

Skype & Facetime interview tips

How to excel in a virtual interview

In today's global workplace more and more employers are opting for the Skype and Facetime interviews. These interviews cut down on travel time and expenses, save on fuel (making it better for the environment) and provide the employer with a much quicker and easier way to find the perfect person for the position.

An interview is an interview

Skype interviews can sometimes feel less formal – but do not let that influence the way you prepare. Whether you are being interviewed on Skype, Facetime, over the phone or in person, all the general rules of a job interview apply. Research the company, read the job description thoroughly, know your CV inside out and have a few answers for common interview questions prepared. Just because you are not meeting the interviewer in the flesh doesn't mean any less preparation is involved.

Dress for the occasion

As with any interview, presenting yourself professionally during video interviews is very important. You want to dress the way you would for a normal interview. On most occasions corporate professional attire is appropriate, but sometimes wearing business casual is okay. If you are unsure, it is always best to dress more professionally.

You might feel silly sitting at home wearing a suit and talking to a computer, but it will make all the difference. Not only will the interviewer think you look great and will already be picturing you in his/her workplace, it will help you to mentally prepare and get into a professional mode of thinking.

It's best to wear neutral, solid colours (shades of black, blue or grey are best) because these colours look the best on video and don't create any distractions for your interviewer. Also, try to stay away from colours that match your skin and hair tones.

Clean up your room

Your surroundings can be just as important as your personal presentation. Whether the interview is being conducted from your home or an office environment, the interviewer does not want to see you sitting in front of a pile of rubbish. Clean up the room as you don't want anything in the background to distract the interviewer from what you have to say.

Keep the noise down

Finding a quiet place to do the interview is vital as the microphone picks up more background noise than you might think. Dogs barking, children crying, mobile phones or music are not welcome distractions when an interviewer is trying to determine whether you will be suitable for a job. Nor does it look good if you have people walking in and out of the room – if need be, make yourself a 'do not disturb' sign and stick it on the door!

Make sure you create a professional username in Skype. Whilst the username you have previously chosen may have seemed amusing at the time and be entirely suitable when contacting your friends and family, ask yourself whether this name gives the right impression to the interviewer and if not it may be beneficial to create a secondary Skype account that you only use for interviews, choosing your full name and numbers.

Get the technology right

Five minutes before the video interview is not a good time to realize that your internet is down, Skype/Facetime isn't working, or your pet has chewed through the microphone cord. Not only does this reflect badly on your organisational skills, it will cost the interviewer precious time as they will most likely have to reschedule. Allow plenty of time before the interview to test all equipment.

If possible, try to Skype/Facetime a friend beforehand and get them to give you some feedback. Can you see/hear them? Can they see/hear you? Is the picture clear? Is the lighting OK? Is there much background noise? You may even want to record yourself before the interview answering some imaginary questions to practice and make sure everything is working.

Watch out for the delay

With all but the very best web-based interview connections, there is a slight transmission delay when using the video functionality. It's important to be aware of this delay and to pause to ensure that your interviewer has finished speaking before you speak.

Some Final Reminders

The golden rule with a Skype/Facetime interview is to treat it like any other face-to-face meeting. There is a real person on the other end of the call, so treat them like one. Smiling is a big one - this makes you look positive, confident and enthusiastic about the job you are applying for.

Try to make eye contact: look straight into the camera when you are talking, as this will make the interviewer feel as if you are speaking directly to them, despite being remote.

Don't shout, but do speak loudly and clearly. Sometimes with video calls there may be a delay with the picture so a clear speaking voice is extremely important.

But most of all, relax. By the time you have done your research, know your stuff and look great, all you have to do now is work the camera!