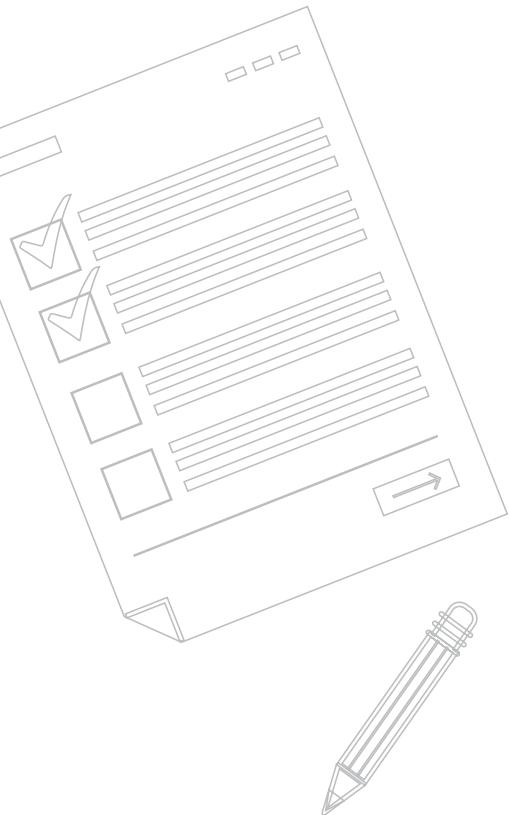


The Ultimate Guide to

INTERVIEWING FOR YOUR FIRST TECH JOB

skillcrush



You just opened one of those emails, the kind that makes your heart race and your hand reach compulsively to text your mom. You got an interview!!

And then comes the delayed reaction. ::Gulp:: *I got an interview?*

Putting your skills (and dreams) on display for a potential employer is hard enough, but if you just learned new tech skills and are going into your very first tech job interview? Well, that comes with its own set of worries: What if I don't know enough yet? What are they going to ask me to do in the interview? How am I going to explain my history as an HR manager?!

Fear not! In this guide, you're going to learn EXACTLY how to ace the entire process of interviewing for your first tech job.

WHAT YOU'LL LEARN IN THIS ULTIMATE GUIDE:

- WHAT TO EXPECT IN THE INTERVIEW**
- HOW TO PREPARE FOR THE INTERVIEW**
- HOW TO ACT DURING THE INTERVIEW**
- WHAT TO DO AFTER THE INTERVIEW**

WHAT TO EXPECT IN *your* INTERVIEW



TECH BUSINESS TERMS TO KNOW

AGILE

A style of product development and project management that divides work up into small, manageable chunks, so it's easy to reevaluate and readjust frequently.

Example: Have you ever worked on an **agile** product development team?

Translation: Have you ever worked on a team that works collaboratively and at a fast pace, and schedules frequent check-ins to reevaluate the strategy?

LEAN

A term often used for startups that involves testing products early and being strategic about growth so that a company can start making money before it runs out of money.

Example: Have you ever worked on a **lean** startup team?

Translation: Do you know how to work on a fast-paced team that evolves quickly and on a tight budget?

ITERATION

Testing, reevaluating, and changing the plan frequently throughout a project.

Example: We like to constantly reevaluate and **reiterate** our projects.

Translation: We like to check out how well a project is doing and then change the plan on the fly. That way we don't invest a ton of hours and money into something only to find out it doesn't work or our users didn't want it!

SCOPE

The size of a project in terms of cost, hours, and resources invested.

Example: **Scope** creep is the stuff of my nightmares.

Translation: I dread situations where a project seems like it will take a certain amount of hours and resources and it turns out to grow and grow into a monster Godzilla project that drains the life out of me!

STAKEHOLDER

Someone with a stake or interest in a company or project.

Example: We need to find a way to communicate this plan to our key **stakeholders**.

Translation: Bob is spending \$20,000 on this site and expected it would be done Thursday. We better tell him we're going to change the release date to next week.

SCALABILITY

The measure of whether a practice or system will be effective if a company grows.

Example: I just don't think this is a good plan in terms of **scalability**.

Translation: This solution works now, but as our company (and this project) grows, it won't be sustainable. We need a longterm solution.

MVP

Minimum Viable Product: The most basic, trimmed down version of a product needed to test if it's going to pay off.

Example: Let's get an **MVP** finished so we can start user testing.

Translation: *Let's create a basic, barebones version of this website so we can see if our users even like the idea before spending \$\$\$ building it out.*

TRACTION

The difficult-to-measure concept of how well an idea or business is taking off.

Example: It's only been 2 weeks and we're noticing some really great **traction!**

Translation: *Our startup is growing exponentially! Sales are still climbing and our email subscribership is up 35% since Tuesday.*

QA

Quality assurance, or quality control.

Example: Can you send this to Audrey for **QA**?

Translation: *Can you get Audrey to check that this is all up to our standards, working correctly, and free of glitches and bugs?*

WHAT KIND OF QUESTIONS TO EXPECT

Most tech job interviews will include one or more of these questions. (Inside secret: they're all getting their questions from Google!) Here's an outline of what to expect, and some hints on how to provide the best answers.



WHAT LANGUAGES / DESIGN TOOLS DO YOU KNOW?

This one is pretty straightforward. Start with what you're most comfortable with and then describe skills you're learning now.



WHAT IS YOUR DEVELOPMENT / DESIGN PROCESS?

Don't let this one scare you! There's no wrong answer. The interviewer wants to know that you think through problems in advance and have a systematic, yet flexible method of working through a project. Be sure to emphasize how you would adapt to a team environment.



WHAT KIND OF PROJECTS HAVE YOU WORKED ON LATELY?

Don't just say what the project is—describe all the work you put into it.



