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Virtual, One-Way, and Phone Interviewing Guide

Numerous employers are changing how they conduct interviews in response to the current health crisis here in the U.S. and abroad. This guide is meant to provide an overview, tips, and other resources for what you need to know when interviewing virtually, through a one-way interview, or via phone. If you need to practice your interviewing skills, please schedule a mock interview with one of the CDO's staff members through [Handshake](#), which we can conduct for you remotely. You may also consult our [Interviewing Guide](#) for a list of questions to be prepared to answer and ask your interviewer(s), or visit the [Interviewing section](#) of our website for additional interview advice.

Purpose of an Interview

The interview is an exchange of information, or a directed conversation, between you and an employer. The basic purpose is simple: to determine how well you and the organization will be able to meet each other's needs. The interviewer will evaluate such things as your qualifications, motivation, personality style, and ability to communicate. It is your job to assess the organization as well by listening closely to the interviewer's comments and descriptions, and asking informed questions of your own. Although it is easy to view the interviewer as an authority figure or adversary, you can increase your confidence—and have more productive interviews—if you see yourself as an equal partner in the experience.

Virtual Interviewing

Virtual interviews, often held on [Google Hangouts](#), [Skype](#), [Zoom](#), etc., have become more common in recent years as a replacement to an in-person interview. They may last anywhere from 30 to 90 minutes and there may be multiple people conducting them. It is important to treat a virtual interview like an in-person interview; meaning that you should practice answers to frequently asked questions (see our [Interviewing Guide](#) for such questions), dress professionally, and be aware of your body language. The below list of tips can be treated like a checklist to help you set-up and prepare for your virtual interview. The best tip that we can give you to make you seem like a seasoned virtual interviewee is the following:

Eye contact during a virtual interview is important and can be easily forgotten in this different format. We recommend that you look into the camera instead of at the screen when responding to a question, asking your interviewer(s) a question, or participating in the conversation. This gives the illusion of eye-contact because your eyes won't be downcast when you're talking. When your interviewer(s) is speaking it is acceptable to look at your screen so that you can see their facial expressions and gestures.



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Before Your Virtual Interview

- ❑ If you receive a calendar invitation from your interviewer make sure that you accept it, which is an important formality to show your interviewer that you're confirming their invitation. The invite will contain the link you will use for the interview.
- ❑ Be intentional about the location you choose to conduct your interview. Find a quiet and private place, free from possible interruptions (including pets that may be roaming 🐾🐾).
- ❑ Communicate with your roommates and/or family members as to when your interview will be so that your apartment and/or house stays as quiet as possible.
- ❑ Check your lighting. Is your light source coming from behind? If so, it will make it hard to see you. Try to have your light source in front of you, preferably natural light from a window.
- ❑ Look around the room where you plan to have your interview. What will be in view behind you? Clear away anything unprofessional or any mess not relevant to the interview. If you can find a blank wall that's preferred because it keeps the focus on you and what you're saying.
- ❑ Framing yourself well on your screen is important. Place some books under your computer if you need to adjust the height of what the camera captures. Your head and shoulders should not be cut off in any way. This may also mean that you need to bring your camera closer or push it farther from you to get the right framing.
- ❑ Ensure your internet connection is strong and free of glitches. If it is not reliable, locate a WiFi connection that is more reliable. If this is not available to you, request a phone interview and consult our phone interview recommendations below.
- ❑ Check that your computer's audio is working and test your computer's camera.
- ❑ Prepare approximately 3 questions that you would like to ask your interviewer(s).

Day of Your Virtual Interview

- ❑ Dress professionally head to toe in case you have to get out of your seat. Avoid bright colors, busy patterns, and too many accessories, so as to keep the focus on your face and what you're saying.
- ❑ Close any unnecessary web browser tabs and applications that may be running so they don't interrupt your interview.
- ❑ Log in 5-10 minutes early so you can be calm and centered when the virtual interview begins.
- ❑ Place your phone in silent mode. If text messages also come to your computer, turn off or silence those notifications so that you do not appear distracted during the interview.
- ❑ Keep copies of your resume and cover letter nearby to reference during the interview.
- ❑ You can have a few post-it notes nearby (attached to the sides of your screen) if there's something important that you want to remember to bring up, but make sure not to read directly from these notes because it will be obvious that you're doing so.
- ❑ Have a pen and notepad to take notes during the interview. It's better than typing notes during the interview because if your microphone is close to your keyboard the tapping sound can be very annoying.

During Your Virtual Interview

- ❑ When listening to your interviewer(s), nod and smile to show that you are engaged.



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- ❑ Project your voice and speak clearly so the microphone picks up your voice and the interviewer doesn't have to strain to hear you. If your computer's built-in microphone isn't great, then use your headphones so that a microphone is closer to your mouth.
- ❑ Remember that digital connections can sometimes be delayed. To avoid talking over your interviewer(s) or having your first few words cut out, let the interviewer finish the question and then pause for a few seconds before delivering your answer.
- ❑ Don't forget to breathe. It's a good idea to take a good deep breath before delivering your answer. It will help to slow you down if you're a fast talker.

