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Interviewing From a Distance

In today's job search environment, it is likely that you will be asked to conduct an interview from a distance. These interviews will likely take the form of either a traditional phone interview or a more modern web-based interview using a platform such as Skype. Phone and Skype interviews have increased in popularity for a number of reasons:

- They save both the candidate and employer a lot of time and money.
- They allow employers to consider candidates from a wider geographic region.
- They allow employers to better screen potential applicants.

It is extremely important to prepare for distance interviews the same way you would prepare for an in-person interview. You will need to research the organization, have answers prepared for the common questions, and have questions that you hope to ask them. For more information about preparation, please see the Interviewing Handout.

GENERAL TIPS FOR DISTANCE INTERVIEWS

- When scheduling your interview, allow for ample time to prepare before and review after the interview.
- Find a quiet, private space where you can conduct the interview.
- Have your résumé, notes, questions, and blank paper nearby. You do not want to read from any of these materials, but it is fine to reference them while answering questions.
- Dress professionally as you would for an in-person interview. (See Professional Attire Handout for more information.)
- Do not be afraid to ask for clarification if you were unable to understand or fully hear a question. Also, feel free to ask if they need any additional information after you answer questions.
- Take a breath before responding to each question. This will give you a moment to formulate your answer and will prevent you from cutting off the interviewer. Consider that there may be a delay in the transmission.
- When responding, use specific examples that paint a picture in the listener's mind.
- Interview alone. Do not let anyone else into the room – they will only serve as a distraction.
- Take notes during the interview to help you remember the questions asked and how you answered them. This is valuable if you move on to a second round interview.
- Be sure to ask questions showing your preparation and interest in the position.
- Be prepared to discuss your availability at the end of the interview should the interviewer ask to set up an in-person interview.
- Be sure to get your interviewer's name and contact information to follow-up with a thank you e-mail or handwritten letter.
- Always thank your interviewer(s), ask about next steps, and re-express your interest and fit.

PHONE INTERVIEW TIPS

- Use a landline phone if possible. If you must use a cell phone, take a moment at the beginning of the conversation to determine who will call the other person back if the call is dropped.
- If using a cell phone, put it on silent in case you receive another call or text messages during your interview.
- Be enthusiastic, avoid a monotone voice, and utilize facial expressions and gestures. This will help you avoid sounding flat.
- Avoid chewing gum, eating, or drinking while on the phone.

SKYPE INTERVIEW TIPS

- Be sure your Skype account name is professional. If you do not have a Skype account, go to www.skype.com to set up a free account.
- Make sure your laptop is fully charged or plugged in and that you are in a place where you have a strong internet connection.
- If Skype is new to you, be sure to practice with a friend to familiarize yourself with its functions, volume, and lag time.
- Look into the webcam and not at the screen otherwise you will appear to be looking away from the interviewer. Check your appearance at the beginning then avoid looking at the video of yourself during the interview.
- Turn off cell phones, e-mail alerts and any other programs that make sound. You do not want interruptions during your interview.
- Avoid putting your face too close to the camera.
- Choose your background wisely. You will want to avoid anything too distracting or too boring such as a flat white wall.
- Take a moment to figure out how lighting is affecting your image on the screen. Natural lighting tends to be best.
- Consider recording the Skype call. By recording the interview you can review your answers and work to improve.