

HOW TO LOOK AND SOUND YOUR BEST IN VIDEO INTERVIEWS

Apply these strategies any time you need to make a good impression on camera.

Using video interviews in the hiring process is one of the fastest growing job interview strategies for large companies. In addition to live virtual interviews, employers are increasingly using pre-recorded video interviews to screen potential candidates. Requiring candidates to record responses to pre-selected questions speeds up the hiring process and limits traditional face-to-face interviewing for finalist candidates. An employer may provide you with questions to answer in a video you record and send to them. Or you may be asked to log onto a software platform that will ask you the questions and record your responses on the spot.

The more professional your video looks, the more professional you will look as a candidate to the employer, so do your homework.

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

Making a good impression during an on-screen interview requires more preparation than for a traditional face-to-face interview. Spend some time to organize your equipment and prepare your location in advance. Record a test video or two to practice at least a day in advance to allow time for changes.

- **Camera:** Use a desktop webcam, laptop, tablet or mobile phone. Desktop webcams or laptop computers provide the most stable shot. If recording with a phone or tablet, use a tripod.
- **Audio:** Test your audio in advance to ensure that playback is loud and clear. Coordinate with a friend to check the sound quality. If it is poor, you may need a microphone to properly amplify your voice for the recording.
- **Location:** Choose a quiet spot at home or in an office. Avoid spaces with extraneous noise such as dogs, children, music playing or outdoor noises from traffic or heavy equipment. Lock the door if possible and tell people in the area that you are recording and need quiet. **IMPORTANT:** Do not attempt to record your interview in a public space like a school library or a coffee shop. Do not try to record it in your car.
- **Background:** Set up your camera to face a neutral (no busy patterns) and distraction-free background. Check what is visible on the screen behind and around you. Piles of dirty clothes, your childhood trophies or messy bookshelves look unprofessional and pull focus off you. Consider setting yourself up in a corner of a room to create depth behind you.
- **Lighting:** Use soft, natural light from a window behind the camera and facing you. Avoid having a bright light shining behind you. If logistics do

IMPORTANT TIPS:

Before beginning, wipe the lens of the camera to ensure it is clean.

Check your router to confirm a strong internet connection.

Put a sign on your door to remind passersby that you are recording.

Avoid distractions during the interview:

- Shut off or silence your mobile phone.
- Unplug landlines.
- Turn off all computer notifications.

Have a copy of your resume and other application documents nearby.

not allow natural daylight from a window, position a light directly behind the camera or two lights on either side. If you have a strong direct light, try aiming the light overhead. The goal is to bathe your face in even light with no shadows.

FRAMING THE SHOT

Once you have tested your equipment and set up your location, practice speaking into the camera. Experiment with different angles. Your face is the focus of the interview. Taking time to frame the shot will pay dividends.

- Position the camera at eye level or slightly above. Prop up your computer on books or boxes if needed to create the correct alignment. This is why you may need to prop up the computer. Avoid high-angle or low-angle shots. You want to replicate a face-to-face interview.
- Frame the shot from the chest or waist up. Your gestures should be visible.
- Place yourself at least at arms-length from the camera to position your head in upper part of the screen—not touching the top or cut off. TIP: If you have too much space over your head, it will diminish your presence. If the camera is too low, you look arrogant.
- Focus should be on the eyes. Your eyes should rest about a third of the way below the top of screen. Some software platforms actually show a guide on screen to help you line up the shot.

WHAT TO WEAR: Dress the part

Err on the side of overdressing. Research the company culture and dress one level above. Even if it's likely you'll dress casually on the job, dress up for an interview.

Men: Wearing a shirt and tie is appropriate. Wear a suit jacket for formal business cultures.

Women: Consider wearing a solid color top or blouse with or without a jacket.

Always contrast the color of your shirt and jacket. Avoid matching your background, and beware of wearing green if using a green screen. Solid colors and bright colors can work well. Choose blues, browns, tans, maroons, grays and purples.

AVOID:

Black and white. Large and busy patterns. Pinstripes. Tweeds. Small patterns like paisley, plaids, checks, or herringbone. Tight patterns that pulsate on camera. Glittery and shiny fabrics.

DURING THE INTERVIEW

Prepare as you would for a face-to-face job interview. It's more difficult to show engagement onscreen, so attention to details and showing confidence is key. Take these simple steps to look and sound your best on camera.

- Maintain eye contact with the lens. If you need to break eye contact, look down, not to the side or up.
- Avoid staring at the camera. Remember to blink naturally.
- Speak to the camera, NOT to the computer screen (a common mistake.) You may find it helpful to put a sticker, picture or even a small stuffed animal as close to the lens as you can, to remind you to look there.
- Sit comfortably but with good posture – straight shoulders, no slouching.
- Keep an alert and friendly expression on your face.
- Your body language should be open, no crossed arms. If you gesture, keep your hands within the frame.
- If you have points about the company or other supporting evidence you want to include in your answers, stick a couple post-it notes under the camera lens.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

- Maintain a professional expression and look at the camera for a few seconds after answering the questions. You won't know exactly when the recording stops.
- Some platforms give you multiple opportunities to record before submitting.
- If you have the opportunity to re-record your video, follow the same steps as you did the first time. Remember that you want your responses to seem genuine. Your tenth version won't necessarily be better than your first or second.

How to Look and Sound Your Best in Video Interviews is based on insights from Wharton's On-Camera Interviewing Workshop (October 2019) presented by Janet Vasil.

The Wharton Undergraduate Communication Program helps students develop fundamental business communication skills that are critical to long-term success.