

Virtual Interviewing Tips



What is a Virtual Interview?

A virtual interview is an interview that takes place remotely, sometimes over the phone, but often using technology like video conferencing and other online communication platforms. Virtual interviews are often conducted in the same way as face-to-face interviews. That said, virtual communication requires special considerations and adjustments due to the limited ability to read body language and facial expressions.

Perfecting Your Virtual Interview

Here are a few considerations to set yourself up for success:

1. Test your technology beforehand

A virtual interview requires tools like a camera and microphone on your computer, a software program (such as Google Hangouts or Zoom) and a reliable internet connection. At least a day before your virtual interview, check all of your technology to ensure it works effectively and can be used to communicate effectively. That means having a functional computer that meets technical specifications, downloading any necessary software and ensuring the connection is strong enough to sustain streaming video.

In the 15 to 30 minutes before your interview, check your internet connection and sign in to the video or phone meeting provided by the HR representative or hiring manager. Turn on the sound/microphone and video to ensure everything is in working order in time for your conversation.

2. Wear professional attire

In a virtual interview, you should dress the same as you would in a face-to-face interview. Doing so not only makes you appear professional and excited about the opportunity, but it will also make you feel more prepared and confident. When an interview takes place from a remote location like your home, you should expect it to be just as formal as one that takes place in an office—if you're unsure, business casual is a good standard to follow. A great outfit example for men and women is a button-down shirt and blazer with slacks.

3. Prepare in advance

As with any interview, you'll get the best results if you take time to prepare in advance. Just because you are in front of your computer doesn't mean you should rely on the ability to quickly look up answers or rely on pre-written answers you can refer to. You should prepare so you are able to have a natural conversation without clicking around or reading directly from a script, which can seem rehearsed and unnatural.

Employers may give you a list of questions in advance that they want you to answer, which can help you navigate your research. More often, you will be asked to give answers without prior knowledge of the questions. If this is the case, prepare the same way you would for an in-person interview by planning for 'commonly asked interview questions', researching the company, reviewing the job description, and preparing relevant examples of your achievements and experience.

4. Limit distractions

The best place to take an interview in your home is a quiet location with few distractions. Choose a room that is clean and professional looking so the interviewer can focus their attention on you and not what is around you. If you don't have a dedicated office space, you can also use a bedroom or guest bedroom, your kitchen table or

even cleared-out closet space. Try to place your computer on a table or desk instead of your lap or couch. If possible, do NOT use your cell phone for video interviews.

Tell people you are sharing space with about the area you'll be using for your interview, the time of your interview, and that you and your quiet space will be off-limits during that time. Respectfully explain that during this time, it is best that the house stays quiet with limited distractions. You might also place pets in a designated room during the interview.

5. Use professional body language

Because interviewing via video or phone limits the ability to communicate with body language, it is important to utilize body language in a clear, professional way. For example, if you get a question that is unexpected, make sure to stay poised and take a moment to collect your thoughts.

Sit up straight and ensure your camera is placed so your face is in the middle of your screen (not too much blank space above or below your head). In most interviews, you shake hands with your potential employer at the beginning and the end of the discussion. It's an important body language cue that helps you establish the relationship. Instead, find other ways to greet and exude enthusiasm, like smiling and giving a confident wave with eye contact.

6. Build rapport

Establishing rapport is important in any business relationship because it allows you to separate yourself from other candidates by building a personal connection with the interviewer. When you interview in person, your enthusiasm, body language, handshake, and early small talk all help you build that connection with your potential employer.

When communicating virtually, it's still necessary to find ways to establish rapport. You can do this by being prepared to talk about a common interest, asking how your interviewer's experience has been with virtual interviews, or by finding some other neutral topic with which to learn more about your interviewer.

7. Be authentic

When interviewing virtually, you have the rare opportunity to speak in a relaxing, familiar environment and show the interviewer who you are and why you're the best person for the job. Recruiters will look for how you express yourself to understand whether you are a good fit for the company. Use tools like your body language, facial expressions, and interview preparations to convey your confidence and personality as it relates to the position.

8. Ask Questions

To show interest in the position and company, you should always ask a couple of questions at the end. Standard questions such as "How would you define someone as successful in this position?" or "What is the most important responsibility of this position?" are acceptable. You can also ask questions that relate to specific things mentioned in the virtual interview. Of course, never ask about PTO, salary, and benefits in an interview, whether virtual or traditional.

9. Follow up and thank you

After your interview, plan to send a well-timed follow-up. It's good practice to send a follow-up email within 24 hours of an interview, thanking the interviewer for their time, and letting them know you're available if they have any additional questions. Reach out to the HR representative or hiring manager you've been speaking with to get a list of your interviewers' emails.

