

Tips for a Successful In-Person or Virtual Interview

Interviewing can be one of the last, and sometimes most stressful, hurdles prior to landing a job. One of the best ways to alleviate this level of stress is to ensure that you have properly prepared and have dedicated enough time to practicing for your interview.

If you're a UMass Global student or alumnus, you have access to our [interview practice platform](#) where you can gain information, hone your technique, and build your confidence before the big event. This technology provides you with resources on:

- Challenging, virtual mock interviews for all experience levels and dozens of industries.
- A database of thousands of interview questions with tips on how to answer them.
- A comprehensive video training curriculum covering all aspects of landing a job.
- A step-by-step interview Answer Builder for crafting answers to behavioral questions.

Navigate to [the platform](#) and register using your UMass Global student e-mail address to use these tools. We've also included some quick tips for all professionals looking to improve their interviewing skills to land that next great job opportunity.

Quick tips for a successful in-person interview

The two primary pieces to a successful interview are preparation and practice – both of which must be done in advance. The more you do of both of these in advance, the greater you increase your chances of creating a positive first impression and finishing your interview strong.

Once you are in the actual interview, put your preparation and practice to work and follow these quick tips for ensuring a positive experience.

Be professional and use proper workplace etiquette.

Arrive a little earlier than your scheduled interview time. This will allow you to catch your breath and mentally prepare for the interview. It will also reduce your anxiety and stress levels if you get turned around or can't find parking.

Start the interview with a positive comment about the company.

After initial greetings and introductions, say something honest about how you feel about the company. This will help build rapport with the interviewer and start things off on a positive note – it also shows you did your research. Try something like “I watched the Ted Talk with your CEO, it was very inspiring.”

Watch for cues from the interviewer(s).

Be aware of nonverbal cues that the interviewer is sending you. What is their facial expression telling you – are they confused, entertained, curious? Did they just yawn? Pay attention to their behavior when you are talking and adjust as necessary. A confused look may warrant a more detailed response. If you've been talking for a while and the interviewer is fidgeting, it's probably time to wrap up your answer and move to the next question.

Try to mimic their tone and overall body orientation as well – if they speak with a very soft voice, don't counter with a loud one.

Be friendly and approachable with everyone you meet.

You never know who is watching or what will be communicated back to the hiring manager. Treat everyone with courtesy and respect.

Turn off your cell phone.

If possible, leave your cell phone in your car to avoid temptation, or just the habit of looking at it. If you must bring it with you, turn off the sound and tuck it away where you won't instinctively pull it out– even if it's just to check the time. If you need to be aware of the actual time, wear a watch.

Be aware of your body language and nonverbal communication.

We communicate a lot about ourselves simply through our body language. It won't matter what amazing words or thoughts you are communicating if your body language is saying something different. [Check out this infographic](#) for information on nonverbal mistakes.

Remember to breath.

Taking deep breaths and slowly exhaling will help calm your nerves and allow you to relax, be more comfortable and have an overall successful interview.

Make a list of questions to ask.

Remember, an interview is also your opportunity to learn more about the job and the company, so you should always ask questions. Pick ones that show you have done your research and that genuinely deepen your understanding of the role/organization – but make sure you don't ask something that could easily be answered by looking on their website. Questions can range from specific goals for the position you are interviewing for to the 5 year growth plan of the company. You can also use your questions to show your enthusiasm and that you did your research by

asking something like – “I was reading an article on your CEO where he mentioned something interesting.....can you tell me more about that idea?” In a pinch, here are some standards that you can typically use:

- What does success look like in this role and how do you measure it?
- What do you think is the most challenging or difficult part of this job?
- What is your favorite part of working for this organization?
- Who will I be working with most closely? (And can you meet them, if you haven’t already.)
- Are there opportunities for growth and/or professional development? If so, what do they look like?

Tips for virtual interviews

In today’s recruitment environment, there is a good chance that you will be interviewed at some point either over the phone or through a virtual environment, such as Skype. These types of interviews are becoming more common since they are extremely efficient for an organization, particularly in the early screening stages. They can also be cost effective depending on a candidate’s location.

Small details matter in an interview, they matter even more when being viewed through a camera lens. Follow these tips to ensure a successful virtual (Skype) interview.

Dress the part.

Dress the same level of professionalism as if you were meeting in person, avoiding bold patterns and bright colors since they can be amplified through the camera. You may be tempted to only dress up from the waist up, but you should dress from head to toe – what if you have to stand up to adjust your equipment? Avoid bold patterns and colors as well as clunky and shiny jewelry since they can be distracting or blinding, especially if the light hits them just right.

Prepare a professional, distraction free environment.

- Look behind you because that is what your interviewer will see. Nothing distracting or too personal should show in the background (no dirty clothes or messes in the background).
- Choose a place where other noises will not be heard (neighbors, dogs barking, children laughing, etc.) Remember that microphones magnify background noises that you might not even hear.
- Lighting should be soft and natural – try having it come from multiple angles to avoid shadows. Avoid lighting that is only behind you or on one side or a “spotlight” effect.
- Close other programs on the computer – especially if they make noise or have pop-ups.

Decide how you want to sit.

What is the most comfortable way to sit? You don't want to fidget and if you keep adjusting how you are sitting, you may not appear on the screen correctly.

Set the camera so that it nicely frames your face.

The top of the frame should show about a hands width above your head and the lower edge of the frame should be somewhere between your shoulders and upper chest area (think 3rd button on a shirt or jacket.) If you wear glasses, check for glare. If you have glare adjust your monitor and/or camera or consider removing them if you think you might not need them.

Test your technology.

Is your microphone working? Camera working? Speakers working? Try not to wear a headset if at all possible, although wearing one is better than struggling through with poor sound quality.

Look into the camera, not at the screen.

If you look at the faces on your screen you will appear to be looking downward, by looking into the camera you will appear to be looking at the interviewer. Lean forward to show active listening and nod during the conversation to show your engagement.

Use notes!

A benefit to video interviewing is that you have "cheat sheets" available. Put Post-It notes around your monitor, or simply have a piece of paper near you that you can glance at when needed.

Practice with a friend in advance.

Call a friends and get comfortable talking through the camera, not the screen. Tape your practice session so you can play it back and see how you looked and sounded through the camera.

Get ready for your next big interview

UMass Global's [Career Development Office](#) provides a comprehensive suite of resources to assist students and alumni in managing and reaching their career goals. Take advantage of its interview practice platform, schedule an appointment with a career coach and explore the library of resources available to help you with your professional path.