Tips and Recommendations for Virtual Interviews and Meetings

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Since the 2020 – 21 interview season has gone virtual, we have put together the following list to help you prepare for your interview day. Whether you are the interviewer or the interviewee, we hope you will find these tips and recommendations useful. The references at the end of the document are available for more information. We hope you have a fabulous interview season!

Prior to the Interview

1. Ensure good lighting – most cameras will not perform well in poorly-lit room.

> - *The light should preferably come from your front. Backlight will throw your image into a shadow.*
> - *Remember, outdoor light may vary as the day progresses and will also depend on the weather conditions.*

2. Choose a quiet, preferably carpeted room to reduce echo.
3. Set your camera at eye-level to enable good "eye-contact".

> - *To improve eye-contact in Zoom, choose Speaker view.*
> - *Then, position the meeting window close to the camera; this way you will appear to be looking at the person you are speaking with and your eyes won't be darting from side-to-side.*

4. Be aware of your background – virtual backgrounds usually don't work very well and can be distracting.
5. Test your equipment prior to the meeting/interview to make sure everything is running smoothly.

> - *Make sure your computer/phone has enough battery power.*
> - *Keep power cables handy and ready to connect in case your device runs low during the meeting.*
> - *While your mic may be muted upon joining the meeting, make sure the speaker sound is turned up or you will miss other people speaking to you.*

6. Test your internet connection and speed. Ensure you have reliable service, especially with multiple users on the same network.

> 💡 • *You can Google "internet speed test" and click on "Run speed test" to check your internet speed.*
> • *On a Mac, hold down <option> and click the Wi-fi icon to check the strength of your connection to the Wi-fi router (RSSI of -30 to -60 dBm is great; -70 or lower is a poor connection). See Reference 5 below for other devices.*

7. Be mindful of differences in time zone, especially when interviewing at a program outside of your region.
8. Look at the interview schedule at least a day in advance.

> 💡 • *Know how much break time will be available; some programs will give more, some less.*
> • *Plan your bathroom breaks and lunches accordingly.*

During the interview

1. Sit down prepared.
2. Dress appropriately.

> 💡 • *Dress for the job you want, not for the job you have.*

3. Keep your video on.
4. Speak clearly.
5. Try to maintain eye contact by looking at the camera.
6. Move and gesture slowly and naturally – avoid distracting movements.
7. Monitor and be aware of your body language.
8. Avoid distracting background sounds and music.

> 💡 • *Avoid noisy jewelry.*

9. Turn off notifications and place the phone on mute.

> 💡 • *Be mindful of other devices with notifications (iWatch, other smart watches) that can be a distraction. May be better to turn them off.*
> • *Be mindful of apps and programs running on your device which have a notification alert (iMessage, Outlook app). May be better to turn them off.*

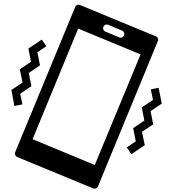10. Mute your mic during group sessions to avoid background noise.

> 💡 • *In Zoom, you can use the space bar to mute and unmute yourself.*

11. Avoid multi-tasking.

> 💡 • *Avoid using the "private chat" feature. It is too easy and risky to accidentally have it go public.*

References

1. Harvard Business School Online. 9 tips for mastering your next virtual interview.
2. Forbes. 12 tips for making your virtual meeting more professional.
3. Inc. 5 tips for conducting a virtual meeting.
4. Pullan, P. (2011). The seven secrets of successful virtual meetings. Paper presented at PMI® Global Congress 2011—EMEA, Dublin, Leinster, Ireland. Newtown Square, PA: Project Management Institute.
5. Eye Networks AS. Wi-fi signal strength: What is a good signal and how do you measure it.