WHAT KIND OF TEAMS HAVE YOU WORKED ON? WHAT'S YOUR ROLE BEEN IN THE TEAM?

Stay positive! Talk about a great trick you've found for collaborating with others or the specific role you played that helped others do their jobs. If you've never worked on a team, talk about what you're excited about!



WHY ARE YOU INTERESTED IN THIS JOB?

It's easy to start gushing about how much you want to take control of your career and make more money in an exciting field. Instead, put the focus on the employer. What about the company's values, goals, or products makes you so attracted to the position? What makes you especially suited to help the company reach its goals?



WHAT DO YOU THINK MAKES YOU DIFFERENT THAN OTHER CANDIDATES?

This is a great place to make your past experience an asset rather than a hindrance. Talk about the special expertise you got in other positions and the fresh-faced excitement you have about tech.



WHAT ARE YOUR SHORT-TERM AND LONG-TERM CAREER GOALS?

Now isn't the time to be timid. Share your biggest dreams and show how you can grow at the company and help the company grow too. Often, hiring managers will value your potential more than they will your specific skills.



WHAT CAREER ACCOMPLISHMENT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF? WHY?

Take this time to emphasize a tech project and really spell out what made it such a milestone for you.



HOW WOULD YOUR CURRENT COLLEAGUES AND SUPERVISORS DESCRIBE YOU?

What are you a go-to person for? These don't have to be tech-specific. If you earned a reputation for putting out fires as an insurance adjustor, play it up!



HOW DO YOU STAY ON TOP OF THE LATEST TRENDS AND NEWS IN YOUR INDUSTRY?

Don't just say, "I check Twitter." Mention specific magazines, blogs, newsletters, and industry leaders.



WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO IN YOUR FREE TIME?

Let your quirkiness shine through!



WHAT KIND OF CODE TESTS OR EXERCISES TO EXPECT

For a lot of junior developers, the prospect of a code test is one of the scariest things about interviewing for a tech job.

And let's be real: just like taking the SAT or auditioning for band is a nerve wracking experience, putting your code skills on display can be intimidating.

In other words, it's okay to be nervous about the code test.

But know this. A code test serves several important functions:

- *It shows the interviewers if your skills on paper match up with reality.*

The code test is gut check for you and the employer. Being slightly out of your comfort zone is a good thing, but it's still a good idea to take things one step at a time rather than leaping from, say, coding in HTML to building a database from scratch.

- *It shows the interviewers how you work through problems and what you do if you get stuck.*

If you get stuck in the code test, don't give up! Ask questions for clarification, and ask if it's okay to use Google, which is a method you would use in real life to solve a tough code problem.

- *And it gives you an opportunity to learn something.*

And it's good practice to view a code test as a learning experience. Every interview you go on teaches you *that much* more about the field of tech and makes you more qualified for the next interview.



COMMON CODE TESTS AND CHALLENGES

Here are some examples of the kinds of challenges or tasks you should be prepared for, depending on your skill set:

DESIGN

- Review or QA a website design
- Design a website element (like a navigation menu or layout)
- Design a web page
- Show your skills with a tool like Photoshop or [OmniGraffle](#)

HTML & CSS

- De-bug HTML or CSS code
- Code a website element (like a menu or a button)
- Create or re-create a simple web page

JAVASCRIPT & JQUERY

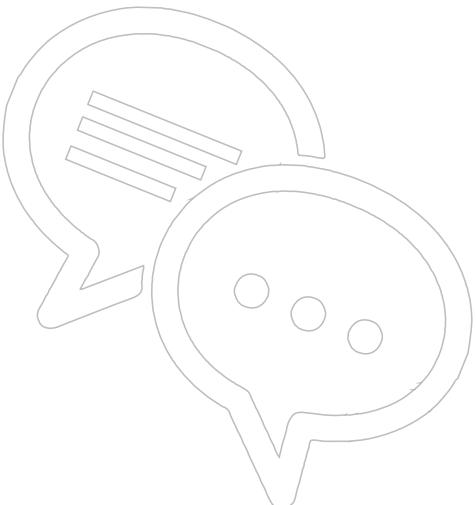
- De-bug JavaScript or jQuery code
- Analyze JavaScript code and determine its output
- Create objects, methods, or arrays
- [Refactor some code](#)
- Solve problems like [FizzBuzz](#) or the [Fibonacci sequence](#)

RUBY OR RUBY ON RAILS

- De-bug Ruby or Ruby on Rails code
- Solve problems like those on [Project Euler](#) or [Code Katas](#)
- Create simple Ruby or Ruby on Rails apps

HOW TO RESPOND WHEN YOU DON'T KNOW THE ANSWER

Remain calm. Do NOT panic. You can do this! Those should be the first thoughts running through your head if the code test looks confusing. By starting with a deep breath and reassuring yourself, you'll seem calm and collected—traits that any boss would like to see in a potential employee.



Once you're ready to tackle the test, start by confirming that you understand the instructions. You can say something like, "So, the question is..." or "I want to make sure I understand what you're looking for..." And don't hesitate to ask for more details or information, especially if you can explain how it would affect your approach to the challenge.

Then, don't silently contemplate it in your mind or scribble solutions on the whiteboard. SPEAK UP! The interviewer is as interested in (or maybe even more interested in) how you come up with answers than whether or not you get it right. They want to know how you approach problems and work through them.

And, even if you feel totally stumped by the problem, you need to at least try to solve it. Employers want patient and persistent workers, NOT ones that throw their hands up in despair at the first sign of trouble. So, forget the phrase "I don't know" and replace it with "Let me think," followed by the steps above.

