

2020 has been a year of changes and, with that, the need to adapt to a new way of doing things. This includes interviewing for a job. Hiring managers and recruiters are shifting their typical ways of finding candidates for positions that remain open in order to keep themselves, their employees, and candidates safe.

One way in which we have seen a significant shift with the employers the CSS team works with is that they are conducting phone interviews rather than in-person interviews. In some cases, video interviews are done on various platforms such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams. As if interviews were not challenging enough to prepare for, there are additional considerations to make when going to a phone interview.

Below are some tips and tricks to help you successfully ace your next phone interview!

Prior to the Phone or Video Interview

Research the company ahead of time

Know as much as you can about the company you are interviewing with by checking out their website. One tip is to find a picture of the person interviewing you on LinkedIn or on the company's website. If you know what the interviewer looks like, it may be easier to talk to them.

Be sure to eliminate as many distractions as possible

Chances are, you will be at home while participating in this interview. Background noise should be considered, including loud noises such as car horns and traffic, children playing or crying, barking dogs, etc. Be sure to lock yourself in a room alone that has the best cell phone reception.

Prepare your technology

Make sure that your cell phone is fully charged! Also, if you don't already have it, make sure you have the interviewer's phone number in case you get disconnected. Turn off call-waiting so your call isn't interrupted and it doesn't distract you. If attending a video interview, make sure your camera works, that your audio/sound is at a proper level, and that your computer is charged.

Download any needed software

Sometimes with video interviewing platforms such as Zoom, you may have to download the software beforehand. Be sure to check in advance and have everything downloaded and prepared prior to the interview start time.

Confirm contact information

Before the call, make sure you've confirmed the date, time and the interviewer's name. Consider asking for the interviewer's e-mail address so you can send a thank you note at the end of the interview. Make sure you confirm who will be calling who for the actual interview. Be ready and in place 15 minutes ahead of the set start time.

Dress as you would for a face-to-face interview

You may be thinking that the interviewer can't see you at all in a phone interview, or that they can only see your face during a video interview. However, there is a lot to be said about feeling and sounding professional when you look the part! Dress like you would for an in-person interview to get yourself into the best professional mindset.

Watch your virtual background

Specific to video interviews, it's important to be mindful of what the employer can see behind you! Busy or messy backgrounds can be very distracting. Also, consider the lighting, including avoiding windows in the background as the light can cause a glare and make it hard to see you.

Adjust your camera

If you are using your camera in a video interview, make sure your computer/camera is at eye level so you are making eye contact with the interviewer rather than looking down or leaning down into the computer. It's important to make it as close to a face-to-face interview as possible.

During the Phone or Video Interview

Take notes

Have pen and paper nearby to take notes as needed. Still have 3-5 questions prepared to ask the interviewer when the interview is complete, as you would for an in-person interview.

Be aware of your facial expressions

Believe it or not, people on the other line can "hear" your attitude and mood. You can't use your body language to convey and emphasize your enthusiasm so it's important that you try to convey it through your voice. Try smiling as much as you can while you speak. It works!

Food and water

Keep a glass of water near you during the interview to combat dry throat or a random cough. Be careful to take a sip (if needed) when the interviewer is talking and not while you're answering a question. Abstain from smoking, chewing gum, and eating during the interview.

Slow down and be patient

Wait for the interviewer to finish their question and be sure to not interrupt. Since you can't play off the interviewer's body language or facial expressions as much to determine when they are finished talking, being patient is important. Once the interviewer is finished asking the question, be sure to give short, focused answers.

Answering questions

One advantage of a virtual interview is that you can have notes in front of you for reference. Consider having your resume with you. Maybe you prepared for the interview using the [STAR method](#) and have plenty of stories and examples to share. Keep these notes near you to remind you of what you really want to share with the interviewer.

As you can see, it's not necessarily more difficult to prepare for a phone interview; it's just different. If you pay attention to the suggestions above, along with extra support from the FSET team, you should feel more confident when you attend your next phone or video interview!