After Your Virtual Interview

- ❑ Remember to send a thank you to your interviewer(s) within 24 hours of your virtual interview.

Additional Resources

Idealist: [How to Prepare for a Video Interview](#)

Indeed: [Video Interview Guide: Tips for a Successful Interview](#)

Target Jobs: [Expert performance tips for Skype and video interviews](#)

One-Way / Pre-Recorded Interviewing

One-Way interviews (sometimes called "Pre-Recorded Interviews") have been popular in the finance and tech industries for some time. They are called one-way because the job/internship applicant logs into a platform/website, such as [HireVue](#), and records their answers to a series of questions that typically last about 25 to 45 minutes in length. There is no one on the other end who is directing the questions or with whom to engage. This can be a rather odd experience; however, thinking of it as your visual-verbal testimonial for your job application can reframe how you approach this type of interview, which can turn this application component into a powerful addition to your job/internship application. Additionally, since you have the freedom to record this on your own schedule you can record it at a day and time when you know that you're at your best. More so than other interviews, this interview experience does require practice so that your responses are engaging and come off naturally.

It is important to read the instructions that you're given thoroughly because time-limits (typically 60-180 seconds) are often built into one-way interviews, meaning that you may only have a limited amount of time to respond to each question or the time-limits may vary depending on the question. If no time-limit is mentioned in the instructions, we recommend being prepared for 60 seconds per question.

One-way interviews sometimes give you a list of questions that you have to respond to in advance, therefore there is no excuse not to practice. Once you're in the platform, you may also have the option to re-record your answers until you're satisfied, but this is not always the case, and also the number of times you re-record could be tracked. It's best not to have to re-record too much. We recommend practicing in advance so that you're prepared whether you have a list of questions or not, and/or if you



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have the option to re-record or not. Schedule a mock interview through [Handshake](#) with one of the CDO's staff members to practice typical questions and/or the list of questions you've been given.

The below list of tips can be treated like a checklist to help you prepare for your one-way interview. The two best tips that we can give you to make you seem like a seasoned one-way interviewee are the following:

Eye contact during a one-way interview is important, therefore, look into the camera instead of at the screen when delivering your responses. This will give the illusion of eye contact to your viewer and make the recorded interview feel more personal. What this means is that you can't look at a script or some notes too much when giving your answers because you have to maintain this new kind of eye contact.

Don't wait until the last minute to submit your one-way interview. Your interview submission will have a timestamp on it, therefore, it's recommended to submit it sooner rather than later. If you submit it at the last minute an employer could assume that everything you do is last minute.

Before Your One-Way/Pre-Recorded Interview

- ❑ If your one-way interview does not supply you with a list of questions, then review and practice the list of typical interview questions found in our [Interviewing Guide](#) and then schedule a virtual mock interview through [Handshake](#) to practice with one of the counselors of the CDO.
- ❑ Thoroughly review and follow instructions. One-way interviews often have a set of detailed instructions for how to complete the interview. Don't make assumptions about what a one-way interview is or that it's the same as one you've done previously.
- ❑ If your interview instructions mention a time-limit per question, make sure to practice delivering responses within that time-limit.
- ❑ Ensure your internet connection is strong and free of glitches. If it is not reliable, locate a WiFi connection that is more reliable.
- ❑ Check that your computer's audio is working and test your computer's webcam.
- ❑ Prepare approximately 3 questions that you would like to ask your interviewer(s).

Setting Up for Your One-Way/Pre-Recorded Interview

- ❑ Dress professionally head to toe to put you in the interview mindset. Avoid bright colors, busy patterns, and too many accessories, so as to keep the focus on your face and what you're saying.
- ❑ Be intentional about the location you choose to conduct the interview. Find a quiet, private, well-lit place, free from possible interruptions (including pets that may be roaming 🐱🐶).
- ❑ Framing yourself well on your screen is important. Place some books under your computer if you need to adjust the height of what the camera captures. Your head and shoulders should not be cut off in any way. This may also mean that you need to bring your camera closer or push it farther from you to get the right framing.
- ❑ Check your lighting. Is your light source coming from behind? If so, it will make it hard to see you. Try to have your light source in front of you, preferably natural light from a window.



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- ❑ Look around the room where you plan to have your interview. What will be in view behind you? Clear away anything unprofessional or any mess not relevant to the interview. If you can find a blank wall that's preferred because it keeps the focus on you and what you're saying.
- ❑ Communicate with your roommates and/or family members as to when your interview will be so that your apartment and/or house stays as quiet as possible.
- ❑ If your computer's built-in microphone isn't great, then use your headphones so that a microphone is closer to your mouth.
- ❑ Close any unnecessary web browser tabs and applications that may be running so they don't interrupt your recording session.
- ❑ You can have a few post-it notes nearby (attached to the sides of your screen) if there's something important that you want to remember to bring up, but make sure not to read directly from these notes because it will be obvious that you're doing so.

