



# ASK ME ANYTHING:

## Mastering the Modern Job Interview



# Do You Have an Upcoming Interview?

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Congratulations! We want you to put your best foot forward.

Whether you are an entry-level candidate or a seasoned professional, interviewing remotely or in-person, we will show you how to shine – and land a great new job in the New Year.

## In this eBook, we will discuss:

- How to prepare for a virtual interview.
- Questions to practice before the interview.
- How to handle curveball questions.
- Tips for showcasing your virtual work skills.
- Advice for closing and following up like a pro.

# Prepare to Rock a Virtual Interview

Virtual interviews have become the norm, and even after social distancing ends, many employers will likely continue the practice, so it's important to be comfortable with the process.

Use these strategies to prepare for your virtual interview.

## Research

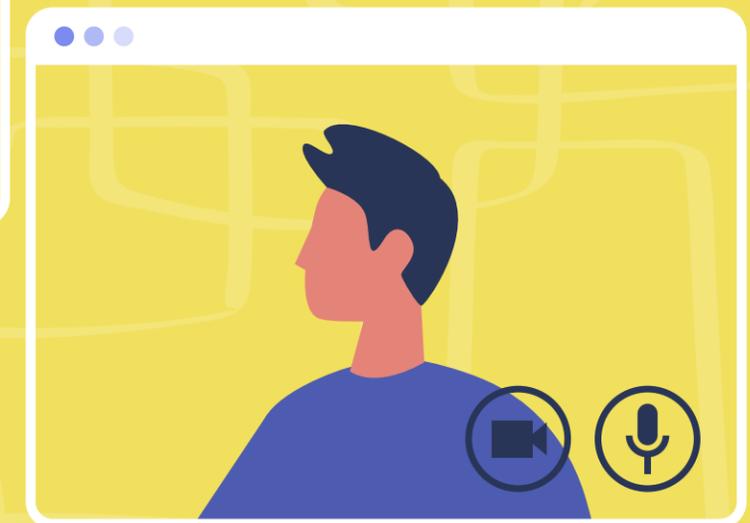
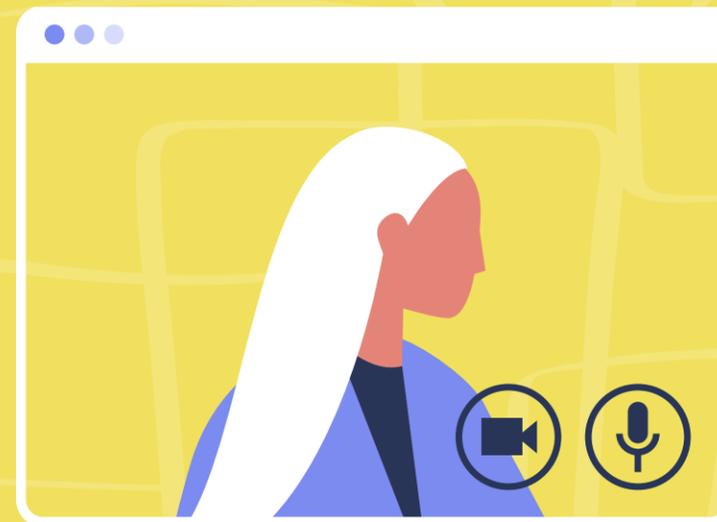
Just as you would prepare for an in-person interview, research the employer to understand what they do, what they are known for, who their competitors are, and how they are faring in the market.

- Study the company website.
- Read through their social media profiles.
- Search the company in your local business journal.
- Practice. Then Practice Some More.

Preparing for a virtual interview also involves practice. By thinking about and practicing answers to common questions, you will be more relaxed and confident during the interview. Just make sure you aren't working off a script – you want to look prepared, not rehearsed.

## Test Your Tech

When the hiring manager sends the link to your video interview, test it out immediately. Make sure all software is downloaded and functional, and test your microphone and speakers, as well.



# Make the Right Virtual Impression

Zoom interviews put some virtual distance between you and the hiring manager, making it easy to forget you must make a great impression. However, you always want to put your best foot forward, even if it's a virtual foot.

## Prepare Your Interview Space

You don't have to have a living room or office worthy of HGTV, but you want to choose your location wisely. Pick an area of your home that is clutter-free. Make sure to test the lighting ahead of time so you don't end up being too backlit or too dark.

## Triple-Check Start Times and Sign in Early

There is no excuse for being late to a remote interview. Confirm the start time, login several minutes early and always, always check (and recheck) time zones.

## Ask for Quiet

Quiet is difficult to achieve if you live with other people, especially children. Hiring managers understand the struggles we all face being at home

together but do your best to control background noise. If possible, send your housemates or family outdoors or on an errand while your interview is happening.