HOW TO PREPARE FOR *your* INTERVIEW



WHAT TO DO THE WEEK BEFORE

- Research the company.**

Figure out exactly what their mission is and how you can make their lives easier.
- Research the interviewer and the supervisors and employees.**

Now's not the time to be shy about a little social media stalking. Find out as much as you can about the employer and your potential team.
- Review the job description and mark any areas for clarification.**

Now that you landed the interview, take a look back at the original job listing and make sure you know exactly what the company is looking for.
- Make sure your personal website and portfolio are in tiptop shape.**

Make sure all your projects are prominently displayed in your portfolio, and check that your site looks great on different screens and devices and is free from glitches or missing links.
- Review common tech business terms.**

Review industry lingo before jumping into the hotseat, and give yourself a week to let it all sink in!
- Complete the Pre-Interview Prep Worksheet**



- Make sure you have business cards and resumés printed.

You never know if the company you're applying at is fully digital or would prefer physical copies of your business card and resumé. Bring some just in case. Also, designers, check ahead of time about whether you should bring a physical portfolio (if you have one!).



WHAT TO DO THE DAY BEFORE

- Iron out your transportation details!

Don't waste time and energy panicking about train transfers the day of the interview.

- Get your clothes ready.

Make sure your outfit of choice is clean and crisp!

- Charge your laptop and clean up your desktop.

You don't want to open up your laptop only to have your interviewer see the 34 tabs you had open about Beyoncé's vegan diet plan, or a desktop filled to the brim with screenshots and other digital detritus.

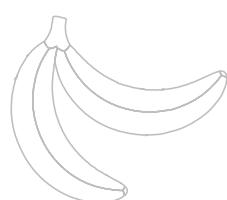
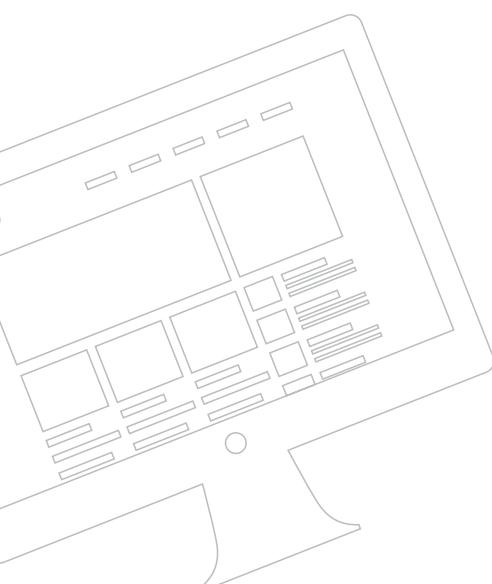
- Read some interesting tech news.

It will give you something to talk about during any lulls at the interview and show that you're on top of tech industry news.

- Code something simple.

In case your interviewer asks you about a recent project, why not make sure it's fresh in your mind?

- Eat something healthy and get some good rest!



WHAT TO BRING WITH YOU

- Resumés
- Business cards
- Physical portfolio (if applicable)
- Your laptop and charger
- A notepad and pen or pencil for jotting quick notes
- Small water bottle (optional)
- Mints (optional)



WHAT TO WEAR

Maybe one day, when remote jobs are the norm, we won't have to worry about what to wear to the interview. These days, your outfit still communicates a lot about who you are.

The trouble is, in tech, it can be especially tough to gauge what's appropriate. In an industry where Converse sneakers and skinny jeans are acceptable office attire, what do you wear to the interview? The answer is that it depends. :P

- Research the company to get an idea of the appropriate dress

Follow [The Muse's](#) advice and spend some of that company "research" time stalking the company's social media pages. What do they wear to the office? Showing up in a silk cravat or decked out in a suit and slingbacks might harm your cause if the office is more casual. Show that you have a good concept of the company culture.

- Wear what makes you comfortable and confident

All that said, wear what you feel confident in. If the stereotypical developer's plaid button-down feels all wrong, don't try to fit into what you think you have to be. Rather, wear your version of polished but comfortable attire.



HOW TO ACT DURING *your* INTERVIEW



HOW TO TALK ABOUT YOUR PAST EXPERIENCE (OUTSIDE OF TECH)

Companies don't expect you to have decades of experience in tech. In fact, they might actually prefer it if you have experience from other areas and industries. A fresh or innovative perspective could be exactly what they're looking for.

So be proud of your past! And rather than just giving a rundown of what you did in your "former life," show how your experience will be useful in this new role. For example, if you used to be in customer service but are now getting into web design, you can talk about how your client-focus helps you create better user personas or listen more carefully when user testing.

Also remember to emphasize your "soft skills." Collaboration, communication, and hard work are critical in tech too, so think of ways you can bring up how you gained or used those talents in your past jobs. And don't forget the power of a unique example or an interesting story.

Example:



I've spent the last 5 years listening to customers and learning to understand and solve their problems first hand. Because of that keen attention to user experience, I'm thorough when it comes to planning websites that are tied to real users at every stage.

I've also honed the ability to take user feedback into account and make changes during a project and at a fast pace. That requires communicating with everyone from the product developers and designers to the customers themselves.

HOW TO TALK ABOUT YOUR TRAINING

Are you a self-taught coder? Did you get a degree in graphic design and then learn web design in an online course? Did you complete a [Skillcrush Career Blueprint](#)?

However you got your skills, you need to be ready to talk about your education. This is the time to make sure you reference all those tech terms that were listed as must-haves in the job ad. You know: HTML, CSS, wireframes, Git, command line, etc.

And be prepared to give details about the courses you've done—Where? How long? What topics? What kind of projects? Talking through everything you've learned can take the emphasis away from the fact that you're entering a new field and onto the hard work you've already done to make the switch.

