
RESIDENCY

6 tips to ace video interviews for residency

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Application fees and travel expenses for residency can be costly, which is why program directors are piloting new ways to interview applicants via videoconferencing. Take time to prepare. Follow these expert tips for success, should your prospective residency programs offer video interviews.

“The use of videoconference interviews for residency and fellowship programs ... has been associated with positive feedback from candidates, cost savings for candidates and increased time efficiency,” according to a study authored by internal medicine residency directors at the Mayo Clinic in Arizona. The study was published in the *Journal of Graduate Medical Education*.

Previous research shows that Web conferencing offers flexible alternatives to the typical in-person interview while simultaneously reducing costs for students and helping program directors screen applicants.

Program directors at the Mayo Clinic decided to test the effectiveness of Web conferencing by launching their own video interviews for the 2014 Main Residency Match in the National Resident Match Program.

“The clear benefit of video interviewing for a residency or fellowship program is the ability to engage and interview candidates who are not able to participate in an on-site interview due to time or resource constraints,” authors of the study said.

After interviewing eight applicants on video, the program directors selected two candidates to rank in the Match for an internal medicine residency position.

during the study:

1. Connect to Ethernet. Skip wireless and use an Ethernet cable for Internet connections. This ensures interviewees have a stable and speedy connection during conversations. Also plug all cords into an outlet as video conferencing quickly drains batteries.

2. Dress for success—no matter the platform or venue. “In the more successful interviews, candidates were dressed in attire appropriate for an on-site interview and positioned the camera directly at eye level. They appeared to maintain eye contact and seemed completely engaged throughout the interview. These candidates also appeared to have reviewed the online program information and were prepared with questions,” authors of the study said.

3. Keep your eyes focused on the interviewer (this takes practice). Avoid inadvertently watching yourself on your computer, and close the self-view window on your screen if necessary. Focus on looking into the camera when responding to questions to improve the perception of eye contact. “This is a difficult habit to form and needs to be practiced ahead of the interview,” study authors advised.

4. Set the stage using good lighting, angles and sound. Before the interview, be sure to notify any family or friends about the interview to avoid unexpected visitors during the conference. Put phones on silent, and close all computer programs to minimize notifications.

Average overhead lighting should be sufficient. Once lights are set, ensure that the backdrop behind your camera is neutral, angle the camera away from any doors or windows, and make sure it’s pointing slightly downward. “This gives the effect of eye contact and a more engaging facial appearance,” study authors said.

5. Remember actions that translate well in person may be less effective on video. It’s common for people to move their hands while talking to express animation. But on video, frequent movement can actually be distracting. Instead of using your hands while talking, try facial features, thoughtful question responses and eye contact to express interest. Also, be sure to reduce unnecessary noise from shuffling papers or fidgeting.

6. In the event of technical difficulties, openly communicate with program faculty. Although only one of eight students in the study reported experiencing technical difficulties during the interviews, random disruptions, especially to Internet connections, can occur, according to the study. If you have a bad connection, the authors suggest that you “inform the interviewer ... early in the conversation.” Should multiple technical problems disrupt the interview, “ask whether a protocol for a repeat interview is available,” authors of the study said.

For more video interview tips, read the [study](#).

Also, explore these student-friendly tips for applying to residency:

- Master these [4 tricks to a successful residency program search](#).
- Follow these 6 steps for building a [competitive CV](#).
- Review and print [this must-have checklist](#) of tasks to prioritize during your first and second years of training. This will help you begin preparing a strong application for residency.
- Print your second checklist [for success during your third year](#) of med school.
- Find out [how many residency programs students really apply to](#) each year (broken down by specialty).
- Read [how to get published](#) and review [this list of the top journals](#) seeking to publish work from physicians in training.

Residency Application
