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Tips to a Great Skype Interview

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By Laura Backes

It is becoming common for companies to conduct job interviews via Skype. Skype interviews are fast, easy and very inexpensive. Because you are online using your computer and a camera it can be a tad uncomfortable the first time.

1. Background: Believe it or not the background of your Skype interview is more important than you think. The idea is to face your computer toward a simple but not boring background. Try framing a bookshelf or desk behind you. You want to give yourself a little depth in the image. Avoid stark white walls or brightly colored and too busy backgrounds. Computers distort colors and can make it difficult for the interviewer to focus. Be in a location where no one (housemates, offspring, pets, etc) can interrupt you, and which is quiet and has a neutral and/or very clean and organized background (you don't want to show any mess.)

2. Lighting: Make sure you have good lighting on your face. Having the correct lighting will help your interviewer see you at your best and make it easy on their eyes. Overhead lights that are very bright or florescent tend to wash your face out or even darken your face. The best lighting is natural sunlight from a nearby window. Look toward the natural sunlight and/or a table lamp so that it illuminates your face. Test the lights in the room - you want enough light to look good and happy, no dark shadows for your interview

3. What to Wear: Dress Dark With A Touch Of Color. Just because you are having an interview in a less conventional way doesn't mean the same business interview attire does not apply. Wear what you normally would for an interview. *A tip for women:* Log onto Skype beforehand to determine how much makeup you may need. Sometimes computer cameras can create the appearance of being tired. As in any on-camera scenarios, don't wear stripes or tight woven patterns such as hounds tooth because they'll come across like strobe lights to your interviewer. It's best to wear a darker color suit with accents of jewel tones in a tie, or for a ladies shirt under a suit jacket, to bring a little color to the image.

4. Where to look: Your natural reaction is to look directly at the screen as the interviewer speaks, however you need to look into the computer camera. You and the interviewer should make the interview as close as an in person interview as possible. Looking into the camera will give the effect that you are speaking eye to eye. Do not sit too close to the camera. Sit up straight-posture goes a long way. Look at the camera.

When you look directly at the camera, it appears to the interviewer that you are looking directly at them/making eye contact

5. Practice: Practice with a friend or family member on Skype. Practice speaking up and looking right into the camera. Test out your interview outfit and background. Make sure your posture is strong and that you keep it throughout the interview. If possible, get in touch with their IT guy to test the connection ahead of time. Practice makes perfect!

6. Sound: Mind your sounds. No cell phone, pets, distractions around. You are in a room alone and they can hear everything clear as day. Do not nervously click your ball-point pen or shaking of your leg because the sound will transmit clearly to the panel of interviewers.

7. When listening and talking: Sound Strong, clarity is very important. You can use a USBheadset because the microphone jack usually provides a suboptimal experience or an earbud, not your computer speakers. There's nothing more annoying for either party than when someone hears themselves echoing back through the mic as they're speaking. You want to use an earbud if possible so you can be discrete and do it "news anchor" style--again, if possible. If not, then just a normal skype-chat microphone/headset can work as well and make sure it works properly.

Don't forget to breathe, and good luck!