Example:



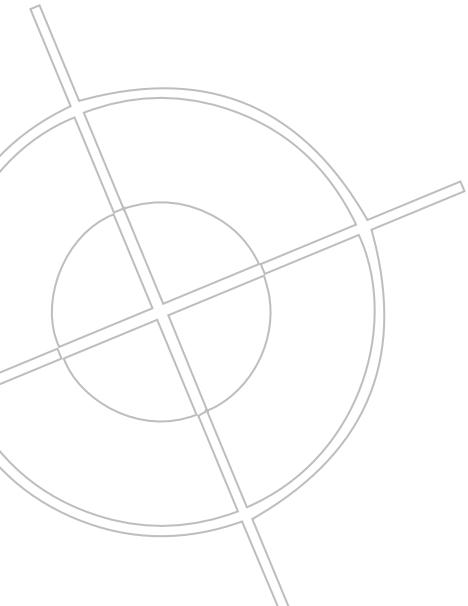
In my Skillcrush Career Blueprint, I took 3 classes.

In the first class, I worked on user experience and design theories and got really good at taking a vague idea of a brand or product and translating that into something that appeals to actual users. I used tools like Photoshop to create wireframes, moodboards, and typography pairings.

In my second class, I figured out how to get into Sublime and turn all of that into clean, organized code and use FTP to launch a website built with HTML + CSS.

Then in my third class, I learned to make a site interactive by incorporating vanilla JavaScript and jQuery plugins. By the end of the blueprint, I had several small projects to showcase, as well as a personal website.

THINGS TO ASK



Phew! You survived the Q&A and all the design or code challenges. Now it's YOUR turn to do some interviewing. That's right—interviewers expect you to have some questions for them. After all, if you really want the job, you should be eager for more information about the position, the team, and the company.

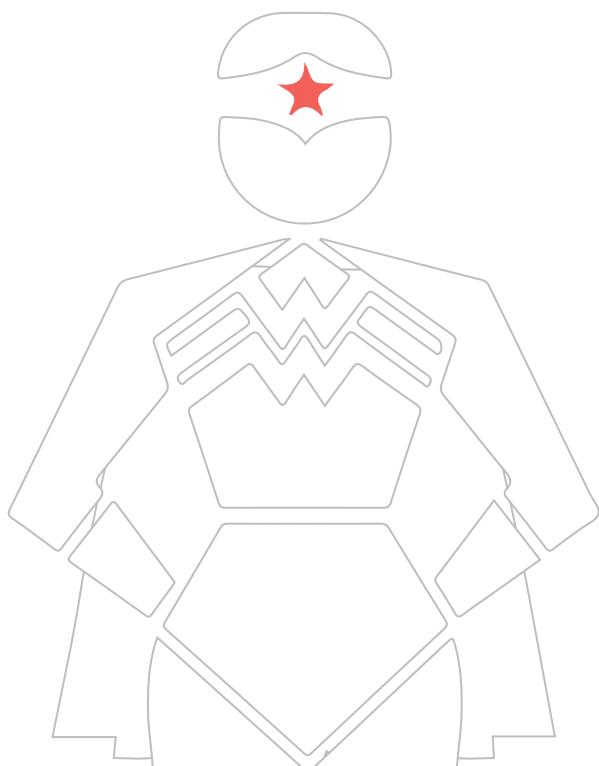
Here are 10 questions you can have at the ready for your interview (if they're not already answered in the job ad, on the company website, or in Google searches you do beforehand):

- What projects or products will I be working on?**
- What tools will I be using?**
- Who will I be working on the same team with?**
- How will my work be evaluated?**
- How would you describe the company culture?**
- What's a typical working day like for this position?**
- Where could I expect to see myself in one year (3-5 years) in this company?**
- What are the biggest challenges the company is facing right now?**
- What are the biggest opportunities for the company right now?**
- Are there any concerns you have about my qualifications?**

EXUDING CONFIDENCE

No matter what comes up during the interview, stay strong and stay sure of yourself. You might not turn out to be a fit for this job, but, in any case, you DO have valuable skills and qualities, and you WILL find that job you're dreaming of.

To boost your confidence before or after an interview and remind yourself of the awesomeness that is you, take a look at advice from women in tech who've overcome their doubts in the [How to Stop Second Guessing Yourself IMMEDIATELY](#) article on the Skillcrush blog. And download the [FREE Emergency Checklist for Stopping Self-Doubt FAST](#) for those times when you need an extra boost.



WHAT TO DO AFTER *your* INTERVIEW





WHEN YOU GET HOME

POST-INTERVIEW WORKSHEET

Make sure to fill out the post-interview worksheet as soon as you get home, when everything is still fresh in your mind.



NEXT DAY

THANK YOU EMAIL

Send a quick note thanking the interviewer for thinking of you, and feel free to ask any questions, share any information or projects, or fill in any gaps that were left after the interview.



