

Interviews by Phone, Skype and Video

Many recruiters now use technology such as phone, Skype or video to conduct interviews with candidates. These typically form part of the earlier selection rounds and successful candidates will be invited to more traditional face to face, in-person interview(s) later on.

The most important thing to remember about phone, Skype or video interviews is that you need to prepare for them just as you would for a face to face interview. For full information about how to prepare well for any interview, see our 'Interviews' handout. In this handout we cover some special tips that are additional to the advice on preparation detailed in that handout.

TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS

Many employers now regularly use phone interviews as part of their initial sifting process - for example, to decide which of many candidates to call for an assessment centre. These interviews may be conducted by the Human Resources department or outsourced to a specialist firm. They can vary in length from 10 minutes to 45 minutes. Typically, they will test any or all of the following: your suitability for the job (motivation), your knowledge of the organisation and how you measure up to their key criteria (competency based questions).

SKYPE INTERVIEWS

Generally, these are similar to telephone interviews, except the applicant can see and interact with their interviewer and be seen by them. Facetime is also occasionally used in the same way.

VIDEO INTERVIEWS

In a video interview, questions are automatically generated and timed and there is no dialogue with a human interviewer. The candidate is recorded delivering answers and these are reviewed later by the selector.

Tips for phone interviews

If you are given a choice of times, think laterally – 9 am may work best if you are a morning person, 2pm if not. Whatever the case and whenever possible, avoid the slot just before lunch or at the end of the day: both you and the interviewer

are likely to be low on energy then.

Check the technology. Make sure you have a good connection - and plenty of battery power if you intend to take the call on a mobile phone.

Listen to the question carefully and if you cannot hear it properly, ask the recruiter to repeat or clarify it.

Pause before answering as this will allow you to gather your thoughts. Given that the interviewer will have no visual clues as to your reaction, provide a verbal signal such as "I'm just going to think about that for a few seconds".

Prepare answers to likely questions on notecards with a few key words / bullet points on each and have these easily to hand. Avoid writing out lengthy replies on sheets of A4 – all the interviewer will hear is the rustle of paper as you search for the right page.

Dress the part. This may sound strange as you cannot be seen, but casual clothes can make your responses too relaxed and informal.

Smile! This will come across in your speech and tone.

Tips for Skype and video interviews

Check your broadband/wifi connection and close down all other applications to prevent emails etc. popping up unexpectedly during the interview.

You will be sent a link or app – try it out in advance, because making an error with unfamiliar technology is allowable beforehand when you will have technical help on tap. It is less acceptable at interview stage itself. This is especially important if you are doing a video interview in the evening or at the weekend.

If you download a free app sent by the recruiters you can take the interview on a smartphone, iPod, iPad etc. Think carefully if this is the most appropriate medium for you: choose a channel with which you feel comfortable, confident and that shows you at your best.

Keep the background minimalist and tidy – no clutter, coffee cups, unmade beds etc.

Choose a location that is quiet and free from interruption from flatmates, friends or family. Some students and graduates report feeling inhibited by the idea that people



may be able to hear them: this is then reflected in the quality of their answers and the confidence with which they give these. So select a time when you can be alone or put a notice on the door if necessary. You may be able to use the Careers Service or another space on campus – arrange this as far in advance as possible.

If you have prepared answers on flash cards, refer to these unobtrusively - they are probably best kept attached to the wall in front of you. Alternatively, some people keep these on a separate device behind the one on which the interview is being conducted. Avoid looking down or to the side.

Again, dress smartly – all over. The jacket on top half, jeans on lower body technique rarely works unless you are planning to sit still for the entire interview.

Don't forget to smile, nod and use other positive body language.

Tips for Skype interviews

On Skype, the time lag may mean that you speak over the interviewer at first. Apologise if this happens and allow for it as the discussion continues.

Maintain eye contact with the interviewer, as you would in a "standard" interview, by looking into the camera.

If you can pre-schedule your Skype interview, take note of the points about this in the "Tips For Phone Interviews" section. If the recruiters are in another country, bear different time zones in mind!

Tips for video interviews

Unlike Skype, you can undertake these at your leisure, rather than at the company's convenience. There will be a deadline for submitting your interview – often this is a Monday morning. Be canny about timing. Recruiters will look at videos in batches so if yours is one of many to come in over the weekend, you may be at a slight disadvantage.

You will normally be given an app or link with initial interview and technical details. Read these! If the instructions incorporate a practice facility, this can only be of benefit, so do use it.

Not everyone has cutting edge technology immediately to hand. If you are using an ordinary computer, make sure it has an integral web cam or attach this beforehand.

You will often be told what the video interview will consist of – e.g. 12 questions with 15 seconds to take stock before each answer. This can help with your research, practice and preparation.

Questions, pre response intervals and answers will all be cued and timed. Use the space before you speak to frame what you want to say, a coherent structure and supporting evidence.

Avoid keeping your eyes pinned on the clock in the corner of the screen. Only look at this a few times to keep track of your progress and make any necessary adjustments.

Candidate feedback indicates that some people find it difficult talking to what is essentially a void. A simple and effective way of overcoming this is to keep a photo of a friend or relative at camera height and focus on this.

Other

Occasionally, and particularly for creative or sales / marketing jobs, you might be asked to make a pitch or a presentation and upload it to You Tube or a similar site. The information above should also help with this.

Tips for all interview formats

Anyone requiring "reasonable adjustments" because of some kind of special need or disability can ask for these.

Practise beforehand, but don't memorise entire answers as this can sound mechanical - and you might be thrown if the anticipated question is worded slightly differently. Instead think of a strong opening statement and then a framework for key points you want to make.

Practise out loud and ideally record yourself. If possible, get a friend to listen and give feedback to your answers over the phone or on Skype. For video interview preparation, try using Skype with your friend's camera on and yours turned off.

Put some light and shade into your voice: speak clearly and, above all, unhurriedly. Our speech is often quicker when we are nervous, so consciously slow down a little.

The Careers Service can help with interview preparation of all kinds.

FURTHER SUPPORT

Available from the Careers Service:

- **Careers Service website:** www.imperial.ac.uk/careers/interviews
- www.prospects.ac.uk - look for 'interview tips' under 'Careers Advice', and targetjobs.co.uk/careers-advice
- **Bookable appointments** with Careers Consultants: book through **JobsLive***
- **Reference books** - including: 'Handling Tough Job Interviews', 'Competency-Based Interviews', and 'More Best Answers to the 201 Most Frequently Asked Interview Questions', available in the Careers Service, level 5 Sherfield Building
- **Careers Service events** - each year we plan talks and workshops which are designed to enhance your chances of success in the application process - for details, see **JobsLive***
- For information on the disclosure of disability or specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia please see information on the Careers Service website: www.imperial.ac.uk/careers/disclosure

* www.imperial.ac.uk/careers/jobslive