

# Virtual College and Training Provider Interviews:

## Everything You Need to Know



The college/training provider interview is an excellent opportunity for students to show off attributes that are not easily conveyed through the more black-and-white sections of an application—this provides applicants a chance to inject their personality, demonstrate maturity, and talk about their passions and interests.

Although COVID-19 has made in-person interviews problematic, many colleges and providers are adopting virtual interviews as a way to get to know their applicants. Here's some key things you need to know about these interviews.



## Are Schools and Colleges Still Having Interviews?

The importance of the in-person interview in college admissions has diminished in recent years, but a multitude of colleges (especially very selective schools) still factor it into their decision making. Consequently, schools that value a face-to-face conversation with an applicant are still conducting interviews.

However, many colleges have pivoted from physical interviews to virtual ones. In fact, it's likely that virtual college interviews are here to stay—they're easier to schedule, less geography-centric, and typically more relaxed than their in-person counterparts.

## What to Expect in a Virtual Interview?

Besides the obvious difference of not meeting face-to-face, what to expect in a virtual interview is not all that different from a physical one. Applicants should have a resume, transcript, and test scores available in a shareable format in the event they're asked for them. Similarly, applicants should be prepared to answer a wide variety of questions about themselves—topics can include everything from questions about high school classes and extracurricular activities to future aspirations.

Much like an in-person interview, expect to sit in a quiet space and to have a focused conversation for 30 minutes to an hour. The conversation is somewhere between formal and informal, where applicants will have a place to let their personality shine and display their maturity. As always, stay professional and avoid talking about controversial topics, speaking in slang, and using harsh language.



## How to Prepare for a Virtual Interview

While there are numerous commonalities between an in-person and virtual interview, there are some factors unique to taking an interview over Zoom, Skype, Facetime, and other digital services. Below are a few tips for preparing for a virtual interview.

### What to Wear

Business casual is a good guideline for what to wear to a college interview, whether face-to-face or through a computer. While the interviewer is likely only to see an applicant from the waist up during a virtual interview, completing your interview ensemble by wearing appropriate pants (or skirt) and shoes is recommended, in the event that you need to stand up. Also, keep in mind that



computer screens present some unique challenges: bright whites, reds, and solid black outfits, as well as small patterns, generally don't present well on camera. Instead, consider dressing in solid, simple tones.

As for grooming, men should brush their hair, be clean-shaven or have well-groomed facial hair, and present a well-kept appearance.

Women should have their hair neatly arranged and wear office-appropriate makeup. Attire should be clean, smart and without low necklines

### Check the Tech

A long-time complaint of virtual meetings is technology, or, more specifically, the shortcomings of technology.

Prior to your meeting, go through this checklist to ensure it isn't sabotaged by something silly:

- If taking the meeting on a laptop, make sure the laptop is fully charged (better yet, arrange it so that the laptop is plugged into a power source for the meeting)
- Check your internet connection and ensure it is stable
- Make sure your device can handle a video meeting
- Make sure the login and password to the meeting work (also make sure usernames are simple and professional looking)
- Check the device's audio and video settings to avoid distracting muffled audio and/or grainy video
- Email your provider in advance for additional instructions if you are unfamiliar with the specific platform or software, they plan to use



## Set the Stage

Since a virtual interview doesn't take place in a quiet office, the need to create a distraction-free environment is another difference between physical and virtual interviews. Here are some ideas for creating a winning virtual meeting place:



- Get good lighting—lighting should face the applicant (sitting in front of a window is a popular option), not behind them
- A blank background is best—it keeps the attention on the applicant—so look for an empty or uncluttered wall
- Eliminate external noises—find a quiet place, close the windows, silence cell phones, and turn off televisions
- Get everyone on board—let family members know about the interview so they don't create any interruptions or distractions

## Practice Makes Perfect

Before sitting down for the real thing(s), applicants should sit down for at least one practice interview. Simulate interview day as closely as possible and have a friend or family member play the role of interviewer. Have them critique everything from the audio and video quality to comfort in front of the camera and how questions were answered.

## Prepare to Wow

One similarity between in-person and virtual college interviews is preparation. Interviewees should be prepared to answer questions about themselves along with being armed with questions for the interviewer that demonstrate their interest in the college.

### Common questions asked during a college interview include:

- Why do you want to study at this college/university?
- How will you contribute to this college/university?
- Where do you see yourself in x-number of years?
- What are your academic strengths?
- Who do you admire?

### Common questions to ask a college interviewer include:

- What is the best thing about your college?
- What makes your college unique?
- What percentage of your students gain employment positions in their chosen field?



### After the Interview



Although not interview-specific, don't forget to get the interviewer's contact information to follow up with a thank-you email after the virtual interview. Make sure that thank-you notes are written and sent shortly after the interview and are specific to the interviewer.

