

Virtual and Phone Interviews

Many employers will conduct their first round interviews via the phone or virtually using Skype or another online videoconferencing tool. These interviews typically last from 15-60 minutes, and are used as a precursor to an in-person interview. It is important to have a professional and clean background when conducting a virtual interview. UCS has created free [virtual background templates](#) [1] that students can download and utilize. Here are some [best practices for video interviews](#) [2]:

- Prepare on time. The number one rule of video conferencing is to prepare on time by testing the equipment and checking that everything functions properly. The worst thing that can happen is to start a conference and realize that your Internet connection is not good or that your microphone is not working.
- Pay attention to the camera angle. Video conferences are similar to face-to-face meetings, so you need to pay attention to the angle of your camera. Place it at eye level or slightly above because it will help you to create a notion of eye contact.
- Look straight at the camera. This tip is closely related to the previous one. Namely, many users make video conferencing awkward and unnatural because they look at their own images on the laptop instead of the camera. It's a surefire way to make your speech look silly, so do your best to ignore your image and look directly at the camera.
- Adjust the environment and make it look professional. You are probably in your room during the video conference, so do your best to adjust the environment and make it look as professional as possible. Here are a few suggestions: The room should be well-lit and bright enough. Remove casual wall decorations and paintings that look too strange or unusual. If needed, use a [virtual background image](#) [1] instead of showing your room.
- Eliminate background noise. Do your best to cut the noise and let other participants speak without interruptions. If you are not speaking, mute the microphone. Besides that, remind your roommates or family members not to enter the room while you are video conferencing.
- Dress professionally. The fact that you are working from home doesn't give you a free pass to look sloppy and messy. On the contrary, you need to dress

professionally and look like you would in a face-to-face meeting or interview. Exceptions are allowed only if you know that all the other participants will dress casually.

- Avoid multitasking. How do you feel when people don't pay attention to what you're saying? You probably feel annoyed. Well, the same goes for video conferences and their participants, so you have to pay attention and avoid multitasking in the background. Don't text or answer emails when you're not speaking, but rather focus on your colleagues as you would in an in-person meeting.
- Don't interrupt and ask questions via live chat. Almost every video conferencing tool comes with a live chat platform. You should take advantage of it when asking questions so that you don't interrupt the speaker. They will be notified that there are questions and will answer them when they are ready.

Phone Interviews

When you are having an in-person conversation with someone, you can take in a lot of information through their body language; are they listening, do they seem engaged, do they seem bored? With a phone interview, it is much more difficult to gauge the interviewer's interest. Some tips for a successful phone interview include:

Make sure you are in a quiet, comfortable environment where you will not be disturbed. Use a land-line, rather than a cell phone, when possible.

- Have your resume, notes, job description, and employer research in front of you so that you can glance at them during the interview. Do not read anything verbatim to the employer, and try to minimize the sound of shuffling papers.
 - Smile! Even though the employer cannot see you, smiling can help you come across as personable and warm.
 - Some candidates find it helpful to dress professionally for a phone interview. Though the employer will not see you, it can be helpful to dress as you would for an in-person interview.
 - Be prepared for pauses and silences. If there is an extended silence in between questions, you can ask confirming questions. Comments such as "Was my answer clear?", or "Would you like me to elaborate more on that?" can help you and the interviewer connect and thus provide you with important feedback.
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Links

[1]

https://www.canva.com/design/DAD7gRb295s/rjeyMqUzjigPMD5ah3QISA/view?utm_content=DAD7g

[2] <https://access.vault.com/blogs/workplace-issues/best-practices-for-video-conference-etiquette>