

Ten Ways to Ace A Video Interview

By Eilene Zimmerman

Video interviews are no longer a job search novelty, the kind of thing only a tech startup would ask of you. They are edging closer the mainstream as hiring managers and recruiters increasingly look to them as both a convenience and to save the time and money in-person interviews require.

Yet for candidates who have never had a video interview, prepping for one can be stressful simply because they don't know what to expect. In fact a survey by Software Advice, a software review site owned by the research company Gartner, found that only 34% of jobs seekers prefer a video interview to a phone interview. Those most opposed to video interviewing? People who have never had one.

A little preparation, however, can go a long way toward reducing anxiety and ensuring you come across on camera as confident, comfortable and articulate. Here are ten surefire ways to have a successful on-camera interview. They aren't difficult and they can make a huge difference in your success:

1. **Keep the background neutral.** One of the easiest things to control—and one that has a big impact on how you are perceived by others—is the backdrop. Make sure you are the focus on the interviewer's attention, not the paperweight your daughter made or the half-eaten bagel from breakfast. Even a bookshelf or holiday ornaments can distract from your answers. If possible, set up the camera in front of a blank wall and sit close to the camera, so the interviewer sees just your head and shoulders. And make sure the room is neat.
2. **Find a good camera angle.** Place the webcam at the same height as the top of your head and point it slightly downward, which is generally the most flattering angle. (It will force you to sit up straight, which is also important.)
3. **Use a high quality microphone.** Your interviewer needs to be able to hear you, so make sure and have a good quality microphone. Beware of noises in the room in addition to your voice, which a microphone will pickup, so don't shuffle papers, tap your foot or move things around. Keep pets and children out of earshot.
4. **Look professional.** Make sure your haircut, facial hair and makeup look professional. Business casual dress in neutral colors works best for a video interview.
5. **Make eye contact.** Look at the interviewer, not off into space or down at your notes. Lean forward slightly to show you're engaged and actively listening. You can keep notes nearby for an occasional glance, but they should be there mostly to give you confidence and kept out of the sight of the camera.
6. **Don't do anything else while interviewing.** A video interview is not the time to also be checking Facebook or email. Quit out of distracting applications, turn off notifications and the ringer on your phone.
7. **Do your research.** Prepare for a video interview the same as you would for an in-person interview. Research the company and the role of the person doing the interviewing. Come up with answers to common interview questions as well as ones specific to the job for which you're interviewing.
8. **Hold a mock interview.** Get a friend or family member to conduct a mock video interview ahead of the actual interview. This is a good chance to get objective feedback on the lighting and camera angle, your speaking speed, the quality of your answers and your on-camera appearance.
9. **Rehearse in front of the camera.** Use Skype, Google+ Hangout or a similar tool to practice answering questions. Record the interview and then review it, looking closely at your body language, posture, articulation, the physical environment and, of course, your responses.
10. **Smile!** Smiling and eye contact (see tip number 5) tells the interviewer you're confident. And you should be, because you've done your preparation.