

VIRTUAL INTERVIEW TIPS FROM PROGRAM DIRECTORS



Test your technology

- a. Make sure your computer works and has an updated version of the meeting application.
- b. If using a laptop, fully charge it to 100% battery life and/or have it plugged in.
- c. Ensure your internet connection is secure and reliable.
- d. Be prepared with phone numbers so you can quickly transition to a voice call in the event your computer or internet fails.
- e. Confirm there is no echo or feedback from other microphones in the space you will be using. Have a headset in case issues develop with sound quality or ambient noise.
- f. Speak slowly and enunciate clearly, as connection and microphone issues can degrade sound quality.

Arrange your space

- a. Organize the room so your camera does not show anything you do not want the interviewers to see (eg, bed, bright window). Be very thoughtful about using virtual backgrounds. Generally speaking, this practice is discouraged, but if you are unable to participate in the interview from a place you are comfortable showing on camera, choose a professional background.
- b. Pay attention to lighting. Test different camera angles so your face is not in shadow.
- c. Turn off the camera between interviews and during breaks so as not to highlight an empty chair.
- d. Ensure a quiet location. Post a Do Not Disturb sign on the door.
- e. Ask your institution if there are designated spaces with good lighting, Wi-Fi, and sound proofing. If so, use them.

Limit distractions

- a. Mute phone and computer alerts and avoid multitasking during the interview.
- b. Block your schedule for at least 30 minutes before and after the interview in order to be on time and stay present for the entire interview. If you have a series of interviews, consider taking the entire day off to minimize distractions.
- c. Keep in mind that personal mannerisms such as scratching your head or face, adjusting glasses, rocking or swaying in your chair, and fixing hair become more noticeable when you are being viewed on camera from the chest up. Even these simple movements can become distracting.
- d. Maximize eye contact by looking directly into the camera rather than at the computer screen. Some devices allow you to move the video thumbnails on the screen to just under the camera. Mounting the camera/device at eye level keeps you looking straight ahead, so you and your interviewer see each other in a horizontal plane rather than looking up or down at each other.
- e. During a one-on-one interview, you do not need to mute yourself, which can introduce awkward pauses in the conversation. During group interviews, mute/unmute may be necessary.

Prepare for each interview

- a. Review the program website before your interview.

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- b. Develop several questions specific to the program to ask your interviewer.
- c. Do a few practice interviews in low-stakes settings, such as with a friend or mentor who can provide constructive feedback.
- d. Contact current or past residents to gather various perspectives on the program, institution, and city.
- e. Have electronic versions of transcripts, publications, CVs, or other materials that might support your application on hand so you can share them onscreen or send them by email if the situation arises.

Act professionally

- a. If possible, connect at least 10-15 minutes ahead of your scheduled interview time.
- b. Appear professional in dress and grooming, the same as for a face-to-face interview.
- c. Do not eat, drink, chew gum, or walk around during the interview. A glass of water is fine.
- d. Demonstrate professional body language. Non-verbal cues such as smiling and head nodding (when appropriate) are especially helpful when connecting by video.
- e. Take the virtual interview as seriously as a face-to-face interview.
- f. If participating in a group interview, be mindful of sharing time with others. Convey your responses completely and concisely.

Build rapport

- a. Say a proper, friendly hello. Introduce yourself, current institution, and year.
- b. It is appropriate to smile and use a moderate number of hand gestures.
- c. Be prepared for questions related to any past experiences listed on your CV or application.
- d. Strike a balance between being concise with your answers and connecting with interviewer interests. Observe interviewer non-verbal cues if you decide to elaborate on a topic of interest related to the interviewer's work.
- e. Demonstrate interest in your interviewers. If you are familiar with their work, consider asking a specific question or saying something complimentary about it. Do this authentically, not just as a form of flattery.
- f. Be genuine. Avoid clichés. Be specific with your questions for interviewers.

Follow up

- a. Consider sending a thank you card or email.
- b. If you offered to send additional information or materials to an interviewer, do so as soon after the interview as possible.

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