## Get Fully Dressed

You've seen memes of people who dress up from the waist up for a Zoom call, but their sweatpants (or worse) were showing on camera the entire time. Put on an entire professional outfit. This will save you potential embarrassment and put you in a professional frame of mind.

## Don't Get Flustered If Your Tech Fails

If the connection becomes unstable, don't let it shake you. Keep going or offer to call in via phone to show you are poised and minor setbacks don't fluster you.

## Speak Slowly, Loudly, and Clearly

When you're nervous, it's easy to speak quickly or let your volume trail off. Place a sticky note on your computer to remind you to project and speak slowly and clearly. Don't forget, there can be a slight lag in computer audio, so don't get nervous if it takes the interviewer a few seconds to respond.



# Interviewing in Person? Make the Right Impression

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Some companies are conducting in-person interviews, so don't forget your best practices if you're traveling to meet the hiring manager.

- Leave earlier than you think you need to.
- Walk into the building at least ten minutes before your interview.
- Bring several copies of your resume.
- Leave food and drink in the car, and don't chew gum.
- Dress professionally, even if the workplace is casual.
- Don't wear too much jewelry and don't wear perfume or cologne.
- Wear a mask.
- Wave and don't shake hands due to the pandemic.
- Smile with your eyes if your face is covered.
- Project confidence and watch your body language.



# Common Interview Questions to Prepare For

No matter what type of job you are applying for, you can count on being asked many of the same questions over and over again. Here are five questions you should be prepared to answer:

## **Tell me about yourself.**

Despite what you might think, this is not the time to talk about your personal life. The hiring manager wants to know about you as a professional. Be concise, but craft an answer that explains your background and how it ties to the job and company:

1. Start with a brief overview of your current job. You may also want to touch on a hobby or pursuit that demonstrates your character or explains what you're passionate about.
2. Reference education, past positions, volunteer or internship experiences that helped you get where you are now.
3. Touch on your career goals and plans for the future (as they align with the available job).

## **Tell me about a project that did not go as planned.**

Your answer will illustrate the way you handle challenges on the job. Talk about a situation that shows your ability to quickly recover when something goes off course. Make sure to include lessons you learned from that challenge to ensure future projects went more smoothly.

## **What is your greatest weakness?**

Do not fall into the trap of saying you have no weaknesses or using a cliché like, "I'm a perfectionist." Everyone has weaknesses, and the hiring manager is looking to see if you're self-aware enough to own up to your shortcomings. Focus on an actual weakness but in an area that isn't essential to the role, then showcase how you're trying to improve.



## Why do you want to work here?

This is one way a hiring manager has of finding out whether you did your research. They are looking to see whether you studied their mission and vision and company culture. Answer the question by focusing on the ways your skills, goals and personal values are aligned with the job and the company.

## Why did you leave your last job?

Do not bad-mouth your last boss or company, as this will only reflect poorly on you. Instead, explain why this opportunity is more in line with your goals. For example, “I am interested in growing my career and unfortunately, there was not much room for upward mobility at my last job. Based on this job description and your organizational culture, I believe I can really spread my wings and make valuable contributions here.”

## Tell me about a time you had a conflict at work.

Don't fall into the trap of describing a personal disagreement with a co-worker. What you should do is explain professional conflict – differing views on an approach to problem-solving, for example. Then, detail the ways you respectfully resolved it and moved towards a common goal.

## Where do you see yourself in five years?

“I'll be CEO of the company” may seem like an answer that can win you points for ambition, but you don't want to look like you have unrealistic expectations. You also don't want to say you'll be working for another company or starting your own business. You should talk about the skills you want to develop or taking the next logical step up the ladder.



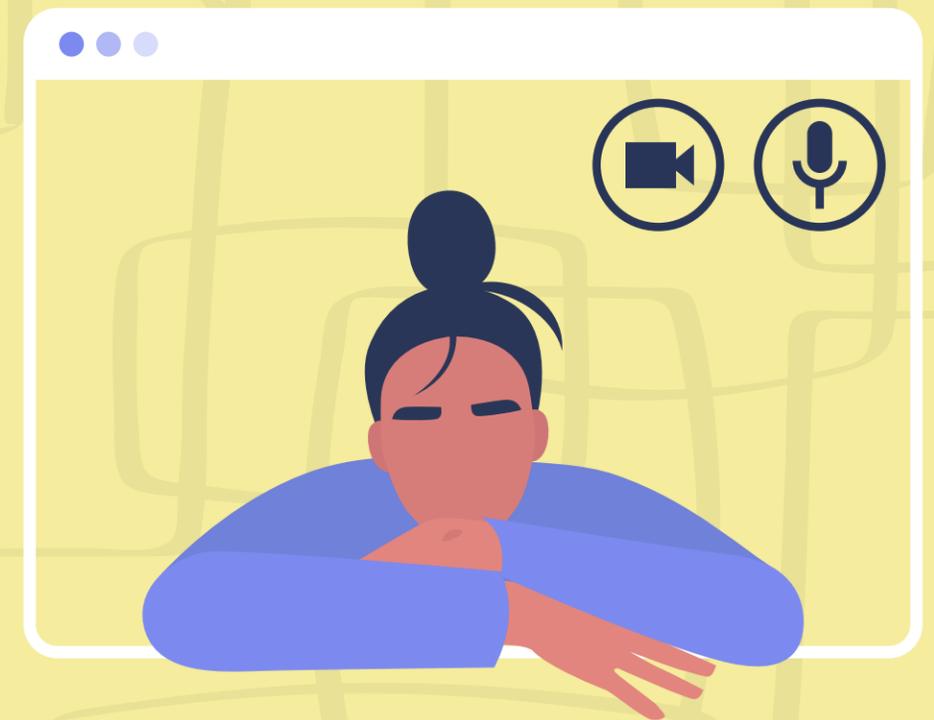
# Ready Yourself for Curveball Questions