NEXT WEEK

FOLLOW-UP EMAIL

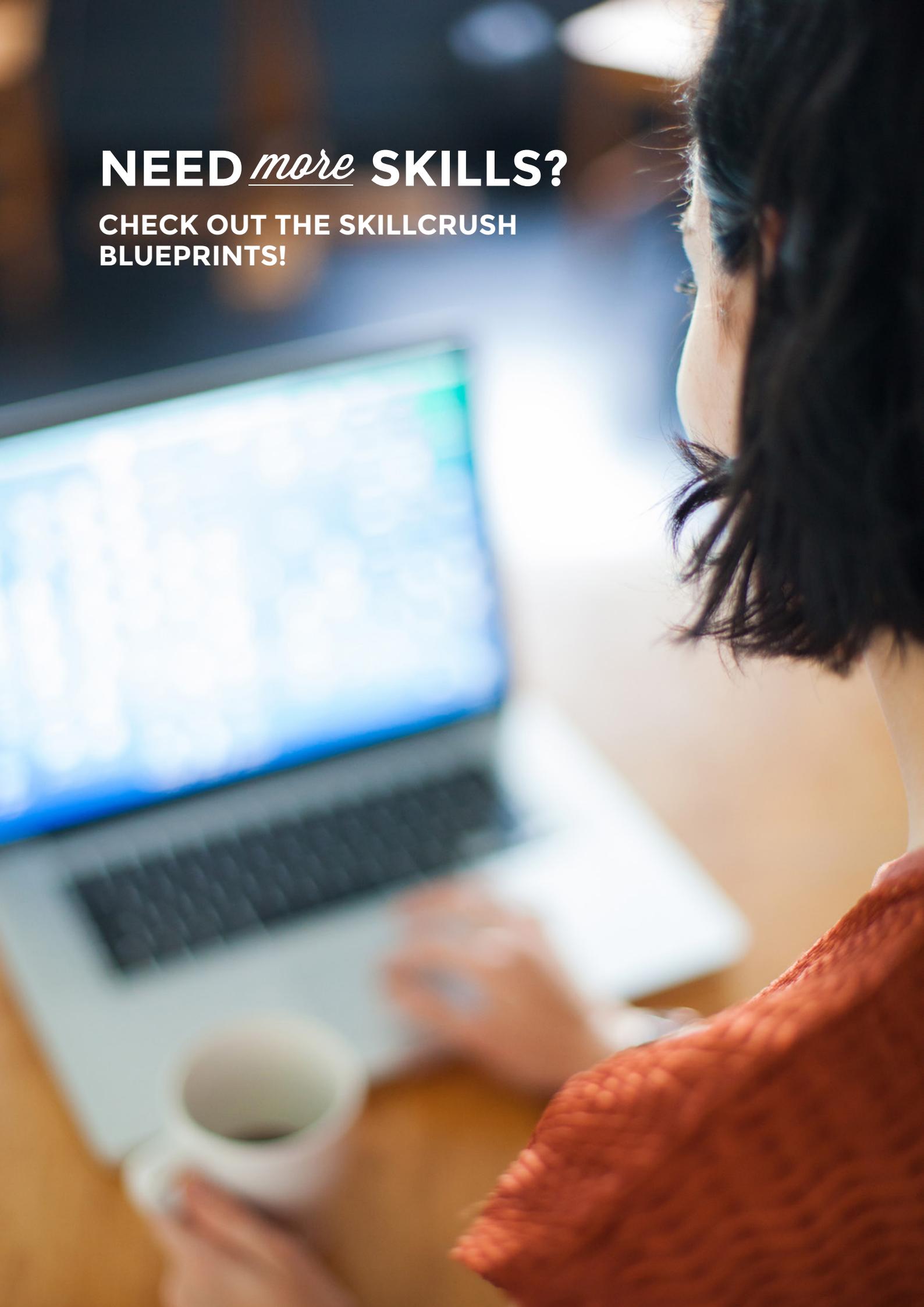
Send a follow-up email saying you're still excited about the job, and let them know about any relevant projects you've worked on, or (even better) solutions or ideas you've come up with for the company.



IF REJECTED

FEEDBACK EMAIL

If you don't get the job, send an email asking for feedback. What did they like about you? What could you have done better? What skills did they want you to have?

A close-up, slightly blurred photograph of a person's profile as they work on a laptop. The person has dark hair and is wearing a red garment. The laptop screen is visible in the background, showing a bright, possibly white or light blue interface.

NEED *more* SKILLS?

CHECK OUT THE SKILLCRUSH
BLUEPRINTS!



WEB DESIGNER BLUEPRINT

Are you infatuated with the idea of being a digital designer but you don't have the tech chops? Or maybe you love the idea of being an online educator or customer service rep but the idea of using HTML + CSS on the daily sounds a little foreign. Our Skillcrush Web Designer Blueprint has your name all over it.

YOU'LL LEARN:

- ✓ To Design & Code Your Very Own Website
- ✓ Photoshop for Web Design
- ✓ To Design for Your Users

What Are You Waiting For?

Invest In Yourself,
Invest In Your Future.

SIGN UP NOW

The Web Designer Blueprint is a three-month long online course that includes everything you need to get started in web design: structured lessons, useful exercises, master classes with industry experts, killer cheatsheets and sample files and instructors there to help guide you every step of the way! *Find out more at [skillcrush.com/blueprint/web-designer!](http://skillcrush.com/blueprint/web-designer/)*

Your Blueprint is structured around three core classes:

skillcrush 100 UX AND WEB DESIGN



skillcrush 101 HTML AND CSS



skillcrush 102 JAVASCRIPT, JQUERY AND APIs





WEB DEVELOPER BLUEPRINT

Product design sounds like a pretty cool gig, huh? Getting paid to invent cool products all the livelong day? Yes, please! If you are stoked to start creating but you're lacking some of the necessities – like knowledge of a programming language like Ruby or JavaScript – Skillcrush is here to guide you. Check out the Skillcrush Web Developer Blueprint and get tinkering.

YOU'LL LEARN:

- ✓ To Build Websites from Scratch
- ✓ To Translate Designs into Code
- ✓ To Launch Your Very Own App

What Are You Waiting For?

Invest In Yourself,
Invest In Your Future.

SIGN UP NOW

The Web Developer Blueprint is a 3-month long Blueprint that includes everything you could possibly need to get started the right way: structured lessons, useful exercises, master classes with experts, killer cheatsheets and instructors there at every step along the way! *Find out more at skillcrush.com/blueprint/web-developer!*

Your Blueprint is structured around three core classes:

skillcrush 101 HTML AND CSS



skillcrush 102 JAVASCRIPT, JQUERY AND APIs



skillcrush 104 RUBY, GIT AND SINATRA



ADVANCED BLUEPRINTS

If you are already comfortable using HTML and CSS, or if you are already off to a great start when it comes to web design and development, you might be ready to dive into one of our advanced blueprints:



Freelance WordPress Developer

AVERAGE SALARY: \$85,000

Are you ready to learn one of the most marketable skills on the planet? Do you want to land a side project that pays more than your monthly salary? Are you sick of being dependent on expensive templates that aren't QUITE right, or having to call your developer every single time you need to make even a tiny tweak? Then, my friend, it's time for you to learn WordPress.