During Your One-Way/Pre-Recorded Interview

- ❑ Project your voice and speak clearly so the microphone picks up your voice and the interviewer doesn't have to strain to hear you.
- ❑ Don't forget to breathe. It's a good idea to take a good deep breath before delivering your answer. It will help to slow you down if you're a fast talker.
- ❑ Don't forget to smile! 😊

After Your One-Way/Pre-Recorded Interview

- ❑ After your one-way interview is finished, it is a good idea to reach out to email your contact to let them know that your interview is completed and thank them for the opportunity. If they have not given their decision timeline in a previous correspondence, you may inquire about this in this email.

Additional Resources

Vault: [3 Tips for Surviving a One-Way Video Interview](#)

Job Hunt (One Way Interviews): [12 Keys to One-Way Video Interview Success](#)

Phone Interviewing

Phone interviews are typically screening interviews, meaning they are a first step before passing a candidate to the second round. In our current situation, however, phone interviews may replace different rounds of interviews typically held in-person. This may be particularly true for companies that may not be as tech savvy with video conferencing platforms. Expect to ask and be asked similar questions over the telephone as you would in person, but remember that your appearance and nonverbal communication can't help you out—your words and vocal inflections will make the impact, therefore, rehearsing can really help you, particularly if you're not used to talking on the phone for professional reasons. The CDO is here to help you practice so that you sound like you've been conducting business on the phone for a while. Schedule a mock phone interview through [Handshake](#) to practice with one of our counselors.



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Beginning a phone interview is a bit different from a regular phone conversation. Rather than simply answering with a “Hello” we recommend answering with “Good Morning/Afternoon/etc., this is [your name] speaking.” It will remove an awkward moment of the interviewer having to ask if you are who you are.

Since you aren’t able to see your interviewers it is important to listen to your interviewer’s inflection so that you are aware of the tenor the interview is taking. Make sure to wait for pauses to know when they are finished asking a question or done speaking. It’s also a good idea from time to time to ask “does this answer your question?” or “would you like me to expand on this?” after delivering your answer.

The below list of tips can be treated like a checklist to help you set-up and prepare for your phone interview. The best tip that we can give you to make you seem like a seasoned phone interviewee is the following:

Unlike virtual interviews, you can have a cheat sheet with you. Just make sure that you’re not reading your answers. You should still come off as having a conversation and delivering your answers in the moment. Even novice interviewers can hear when you’re reading a script.

Before Your Phone Interview

- ❑ If you receive a calendar invitation from your interviewer make sure that you accept it, which is an important formality to show your interviewer that you’re confirming their invitation. The invite may contain the phone number you may use if you’re asked to call them.
- ❑ If you do not receive a calendar invitation, make sure to confirm the person’s timezone for the call if you are not sure of their office’s location.
- ❑ Confirm who the interview will be with so that you can research that individual(s) in advance of the phone call.
- ❑ Fully charge your phone in advance of the call. You don’t want to have to fumble with a charger during the interview because they are always a tangled mess when you need them not to be. Set a calendar reminder to remind yourself to charge your phone if necessary.
- ❑ Make sure that you have a quiet space and good reception for the day and time that the call will take place.
- ❑ Communicate with your roommates and/or family members of when your interview will be so that your apartment and/or house stays as quiet as possible.
- ❑ Make sure that there will be no distractions that could interrupt your call like a knock at your door or a particularly vocal pet(s) 🐾.
- ❑ Do not use speaker mode for a phone interview, instead use your headphones microphone so that your voice comes through more clearly.
- ❑ Silence all other notifications on your phone or nearby tablet/laptop so that it doesn’t appear that you’re multitasking. Giving your full attention to your interviewer(s) is paramount.
- ❑ If your voicemail is not professional or not set up, this is the time to change or rectify that just in case something happens and you miss the call momentarily.
- ❑ Dress as you would for an in-person interview. It will help to put you in the right mindset.



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- ❑ Have your resume, cover letter, and any other application documents nearby so that you may refer to them during the call.

During Your Phone Interview

- ❑ Practice active listening. Review [this article from Balance Careers](#) if you're not sure what this is.
- ❑ Smile! 😊 Yes, we encourage you to smile even though your interviewers can't see you. It will come through in your responses.
- ❑ Project your voice and speak clearly so the microphone picks up your voice and the interviewer doesn't have to strain to hear you.
- ❑ Don't forget to breathe. It's a good idea to take a good deep breath before delivering your answer. It will help to slow you down if you're a fast talker.

After Your Phone Interview

- ❑ Remember to send a thank you to your interviewer(s) within 24 hours of your phone interview.

Additional Resources

Idealist: [How to Nail Your Next Phone Interview](#)

Indeed: [25 Phone Interview Tips to Get You to the Next Round \(With Video\)](#)