

# Camera Ready: How to Prepare for a Video Interview

Andrew Trechsel

Executive search firms and their clients are increasingly using video technologies to facilitate early-stage interviews with top-level executives. While most executives are comfortable being on camera, they can benefit from more preparation prior to remote interviews. The following are best practices that can ensure video interviewing success.

1. **Test your technology.** At least an hour before your scheduled interview, make sure everything is running smoothly. This includes a strong internet connection, sufficient battery, up-to-date software, and clear audio and video. The last thing you want during your video interview is to have connectivity problems. Also, clean the camera lens to ensure a clear picture.
  2. **Dress professionally.** Remember that this is still an executive-level interview and that a suit (and tie for males) is expected. Avoid patterns and colors that are distracting or can be manipulated by the technology.
  3. **Consider camera placement.** Where a camera is placed is something that many interviewees fail to consider. Choose a solid surface and position your computer or tablet so that the camera is at eye level. This will ensure that your interviewer is not looking directly at the top of your head or up your nose. Also make sure the camera is an appropriate distance from you. You want the interviewer to be able to see from the top of your head to about mid-torso.
  4. **Think about the backdrop.** In an interview you are the focal point, so make sure there is nothing distracting or unprofessional behind you. If you are taking the interview from home, make sure there is not dirty laundry or scattered toys or unusual artwork – anything that will take interviewers' eyes off of you and give off a negative impression. Ideally, a plain wall is best.
  5. **Establish proper lighting.** With the background in mind, choose a location that has good lighting. To illuminate your face you may want to put a lamp directly behind your computer/tablet. Adjust for dimness or brightness and make sure not to wear jewelry or other shiny objects that could catch the light and be distracting.
  6. **Choose your setting wisely.** Find a quiet spot. There have been instances in which candidates have taken video interviews from the airport or a coffee shop, with people walking around and talking in the background, which can obviously distract. If you are taking the interview from home, find a room with a closed door and ask any other members of the household not to interrupt you. Get pets as far away as possible so that barking poodles or cute kittens are not part of the interview. If you are interviewing from the office, make sure your employer is aware of your intentions and you are in a place where you can speak freely. It goes without saying that it is not acceptable to use your employer's time and technology to look for another job without consent.
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7. **Look directly at the camera when speaking.** It is natural for us to want to look an interviewer in the eye, but if you stare at your screen and your camera is above, it will appear as if you are looking down. When speaking, stare directly at the camera (which as mentioned should be at eye level).
8. **Monitor your body language.** Remember that a lot of communication is nonverbal. When listening nod your head to show understanding, and don't forget to smile. Leaning forward slightly can show you are interested and engaged. Avoid crossing your arms and leaning back.
9. **Pause when necessary and consider pace.** Video interviewing can be difficult because it limits some of the natural cues we get when meeting in person. Account for transmission delays. Before you begin speaking, wait until your interviewer has finished asking a question or commenting. Also remember it is important to pace yourself with your response – not too fast or slow, and make sure that those listening to you are following along.

Interviewing for executive roles always requires a great deal of preparation. Video interviewing requires additional time and forethought. However, the preparation in the short term can pay career dividends in the long run.

*This article was written by Andrew Trechsel, a senior associate in WittKieffer's Healthcare practice.*