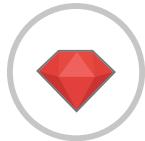
YOU'LL LEARN:

- ✓ To Code and Launch Custom WordPress Sites
- ✓ Plugins for SEO, Analytics and More
- ✓ To Pitch and Land Your First Paying Client

What Are You Waiting For?

Invest In Yourself,
Invest In Your Future.

SIGN UP NOW



Ruby on Rails Developer

AVERAGE SALARY: \$108,000

Ask any industry pro what technology you should learn to build custom web applications and they will all say the same thing: Ruby on Rails. What makes Rails so special is that it is both incredibly complex and unbelievably simple, making it the perfect choice for beginners and experts alike. If you want to get hired full-time at a major tech company (or start your own tech company), this is the technology you must learn.

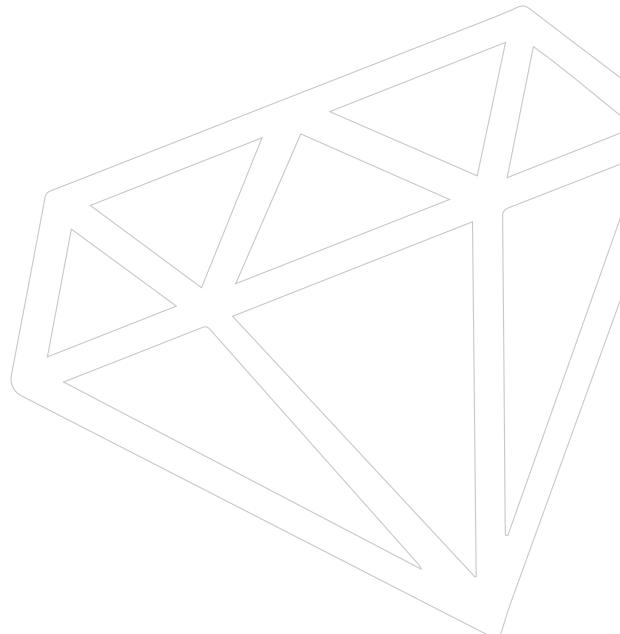
YOU'LL LEARN:

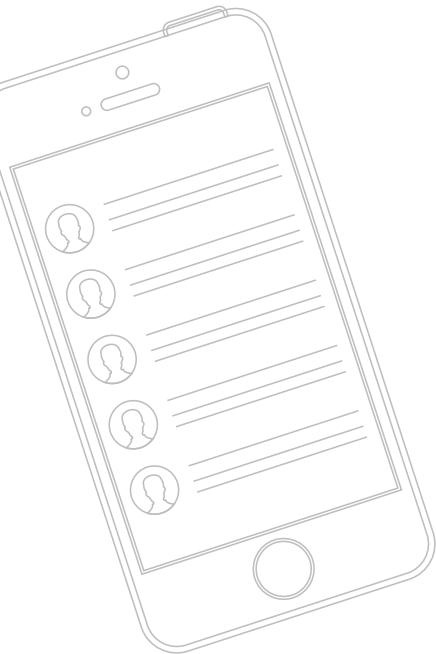
- ✓ To Build Complex Web Applications
- ✓ To Work On An Existing Ruby on Rails Project
- ✓ How Tech Companies Use Rails

What Are You Waiting For?

Invest In Yourself,
Invest In Your Future.

[SIGN UP NOW](#)





Mobile Web Designer Blueprint

AVERAGE SALARY: \$92,000

If you've ever built a website, chances are, you've heard the question, "Is it mobile friendly?" With more and more users accessing the Internet from mobile devices, creating responsive websites has never been more important. If you are a smartphone addict and are obsessed with streamlining the mobile experience, then Responsive Web Design and Development is for you. And if you want to get hired to do frontend design or development at a tech company (or meet the demands of freelance clients), responsive design skills are a must.

YOU'LL LEARN:

- ✓ To design and build mobile-friendly sites
- ✓ To optimize designs for the mobile web
- ✓ To create interactive, adaptive user experiences

What Are You Waiting For?

Invest In Yourself,
Invest In Your Future.

[SIGN UP NOW](#)

PRE-INTERVIEW WORKSHEET

THINGS TO BE SURE TO TELL ABOUT YOURSELF

What are your tech skills?

Your Answer

What are your non-tech skills?

Your Answer

What kind of work are you most excited about?

Your Answer

What projects have you worked on lately?

Your Answer

What would you like to build/work on next?

Your Answer

In what areas do you want to grow?

Your Answer

COMPANY RESEARCH

What kind of work does the company do?

Your Answer

How old is the company and what can you tell about its history?

Your Answer

What kind of clients do they have?

Your Answer

How big is their team?

Your Answer

Who will you be working with (as far as you can tell)?

Your Answer

What is the company culture or attitude like?

Your Answer

What kind of community or volunteer work do they do?

Your Answer

MAKE A LIST OF QUESTIONS YOU HAVE
FOR THE COMPANY

Q

PRACTICE ANSWERING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

What languages / design tools do you know?

Your Answer

.....
.....
.....

What is your development / design process?

Your Answer

.....
.....
.....

What kind of projects have you worked on lately?

Your Answer

.....
.....
.....

What kind of teams have you worked on? What's your role been in the team?

Your Answer

.....
.....
.....

Why are you interested in this job?

Your Answer

.....
.....
.....

What do you think makes you different than other candidates?

Your Answer

.....
.....
.....

What are your short-term and long-term career goals?

Your Answer

What career accomplishment are you most proud of? Why?

Your Answer

How would your current colleagues and supervisors describe you?