Quicky curveballs are a favorite for some hiring managers. They may ask things like “how many tennis balls fit into a school bus,” or, “If you were a half-gallon of ice cream, what flavor would you be, and why?”

Questions like these can throw you off your game if you’re not prepared. First, remember that they are less interested in a “right or wrong” answer than you might think. They are looking for insights into the way you solve problems or your personality.

- **Stay composed.** Keep your expression neutral and view the situation as an opportunity to shine (not sweat). If you are expecting quirky questions, this won’t be challenging.
- **Ask for clarification.** If you’re legitimately confused, it’s perfectly acceptable to ask the interviewer for a bit more information. In fact, they may be looking to see if you do ask clarifying questions.

- **Take your time.** Don’t rush into an answer. Give yourself a moment to prepare by saying, “That’s certainly an unusual question. I’d like to take a moment to gather my thoughts.” This will fill the silence and give you a little time to think through your answer.
- **Tie your skills or experience into the answer.** If possible, find a way to incorporate your transferable job skills or work experience into your response.



# Showcase Your Virtual Work Skills

Many jobs will continue to be at least partially remote for the foreseeable future. Now that companies know they can work virtually, they will likely continue to save overhead costs and provide employees with work-life balance. Therefore, it is crucial to showcase your virtual work skills.

## Talk about your tech skills.

Remote work requires you to be good with technology. Talk about your experience with tools like:

- Video conferencing platforms
- Instant messaging programs
- Project management tools

Focus on the soft skills needed for virtual success:

- **Digital communication.** Communication skills are essential for every job, but digital communication skills are vital when working remotely.
- **Time management.** Remote work is a lot more flexible than an in-office nine-to-

five — but that means you need to prove you can be productive.

- **Teamwork.** Because remote teams can be spread all over the world, even simple tasks like coordinating meetings require communication and compromise on the part of all team members.
- **Self-starter.** A good remote employee is not just at work to punch a time clock and receive a check. A virtual employee gets their job done and feels satisfied when working.
- **Independent problem-solving skills.** When you work remotely, no one is there to hold your

hand through every step. It's important to show that you can work through problems and challenges on your own.



