

## Live Interviews

Live interviews can happen over the phone, virtually (for example Zoom, Skype, or GoogleMeets), or in person. In person, virtual, and phone interviews can be conducted by one individual at the organization, or by a panel. Here are some tips to take into consideration while preparing for live interviews:

1. Research the organization beforehand. Although you likely did some research when you applied for the position you are interviewing for, it is always helpful to refresh your memory by looking at the company's mission statement, what projects they have going on, and researching the interviewer if you've been provided with their name. You can research the interviewer by searching for them on LinkedIn or looking them up on the organization's website to see if there is a bio available for them. This research will set you up to answer the question you are almost guaranteed to be asked, "Why do you want to work at this organization/with this team?" Reading through these areas will refresh your memory about how exactly their work is in line with your interests.
2. Reread your application documents and the job description. While you apply to jobs, it is good to save the job descriptions for each job you apply to in a Word doc in case the posting is taken down before the time of your interview. These are important steps to take during your job search and interview preparation processes especially if you have been sending out a lot of applications. Rereading your documents will remind you of which skills and experiences you have already highlighted and prioritized. A great way to prepare for any experience-based questions that may come your way is to read through the job description one bullet point at a time, and mark which experiences or skills you think you have and jot down where you gained them. This will both remind you of all the great skills you have, what examples you can share with the interviewer about your skills, and to help organize these thoughts in your brain. For the skills or experiences you don't feel that you meet, brainstorm if you learned about the topic in a class, or if you are familiar with it through the news you read. You can even research what these skills or experiences entail in advance to have some talking points for the interview. Additionally, if a task or skill is a new area for you, think about how you might go about developing that skillset on your own (you can speak about this!), or think of a story of another time you had to learn something brand new and how you navigated doing so.

3. Prepare questions. In any interview you should expect to be asked if you have any questions for them. While questions may arise throughout the interview, time is typically left at the end of an interview for you to ask questions of them. It is always good to have at least three questions prepared before going into the interview. If you find yourself having difficulty formulating questions, think of these categories: questions about the job itself, training and professional development opportunities, work culture and environment, and next steps (for a guide on formulating interview questions, see our Career Conversations Corner piece from May 7, 2021!).
4. Do a technology and environment check. For virtual or phone interviews, make sure you have a secure source of wifi and that your phone or laptop battery is fully charged. For virtual interviews, make sure the background of the area you plan to conduct the interview in is clean and free of clutter. Avoid busy backgrounds and lighting angles that cause a glare on your screen and camera. Additionally, it is recommended that you double check your audio settings to make sure your microphone is turned on, and that your laptop is propped up so that it is level with your face. You should carry out these steps the day before your interview rather than right before the interview begins to avoid any last minute technological hiccups.
5. Dress the part. For virtual and in person interviews, always dress professionally and monitor your body language to give off a strong first impression. Some pieces of professional attire you might consider are an ironed button down shirt or blouse with dress pants or a pencil skirt. Positive body language you might try to be conscious of are good posture, maintaining eye contact, avoiding hand fidgeting, and providing an energetic greeting and farewell.

#### **Additional Considerations: Note-taking and Panel Interviews**

A common question people ask themselves before an interview is “is it ok to bring notes with me?” While the general answer is to avoid doing this, there are a few exceptions. In general, you want to have your answers prepared well enough where you do not need notes in front of you to answer the questions asked of you (note: you should not aim to memorize your responses for any interview. Instead, memorize a few key points you would like to address for each response you’ve prepared, and let the information flow out naturally. Memorizing responses can leave you sounding unnatural and make it easier to get tripped up once those

interview nerves kick in). However, notes *are* acceptable for phone and virtual interviews, although you should avoid having full notes in front of you and aim more for a single sheet of paper with “triggers” or single words or phrases that will remind you of key points you want to make. While notes should be avoided during in-person interviews, you might think about bringing notes with you to prep while you are commuting to the interview or waiting in the waiting room. It is also ok to bring a notepad with you into the interview so that you can write down information the interviewer gives you, the questions they ask, or any questions that you might come up with during the interview. This can be particularly helpful for panel interviews to help you remember the names and positions of each individual panelist.

Lastly, let’s discuss a little bit more about panel interviews. Panel interviews involve being interviewed by more than one person at a time. Looking up each panelist beforehand and the work that they do will give you a better idea of what they are looking for in a candidate and how your interests align. These can be great talking points that you can use to establish a relationship with the panelists. Additional tips to keep in mind are to bring multiple copies of your resume if the interview is being conducted in-person, and to try to give at least some attention to each panelist where possible when responding. Be sure to make eye contact with each panel member throughout the interview, and to give each member an attentive greeting and goodbye. If the interview is being conducted virtually, be sure to make eye contact with each member and thank each person for their time and consideration. You can also ask for business cards or contact information, if you do not have it already, so that you can send a thank you/follow-up email to all of the panelists within 24 hours.

To construct your thank you email, first choose an appropriate subject line like “Thank you for your time, [insert interviewer’s name]”. Open your first paragraph by thanking the interviewer again for their time and consideration for this position and mention the specific job title. Next, express your continued interest in the company and tie it into your interests, goals, and experience. You can do this by noting a specific conversation point that seemed particularly important to the interviewer and connect it back to your interests and experience. In the third and final paragraph of your email, summarize what skills and/or experience you have that set you apart from the other candidates and close by saying that you look forward to continuing the conversation. If there was a point you did not get to make in the interview, or something that came up that you wanted to further clarify, the thank you email is a great opportunity to do so. You can then close your email with a professional closing such as “Best wishes,” or “Sincerely.”

## Interested in discussing interview best practices with a Career Coach?

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