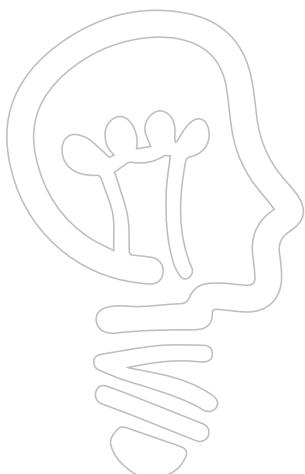
Your Answer

How do you stay on top of the latest trends and news in your industry?

Your Answer

What do you like to do in your free time?

Your Answer



And check out these more specific lists of job interview questions to prepare for:

For developers: [How to Nail Your First Developer Interview and Land a Lucrative New Gig](#)

For designers: [The Most Common Interview Questions for Web Designers](#)

For remote jobs: [18 Remote Job Interview Questions](#)

POST-INTERVIEW WORKSHEET

**JOT DOWN INFORMATION ABOUT THE JOB, TEAM,
AND COMPANY THAT YOU LEARNED:**

Who would you be working with?

Your Answer

What kind of projects would you work on?

Your Answer

Was there room for growth/moving up?

Your Answer

What went well?

Your Answer

What didn't go well?

Your Answer

What tech skills did you find out you need?

Your Answer

What did you like about the job, team, and company?

Your Answer

What did you not like about the job, team, and company?

Your Answer

What would you do differently in your next interview?

Your Answer

What information do you wish you'd found out?

Your Answer

Is there any small project or idea you can flesh out and send over to the interviewer to show you're still thinking about their company and their goals? For example, did they say they needed a plugin for their website? Take a go at it and send it over!

Your Answer

Other notes

AND WHAT IF THIS IS A DIGITAL INTERVIEW?

Original article by Leslie Zaikis

You've landed the interview of your dreams. It's for a remote job that pays more than you ever thought you could make working part-time (or maybe it's for that international gig you've been daydreaming of). In short, you are over the moon!

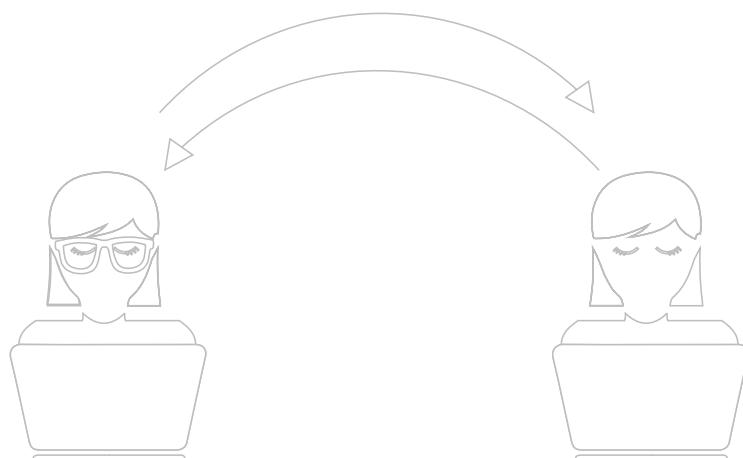
But the interview is over Skype and you are petrified. Of course, you'll try to look natural and you'll rehearse what you should say. But what if there is a terrible echo? Is it okay to join the interview sitting in bed in your room? (Where else will you find a background that hides your messy apartment!?)

You've got this. Read on for a list of absolutely everything to do, from your tech setup to "designing your set," to making sure you look and sound fantastic on your video interview.

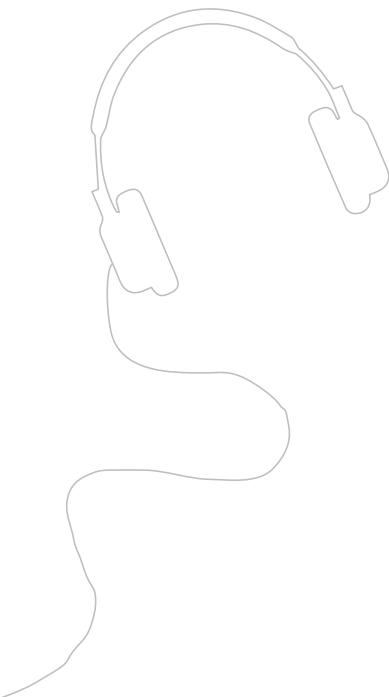
**Check out our
blog post:**

11 Tech Tips for a
Stress-Free Video
Interview

CLICK HERE



1. GET HEADPHONES



If you do nothing else to prepare for a video chat, do this one thing: use headphones. An echo ruins a video chat, fast. And lags in connection and internet blips can easily create an echo, delay, or other sound disruption that can be lessened with headphones. People will forgive your video quality, but they won't forgive your sound. If the person on the other end can't understand what you are saying, you're in trouble!

So, dig up those headphones that came with your first iPhone, or buy a pair of cheap headphones with a mic. (For example, Skullcandy makes a pair for \$20.) Your sound will be crisper, the risk of echo will be reduced drastically, and those sirens and dogs barking in the background won't get in the way of the great impression you're making on screen!

2. DOWNLOAD THE NECESSARY TECH

Most video chat systems require time to download either an application or a plugin. Do a quick search of the technology that your video interview is using, and see what you need to prepare.

Two common (and free!) platforms to use are Google Hangout and Skype. There is a quick plugin for Google Hangout that requires a browser restart (download [here](#)), and an easy application download for Skype ([find your version here](#)). There are hundreds of other video platforms that you could use, such as Cisco WebEx and GoToMeeting, so setting aside 15 minutes before your interview to make sure you have the right tech downloaded will ensure you are prepared!

Note: even if you don't have headphones with a mic, regular old headphones will work to reduce the echo as well. A sketchy set of headphones is better than no set of headphones.



