INTERVIEW TIPS

Employers chose to conduct phone interviews for different reasons. Phone interviews are sometimes called "pre-screen interviews" and are done to make an initial introduction, clarify issues on the resume, or discuss the specifics of the position more. Companies can save time and effort by screening applicants by phone against very strict criteria before asking them to come in for an interview. Phone interviews are also used to screen someone who is interested in a position that will require extensive telephone contact with others. It is a good way to see if a person's skills match what a company is looking for by testing them in the environment where the person will be using those skills. A big difference in a telephone interview as opposed to a virtual or in-person interview is that both you and the interviewer are deprived of visual cues and body language, so you have to pay strict attention to inflection and tone. However, the best part about a phone interview is that you can have your key talking points in front of you and won't forget them."

Here are some additional tips specific to phone interviews:

- It can be helpful to stand in front of a mirror in order to keep good energy and to remember to smile (a person can hear it through the phone).
- Still dress nicely and fix your hair so that you feel good about yourself and have more confidence.
- Keep your phone on and in front of you 5-10 minutes before so you're ready in case the interviewer calls you a moment or two before the agreed upon time.
- Get your voice ready and practice speaking a few minutes before the start time of the interview to ensure you sound alert, not groggy or scratchy.
- Do not feel the need to fill every moment of silence with words. When you're asked a question and do not have an immediate response, it's okay to pause to think through your answer before you start speaking. Reversely, if you've said what you needed to say and your interviewer hasn't responded yet, there is no need to start speaking to fill the space as the interviewer is likely taking notes and might need a few seconds to catch up.
- Do not chew gum, smoke, or eat during the interview.



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