# Close Out Strong!

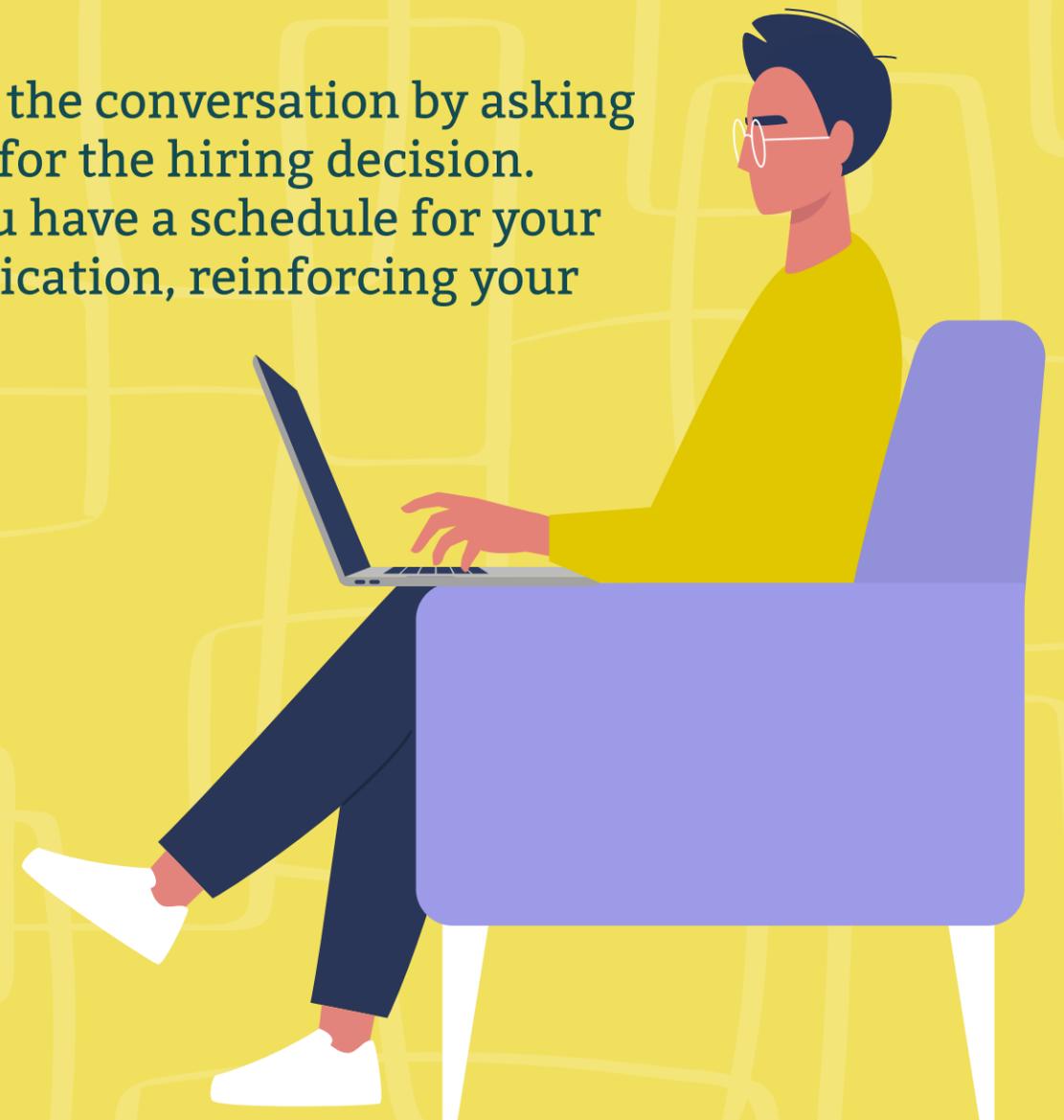
It is imperative to finish on a strong note. Your last impression will shape the way the hiring manager remembers you.

When it comes time for you to ask questions during your phone interview, ask questions that will help you make a more informed decision while also showing the interviewer that you are serious about the job. Ask things like:

- Tell me about a typical week in this position.
- What do you personally like most and least about the company culture?
- What would you say is the most challenging part of this job?
- What are the possibilities for advancement in the future?
- Why is this position vacant?

- What is the management style of this team's leader?
- If I am offered the job, when would you like me to start?

Finally, always end the conversation by asking about the timeline for the hiring decision. This will ensure you have a schedule for your follow-up communication, reinforcing your interest in the job.





# Follow up Like a Pro

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The most difficult part of any job search can be the waiting time after an interview. Follow-up is critical because it shows your continued interest in the role; however, you don't want to overstep and become an annoyance.

Use these tips to follow up professionally after an interview.

## 1) Send a thank-you email

Craft a concise, unique and thoughtful thank-you email to each person you spoke with. Thank each person for their time, reinforce points you want them to remember about you, state your continued interest in the job, and tell them you look forward to hearing from them.

## 2) Reach out by email or phone

Hiring can often take longer than expected, so wait a full three days after the deadline to reach out. Send a short, polite, professional email checking in on the process. Only follow up by phone if the hiring manager said they don't mind receiving calls.

## 3) Be prepared to move on

If you do not hear back after taking these actions, it's wise to keep your options open and move on. Many hiring managers do not reach out to candidates they have not chosen, so avoiding you could be their way of saying they won't be extending an offer.

# Put an Expert in Your Corner

Searching for a job on your own is never easy. It takes time and resources, it can be stressful, and you never quite know whether an opportunity is truly right for you.

That's where a recruiter can help. There are many benefits to working with a recruiter, including:

- **Breaking into great companies.** It can be hard to get your foot in the door with a top employer. A recruiter has the connections to get you in front of decision makers at your target companies.
- **Access to hidden jobs.** Many employers rely on recruiters to fill jobs instead of posting them online. Recruiters and staffing companies often have a line on these hidden opportunities.
- **Feedback to help you improve your interview skills.** Recruiters provide feedback after you have an interview. They will be honest and give both positive and constructive criticism, so you know where you did well and where you need to improve.
- **Pay transparency.** When you work with a recruiter, you'll discuss salary needs upfront, so there are no surprises. If something breaks down in the offer stage and you get less than expected, the recruiter can handle the negotiation with the employer for you.

Are you ready to land a great job in 2021? Talk to a professional recruiter today and start the new year off right!