3. TEST YOUR INTERNET

Being on a video chat requires solid, fast internet speed. Starbucks Free WiFi just isn't gunna cut it. Test the internet speed at the location where you are going to be joining the video interview by running a free test at speedtest.net. Google recommends an upload and download speed of at least 4 Mbps for a solid video connection.

Also, wireless internet signal can fade in and out. If you have an ethernet cable handy (they usually come free with your internet router or you can purchase one on Amazon for less than \$10), plug it in to ensure you have a steady connection.

4. CHECK YOUR SOUND INPUTS AND OUTPUTS

Do a quick check of your sound settings to make sure everything is set correctly. Every video chat system has slightly different settings, but most will default to "built-in audio," which means the speakers and microphone on your computer. If you are using headphones and there is an option to set to your headphone audio (and microphone) instead, click it!

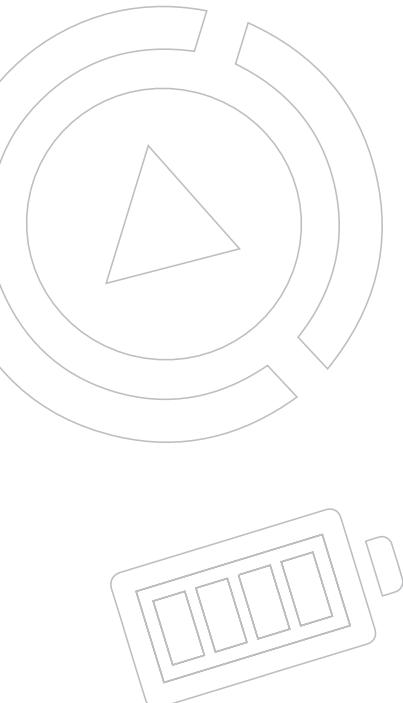
On Skype, you can try speaking and watch the audio bar rise and fall with your volume.

[Skype sound settings video interview](#)

If you are using Google Hangout, try playing a test sound to make sure you can hear in your headphones.

5. PLUG IN YOUR CHARGER

Video drains your battery more than nearly any other program you can run on your computer. If you are taking your video interview using a laptop or tablet, charging it to 100% is a great idea. An even better idea is to have your laptop plugged in! Sort through your closets and find an extension cord if you need it so that you can be in the best position and not run out of juice in the middle of your call.



6. DESIGN YOUR “SET”

Actively think about setting up what is behind you in the shot for your video interview. As executive recruiter Jennifer Johnson shared, being in a big room and having too much depth behind you can be distracting. It's best to position yourself a few feet from a wall, and have one or two tasteful decor components in the background. For example, a painting, a plant, or an organized bookshelf. Imagine meeting with the CEO of a huge company, and think about what how their desk is positioned: try to create the same setup for yourself. A white wall absolutely works, but if you have the time to “design” your set, it can certainly boost the impression you make!

7. BRING YOUR CAMERA TO EYE LEVEL

“It looks like I have a double chin!” That was Laura Belgray’s reaction when we started to set her up for her fantastic Skillcrush webinar. You know what she’s talking about: you look down at your laptop, while your chair has you perched up high, and the camera hits you at possibly the least-flattering angle of your neck you’ve ever seen.

Prop your laptop up so that you are looking at the camera at eye level, instead of down. Use a few textbooks, a pile of magazines, or even a rectangular tissue box to set your laptop up a few inches on your desk. It makes you look relaxed and composed, is a more flattering angle, and saves you from neck cramps.

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8. LIGHT FROM THE FRONT

A cardinal mistake of newbies on video interviews is to have light shining from the background. If you have a big window with a view, why not show it off?



Doh! You want the (spot)light on your face, not on the background! Think about getting your school pictures taken (I know, I know, terrible memories of braces. But bear with me on the analogy...). Where did that huge, blinding flash come from? Directly in front of you! So when you setup your video interview or chat, think about your school pictures and place your lighting in the front.

Natural lighting is best, so face towards a window if you can. If you are in a darker room, or you are getting on video chat in the evening, find a lamp that you can plugin and place about a foot in front of your laptop to give you some good lighting. (Just relying on the lighting from your laptop might give an eerily creepy glow...) If you have the time, take the extra step and take away,

turn down, or turn off the lights behind you, as well.

9. CHECK YOURSELF OUT

Before you go live, make sure to check that your video camera works and that you look great on screen! But, you don't want to login to your interview while you're checking your setup. Instead, use another program to see how you look before going live.

The easiest way to test how you look is the audio/video settings in Skype. Once you open up Skype, click "Preferences" from the menu and open up the Audio/Video tab. Your camera will turn on and you will see yourself!

If you don't have access to Skype, there's a great workaround for testing out how you look on Google Hangout. Pop into Google Calendar and open up a meeting invite. There is an option to join by Video Call (see the bottom field in the screenshot below). Click that, and you'll open up a Hangout with yourself.

10. DO A TEST CHAT

The best way to know that everything will work correctly is to do a test run! Try out the technology you are using in a test call before your interview or chat starts. Setup everything as close to the way you will do it on interview day to make sure you have all variables under control.

Quick tip: haven't talked to your roommate from college in a while? Instead of giving her a call by phone, see if she's up for jumping on a video chat! You get to test your sound and audio so you feel confident that it works, and catch up with a great friend while you're at it.

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11. THINK SOLID + BRIGHT

Bright colors look amazing on video. Avoid wearing stripes, paisley, and the like, as the detail can come across as fuzzy and distracting on video. (Ever notice how the best dressed at Hollywood awards shows are usually the solid, bold colored dresses, and the outfits that crash and burn are often patterns?). Particularly outstanding colors for camera include scarlet red, emerald green, and royal blue. Pick your favorite!



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