



Association for
Academic Psychiatry

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Considerations for Medical Student Virtual Interviews for Residency

Basics

- Treat the virtual interview with the same seriousness as a live interview.
- Make sure the residency program has provided you with the link and access code, if applicable.
- Double-check interview times - factor in time zone differences.
- Ask for the phone numbers for the program coordinator and, if possible, all individuals with whom you are scheduled to interview. That way you will be able to contact them if an emergency arises. Ensure that the residency program has your phone number as well.

Technical Considerations

- Practice ahead of the interview and take time to create your interview space.
- Use a computer or tablet for the interview, not your phone.
- Use a fully charged computer or plug in the computer.
- Turn off all other programs and alarms/notifications on your computer.
- Confirm that your wi-fi connection is working well; position yourself close to the router or use a hardwired connection, if feasible.
- Know how to use basic features of the virtual platform – while most are similar to each other, they nonetheless may have unfamiliar steps, icons, or settings.
- Learn basic troubleshooting, e.g., what to do if you accidentally mute yourself or turn off video.
- Know how to use the chat feature to communicate with the interviewer if technical problems with the sound or video arise.
- Practice with the technology beforehand; perform a mock interview with a colleague/friend.

Dressing for the Interview

- Dress in the same way that you would for a live interview, i.e., formal business attire. Wear the whole outfit, not just the top half (you never know if you may need to stand up!).
- Avoid clothing or jewelry that may be distracting. Include items that reflect your personality, but choose subtler elements, e.g., opt for a maroon tie over a bright red tie.
- It is best to view yourself on the video platform in the clothing you plan to wear. Clothing that does not project well on video:
 - All black or all white.
 - Highly contrasting colors.
 - Smaller/finer patterns, e.g., lines and polka dots, can cause a moiré effect.



Creating the Interview Space

Setting the Stage

- Find an area free of distractions:
 - Eliminate visual distractions, e.g., moving objects.
 - Avoid sources of potential noise; close windows, turn off alarms and appliances, place your phone on silent (and away from your computer).
- Ensure that you will not be interrupted, including by pets. You may place a “do not disturb” sign on the door of the room where you will be interviewing.
- Seating should be comfortable but professional, i.e., not a lounge chair. Be mindful of rolling or rotating chairs, you may be inclined to shift and rotate without being aware, especially when nervous.

Background

- Ascertain how your background will appear to the interviewer.
 - A spinning ceiling fan can be quite distracting and on occasion dizzying. Ensure that a functioning fan is not in the background.
- A neutral background is often best, i.e., a wall or a clean, uncluttered room. If you would like to include personal items in the background, be careful where they are placed, e.g., items can appear as if emerging from your head.
- If you choose to use an artificial background, ensure that it looks professional and that it does not slow the speed of the video transmission.

Lighting/Visual

- Adjust your computer so that the camera is head on, at eye-level. This may require raising your computer.
- Adjust lighting beforehand:
 - Avoid bright fluorescent lights
 - Avoid overhead lighting and backlighting
 - Optimise natural light.
 - Face the source of the light, rather than having it at your back.
- Find the best distance from the camera to position yourself. Your face should not take up the entire screen. However, be close enough so that the interviewer can read your facial expressions.
- Watch out for potential glare from glasses.
- Check your nose and forehead for reflection; subtle makeup (face powder or foundation) on nose and forehead can minimize shine.



Interview Day Considerations

- Start and end on time. Log on a few minutes early. If the interviewer is continuing after the end time, consider politely asking if you could have a second to alert the next person that you are running late, or ask if they would do it for you.
- Speak slowly and clearly: be aware that video/audio may not be perfect.
- You may need to be more explicit with language, as interviewers may not be able to interpret body language as effectively, e.g., showing interest with a smile or subtly leaning forward may not be noticeable over the virtual interface. Instead, it may be necessary to add verbal feedback such as, “I am really **excited** to hear about...” or “the description of therapy training is **inspiring**.”
- On the other hand, bear in mind how body language can be utilized, in the virtual interface, e.g., thumbs up, waving, or exaggerating expressions (as appropriate).
- Maintain eye contact with the camera - position the interviewer’s face directly under the webcam.
- Don’t be distracted by watching your own face on video. It will help to maximize the window showing the interviewer’s face and minimize the window showing your face.
- Maintain appropriate posture and avoid fidgeting (practice where you will place your hands).
- Pay attention to your hands/arms. If you are accustomed to using your hands when talking, pay attention to not wave them into the camera.
- Remember to smile!
- Keep a copy of your CV handy. If you need to refer to it, inform the interviewer that you are doing so (rather than trying to covertly sneak a peek, which will likely be obvious to the interviewer).
- Keep a bottle of water nearby. If you need to take a sip, turn your head away from the screen as you drink.
- In case of an emergency, e.g., the audio/video is not working, loud noises are occurring, or something requires you to step away, do not panic. Explain the circumstances to the interviewer and together decide how to proceed.

Resources

- https://www.aamc.org/system/files/2020-05/Virtual_Interview_Tips_for_Medical_School_Applicants_05142020.pdf
- [BigInterview.com: The Ultimate Guide to Acing Your Next Video Interview](#)
- [TheMuse.com: The Best Way to Set Up for a Video Interview](#)
- <https://wistia.com/learn/production/how-to-look-good-on-a-webcam>
- <https://wistia.com/learn/production/snazzy-on-webcam>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rQwanxQmFnc>

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