



# Tips for video interviews

First impressions count. A cliché but true: 33% of interviewers claimed to know whether they were going to hire someone in the first 90 seconds. This may not seem fair but is as true of video interviews (e.g. Zoom, Microsoft Teams etc.) as face-to-face. There is much advice and guidance available on this topic but the key points to consider are around your initial presentation and impact.

## Technical preparation

### 1. Connection and equipment

- Make sure to test your connection (WiFi or ideally cable) beforehand: if at home or you have low bandwidth, ensure you have exclusive use of the connection and that others aren't attempting to stream or download. Keep in mind that a borrowed interview room in the depths of your office won't have a good mobile signal if you're planning to use that. Also avoid using your phone as a WiFi hotspot for your laptop unless you are very confident of the signal.
- Ensure your device is plugged in or fully charged: video calls are much more draining than many other uses.
- Some video software works best on Chrome and not all works well on Safari (Apple).
- With some you can inadvertently have the link open more than once and it may cause echo: close all other links and browsers!
- Use a steady camera, ideally the one built into your laptop: if you have to use mobiles then rest smartphones or tablets on a flat surface or, ideally, in a holder. Don't

hold your device as it will wobble.

- Make sure audio and video is switched on and that you have "allowed" these in your browser, if asked. Test your audio and camera including reviewing position and background (see below).
- Check that both sides know account and connection details: Skype can be especially problematic in this regard. If WhatsApp or Skype (rare but still used!) decide who is calling who if necessary. Agree a backup plan e.g. a mobile number, but don't be tempted to give up on the video option. Telephone calls are not a substitute for a thorough virtual interview.

### 2. Close all apps

Close other programmes that may cause interruptions or distracting notifications such as Outlook, Facebook and Twitter. Not only can it throw you off, and use bandwidth, it can also appear unprofessional as it could be noticed by the interviewer that you're constantly glancing away

### 3. Keep your account professional

With some video apps there may

be account names or photos.

The prospect of an interview with "wackkydavedances1234" is hardly going to fill an employer with optimism. Perhaps stick to your name or initials to maintain professionalism. Also ensure the account doesn't reveal unhelpful personal information or unprofessional photographs. Family pictures are fine if the agreed format is clearly using a personal medium e.g. WhatsApp but again caution is advised.

### 4. Do a trial run

Practice in advance and perhaps a trial run with a friend. There are also great practice interview tools available on line and you can record and then review how you come across.

### 5. Rehearse screen sharing

Not everyone is familiar with this but it's entirely possible you might wish to share documents or other information to go through. Ensure you know how to do so and, in particular, that the correct versions of the right documents (CV for example) are available and obvious when you click on "Share Screen", rather





than anything confidential or personal.

## General preparation

### 6. Questions and answers

- Consider your answers to likely interview questions and how to show your suitability for the consultancy role. Also have a few questions of your own, although nothing which could indicate a lack of preparation! Clear interest and enthusiasm is very important and are demonstrated by prep and great questions.
- Remember the other person will see everything around you, so keep distractions and clutter to a minimum and keep it professional. A plain background is best. Where possible use the preview screen option to check what the scene looks like. Don't look down into the camera: it's a very unflattering angle and for the other person peering up your nostrils and past your head to the ceiling or light fixture isn't great. They will be unimpressed by a cameo appearance by the dog (or anyone else for that matter) or a pile of dirty laundry in the background. Ensure you are in a quiet place where you won't be disturbed.
- Be very careful with lighting: don't sit with your back to a window. Good lighting is very important: you need to be seen (literally "in a good light") and you need to look good.

### 7. Double check arrangements

With video especially useful for long distance and cross border interviewing check time zones. People often state "GMT" when they actually mean British Summer Time (BST) so best to check. Also don't be late! Best to arrive one or two minutes early, not least to allow time for sorting out last minute technology glitches, but probably not 5-10 minutes early. Ensure you have allocated enough time: while video interviews are often shorter and you might have in mind a quick chat you could find it taking a lot longer so if in doubt agree the time window clearly beforehand.

## During the interview

### 8. Dress to impress

Although you may be at home, it's not an excuse to remain in your pyjamas. Dress as you would in a face-to-face interview unless agreed otherwise. Including



your bottom half.... Check it works on screen as some colours and patterns render badly and can be distracting.

### 9. Be conscious of body language

- Take care with posture and body language (e.g. avoid arms folded across chest): this is easy to get wrong on video calls. Remember to act exactly as you would if you were sitting in the same room as the interviewer or candidate.
- Also don't rock in your seat or lean forwards when you speak: easily done but not a good look with a wide-angle lens.

### 10. Know where to look

Maintaining eye-contact is more difficult over video but look into the camera, not just at the screen. It is one of the key adjustments that are required for this medium and makes a huge difference to engagement. There is a particular problem with some Apple kit which has the camera on the side rather than above the screen which makes it look as if you're very distracted by something off to one side!

### 11. Be concise

Avoid lengthy answers, as it can be more difficult in a video interview for the interviewer to politely interject if you're drifting off the question. Keep to the point. Similarly, beware of over-explaining why you left your last job

or want to move: keep it brief unless the interviewer wants a deep delve.

### 12. Consider a cheat sheet

Keep in mind the point above regarding distractions, but remember that unlike a face-to-face interview, a video interview offers more opportunity to use notes, your CV, the job spec or other prompts if you feel they are helpful. These could be printed off or on screen. Make sure however not to give the impression of reading from a script. Reading from a CV is a bad idea in all interview formats and is more obvious than you think in video interview. Don't use the keyboard: you might think it is sensible to take notes, but the other person might think you are replying to emails.

### 13. Etiquette after the interview

- A video meeting invitation may include the interviewer's email address. While not essential, it is generally considered a good idea to thank them for their time and make clear your continued interest, in a warm message. Proper grammar, no typos! This applies whether the meeting was a result of direct contact or via an agency. Don't expect a reply and don't be concerned by a lack of response.
- By following these handy tips, you can ensure you are well-prepared for your video interview, hopefully settling those nerves, and increase your chances of securing the job!