

Preparing for Your Video Interview

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You finally received the phone call or email you've been waiting for – Someone from the neurology or neurosurgery position you've had your eye on wants to set up an interview! (Congratulations!!) But then they tell you this isn't just any interview, this is a video interview...

Whether it be a normal step in the process before a site visit, or a special circumstance because you're currently working abroad, video interviews can be unbelievably stressful! Where will I sit, so my cluttered home isn't the first impression I make? (Let's be honest, who has time to clean while immersing themselves in that residency, fellowship, or current career?!) How will I avoid poor sound quality and lost connections? What will I wear? Is there any special prep? All those years of medical training helped you achieve the highest quality patient care, the most thorough research protocols, and the best understanding of technology used for diagnosis and treatment, but no one ever talked to you about this!

Have no fear. You can do this. After following just a few simple steps related to the technology, staging, and personal preparation for your interview, you'll be ready to impress your interviewers with the incredible physician that you truly are...without any easily avoidable glitches to muddle the message!

First comes TECH...

Test the application

Ethernet cable

Check sound settings

Headphones

Test the application

Find out what application the interviewer prefers to use ([Skype](#), [Google Hangout](#), etc...). If you don't already have the application of choice on your computer, download it at least 24 hours prior to the interview – further in advance if time allows. This will give you plenty of time to run the complete setup procedures, make sure your profile looks polished and professional (including your username!), and familiarize yourself with the standard operating procedures. Call a friend or family member to make sure you're comfortable with how the application works.

Ethernet cable

A weak Internet connection can ruin the best video interview conversation. Your local coffee shop Wi-Fi probably just won't cut it. If at all possible, use an [Ethernet cable](#) to connect directly to the Internet the old fashioned way. No matter how reliable your service is, Wi-Fi can fade in and out, so it's safest to be connected to a steady Internet stream at all times – an Ethernet cable is your video interview's technological safety net!

If for some reason you can't connect an Ethernet cable, make sure to at least [test your current Wi-Fi speed](#). Skype recommends an upload/download speed of at least 4Mbps/512kbps for a smooth, solid video connection with multiple computers. Google has comparable recommendations. If your Internet meets these minimums, you can be reasonably confident that your computer can connect to up to four others, if need be, and have a clear video conversation.

Check sound settings

You've downloaded your application and your Internet is good to go – now it's time to check the hardware and make sure the person on the other end of a call can actually hear you! Skype allows you to make a [test call](#) to double check that everything is good to go. Google Hangouts provides a test sound and microphone meter under "Settings" (the gear icon) on the call screen. Make use of these tools to ensure clear communication throughout your video interview. If your version of Skype or Google Hangouts has an option to switch from built-in audio to headphone audio, do it! You'll see why in just a second...

Headphones

Are you worried that your/the interviewer(s)' voices will echo and make following the conversation difficult? There's no need to rely on your computer's microphone and speakers. Use a pair of headphones/earbuds with a microphone to decrease your chances of muddled sound. With your mouth being closer to the microphone and your ears closer to the speaker, the concentrated sound will greatly improve the quality of your call. With so many inexpensive options, ([Koss has six pairs under \\$20!](#)) this little accessory is a must have!

Now that your technology is under control, it's time to STAGE your interview area!

Setup

Take precautions

Attachments

Glare

Eye level

Setup

Remember that terrible elementary school photo with the insanely busy, psychedelic, multicolored backdrop? This is not a moment anyone wants to recreate in a video interview! Think about what will be behind you in the camera shot. A blank, neutral colored wall with only one or two other objects in the frame (a well-organized book shelf, houseplant, diploma, or other piece of wall art are all fine!) is best. You want the focus to be on you, not what's going on in the background!

Take precautions

There's a whole list of things you want to avoid during your interview – your cell loudly ringing, your laptop running out of power, your roommate yelling from the next room. All of these concerns are easily prevented! Turn off your ringer, plug in your power cord, and tell anyone else in your home or office that you can't be disturbed during this time. If that means posting a note on the door directing people away until your interview is over, then go for it! Do what you need to do to feel secure and comfortable with your surroundings during the interview.

