

Mastering the Virtual Interview

You applied for a great job, you waited and waited, and you finally got an invitation to an interview! You have already done your research on the company and read interview tips and strategies, so you know you can ace it. Then, as you are signing up for a slot, you suddenly realize that the interview will be virtual. How will the interview differ from what you were expecting? What else should you do to prepare?

Virtual interviews are becoming more popular these days, as employers realize that they can be more efficient in interviewing candidates and can consider students from a more geographically diverse set of universities. Fortunately, much of what you already learned about in-person interviews still applies. You just need a few additional tips so you can master the virtual interview too!

Tip 1: Use a Stable Device

When in a video interview with an employer, consider using a laptop or desktop that is resting on a desk or table. This ensures that your screen does not move while you are talking to the employer. If you decide to use your mobile device, find a way to prop it up so you don't need to hold it. Even if you are blessed with nerves of steel and steady hands, a table or desk location will always provide better video, and you will feel more comfortable if you can speak freely without worrying about moving or dropping your device. Whatever device you choose to use, make sure the camera works, and that you are either plugged in or are fully charged, with several hours of battery life.

Tip 2: Check Your Wi-Fi or Internet Connection

For the best experience in a video interview, you will need a steady and reliable Wi-Fi or internet connection with download and upload speeds of at least 2 Mbps to support video chats. If you do not have access to a good connection in your residence hall, home or library, ask your career office to see if they have any suggestions. Wired internet connections are often more stable and reliable than wireless.

Tip 3: Check Your Background and Lighting

Well before your video interview with an employer, check your surroundings to make sure that things are orderly. You don't want to be embarrassed by compromising items in the background, such as open bottles, controversial materials, or a pile of dirty laundry. Just before the interview, remember to scan the area again quickly, in

case something changed. If you choose to use a virtual background, make sure it is appropriate. Also consider finding a quiet place where you can concentrate and not be disturbed by roommates, family members, or pets. If you do not have access to such a place in your residence hall, home or library, ask your career office to see if they have conference rooms, interview rooms, or open offices that can be used. Lighting is also an important consideration. If there is a bright light behind you, your face will not show up well on camera. Avoid having bright sunny windows directly behind you. Try to have some light on you, so that the employer can see you when you are talking. Bright sunlight directly behind your screen is another hazard to avoid; you will look much better during the interview if you are not constantly shielding your eyes!

Tip 4: Turn Notifications Off

While you are in the interview, you will want to focus your attention on connecting with the employer. To avoid being distracted, consider turning off notifications for social media, news, and other applications. A notification at the wrong time might make you miss an important question or make you stop in the middle of a brilliant answer! Your goal is to make the employer think that you are very interested in their company. Focusing on being completely present during your interaction with them is critical!

Tip 5: Dress Professionally

Yes, the interview is virtual, and it might be tempting to see it as being more informal. However, it is still an interview and is not like a Houseparty chat with friends. Professional attire will help you to make a good first impression with an employer. Some experts advise dressing as if you were attending an interview; others say that business casual – button-down shirt or blouse – is reasonable. Try to stay away from T-shirts with logos, ripped clothes, or tops that reveal too much. From a video perspective, it is also good to wear solid colors, avoiding clothes with lots of patterns, stripes or plaids. Your goal is to have the employer to focus on you as a person and not to be distracted by what you are wearing.

Tip 6: Have Your Resume on Hand

Similar to an in-person interview, it is a good idea to have a copy of your resume nearby. The employer may start by asking you something specific on your resume, and you will want to be able to speak to it without missing a beat. You also can use the backside of your resume to take notes that may prompt questions to ask the employer or that can be referenced in your thank you note.

In many ways, a video interview is just like an in-person interview. Maintain eye contact, smile, and be confident. Remember to follow up. The main difference is in being able to make a good impression on camera. If you remember to use the strategies for in-person interviews, with these minor adjustments, you will be on your way to acing a virtual interview!