Attachments

Have you received or sent any attachments to a recruiter or the hiring organization? Print them! This is information that should be very familiar and readily available to you. If someone sent it to you, they expect you to have looked it over and compiled any questions regarding the material. If you sent it to them (think – CV, cover letter, etc.), you should be prepared to clearly discuss any and all provided documents. You wouldn't bring your laptop for frantic clicking and last minute research during an in-person interview, so why would you do it during a video interview? Take advantage of being able to organize anything you may want to quickly reference well before the interview begins – This is a definite perk of talking to a potential employer from your own space!

Glare

Let's talk about lighting. Have you ever taken a photo in front of a window only to find that you're totally blacked out by the blinding sun behind you? The same thing will happen on a video interview. Try to avoid having a light source directly behind you. Instead, shine a bright light on your face from the front. This will reduce shadows and blurry images just like a camera flash!

Eye level

There are plenty of unflattering camera angles, none of which you want to be a part of your video interview. Do yourself a favor and prop your computer or tablet so the webcam is at eye level. This is easy enough to do – lower your chair, stack up some of those many textbooks I

know you have, or even set out a rectangular tissue box! Just make sure whatever you use is sturdy and stable; you wouldn't want your laptop to topple mid interview!

Your computer is set, your area is staged – now what about you?! Let's PREP!

Patterns

Read

Elevator pitch

Phone a friend

Patterns

We've talked a lot about making sure your surroundings aren't distracting; now let's focus on you! Professional clothing appropriate for an in-person interview, such as a dark suit (preferably not the same color as the wall behind you!), is perfect for your video interview. The only difference – avoid prints! Busy clothing stands a better chance of drawing attention to any blurriness that may still exist in your video stream (even though you've taken all possible precautions!), so go for a solid shirt (and simple tie, gentlemen) under your suit jacket.

Read

Do your homework! Get online and read everything you can about the position:

Check out the practice or hospital website. Where exactly is it located? With whom do they affiliate? What other physicians and support staff are you likely to encounter?

[Google](#) your interviewers and other physicians on the team. What are their subspecialties? Where did they train? Who are some connections you may have to them?

The ability to confidently discuss information the recruiter or hiring organization has not shared with you directly accentuates your interest in and excitement for the position. This will also help you to prepare intelligent questions to ask your interviewer. It's impressive to hear a question you couldn't have learned the answer to with your own quick Internet search!

Elevator pitch

Imagine you walked into a hospital elevator, and the Chief of Neurology or Neurosurgery happens to be standing there. Now's your chance to really make an impression, but you only have 30 seconds to a minute before the elevator reaches your floor! What do you say?

This is your elevator pitch: a 30 second summary of why you're a great fit for the position. It's a great reply to the opening line of, "Tell me about yourself," or the closing question of, "So, why should we hire you?"

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Constructing an elevator pitch takes time and attention. With such a short amount of time, you need to make sure you avoid clutter and really hit what's relevant: training highlights, goals, why this position, why this location, and anything relevant that makes you stand out – Why are you different than the other stack of CVs they are reviewing? Think carefully about what you want potential employers to know about you!

Phone a friend

You're pretty sure your video chat application is working, your interview location is set up, and you're ready to answer anything an interviewer could possibly throw at you. Now it's time to make certain that's the case! Find at least one friend, colleague, mentor – whoever! – and ask them to do a test run with you.

Get ready just like you will on your actual interview day, and walk through each step of the process. Ask for feedback on the audio and video quality, your volume of speech, and the speed at which you are talking. This is the time to work out any remaining technical kinks and get familiar with how the application works in an actual conversation. If the person you're doing a test conversation with is familiar with your field, have them ask and critique some sample interview questions! Give them your elevator pitch, and see what their reaction is. Do whatever you need to do to be most comfortable when your scheduled interview time rolls around!

And now you know!

What do you think? Are you ready to tackle that video interview? Of course you are! Your technology is set, your area is staged, and you're prepped and ready to go. Now it's time to shine. Take a deep breath, and show those hiring managers what an incredible physician you are! And remember, if you ever have any questions regarding any of this information, please feel free to contact me or anyone on our recruiting team!

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