



**STERLING**

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# Guide to Video Interviews

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# Introduction

Video interviews are now a common part of hiring and with good reason; they're convenient, efficient, and they allow for a stronger connection earlier in the interviewing process than phone interviews. Since video interviews are "here to stay," it's important for you to be well prepared so you can put your best foot forward and move ahead with the interviewing process.

**Sterling's Guide to Video Interviews will help you prepare in *four key areas*:**

- 1. Your Technology**
- 2. Your Environment**
- 3. Your Appearance**
- 4. Your Interview**



**... Let's get started!**



# 1. Your Technology

Let's start with the technology you will use for your interview. First, should you use your phone or a computer? Video interviews can certainly be done with a mobile phone, but it will be more difficult to keep your phone steady vs using a laptop or desktop computer. If you must use your phone, consider spending a few dollars on a phone tripod. This will keep your picture steady, and it makes it less obvious that you're using a phone.

We recommend using a laptop or desktop if possible. Make sure your camera is at eye level. If you're using a laptop on a desk, you want to avoid looking down into the camera so that you have the most flattering angle. Use books or other items to prop your computer up to eye level. Also, make sure your laptop or webcam is at a flattering distance, not too close and not too far.



*Good example*



*Bad example*

How you look and sound is very important so test out the camera and sound on your computer beforehand. Clean the lens on your camera for the clearest picture. Consider investing in an external HD webcam if the camera on your computer is weak or if the picture is bad.



Try a couple of practice runs to test out the picture and the sound. Your recruiter is an excellent resource to do a trial run, as they are advising you on the interview and they are familiar with video calls. Set up a few days before the interview, and test everything out again the “day of.” Make sure to charge anything that needs charging, and make sure your Wi-Fi signal is strong and reliable.

Finally, prepare your technology. The most common interviewing platforms include Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Skype, Cisco WebEx Meetings, and Google Hangouts/Meet. Depending on the platform or service the hiring company is using for your video interview, you might need to download software or an app. Make sure you do this well in advance of your interview in case you have any difficulties.

## Technology Checklist:

☐ **My video quality looks clear  
(not blurry/dark)**

☐ **My camera is eye-level, and  
is not too close or far away**

☐ **My audio sounds good  
(mic & speakers working)**

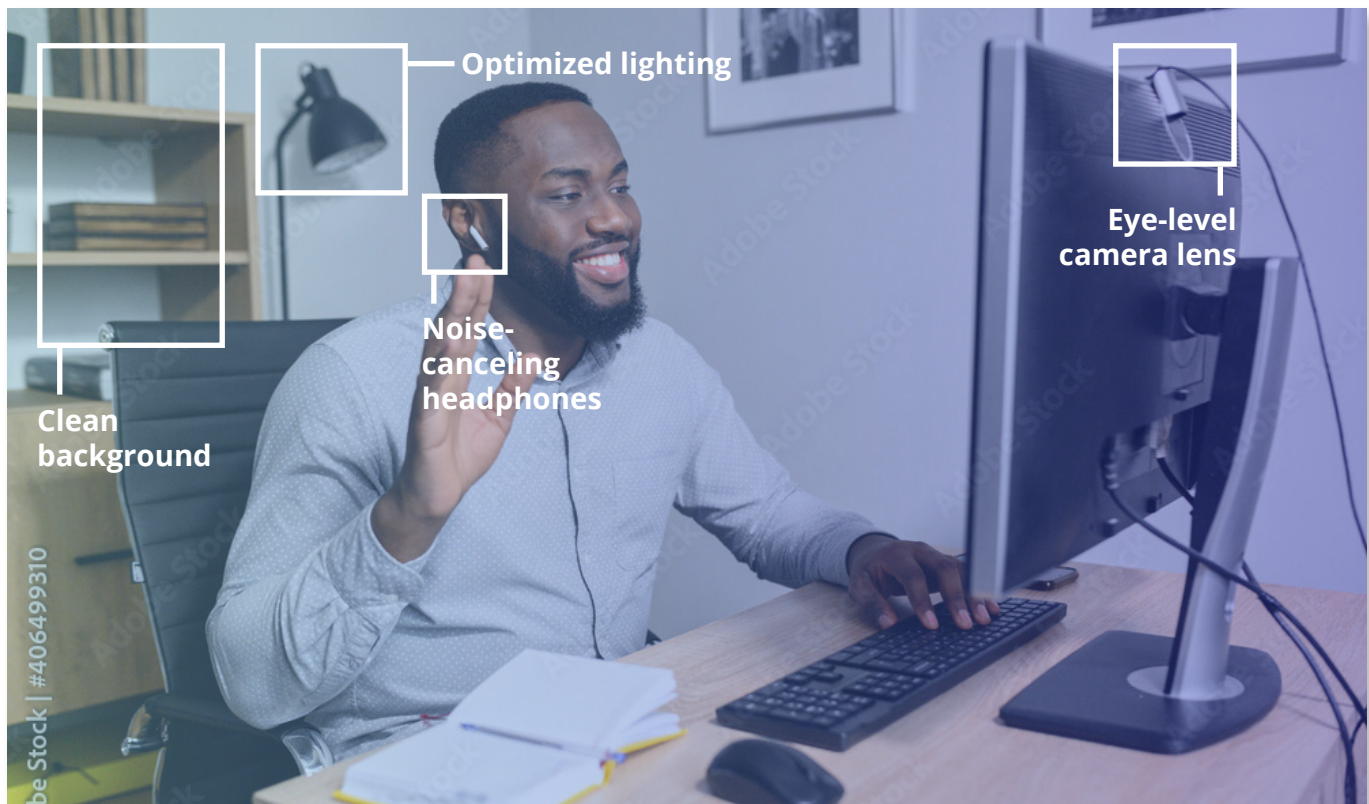
☐ **I have practiced using the  
video call software**

☐ **My Wi-Fi connection is strong  
(disconnect unused devices)**





## 2. Your Environment



You want to create an environment that prevents distractions so that the interviewer stays focused on you and why you're the best person for the job. Making sure your environment is optimal also conveys to the interviewer that you take the opportunity seriously.

If you're using a virtual background, make sure it's professional and appropriate for business. If you're not using a virtual background, make sure your real background is cleaned up, office-like, and clutter-free. Check the lighting to avoid any glare from back lighting or any unflattering shadows. If necessary, position some lamps or other light sources to give you a bright, clear appearance.

Not only do you want your background to be visually appealing; make sure your background is noise-free. If you have pets or kids, make arrangements to keep them quiet and out of view during your interview. Turn off your phone or any other devices that might make background noise while you're talking.



## 3. Your Appearance

Pay as much attention to your appearance as you would for a face-to-face interview. Your attire should be professional, and you should wear what you would wear in person. Dress for the interview from top to bottom (you never know if you'll need to stand up during the video interview). Stick with solids and avoid distracting prints that might not come across well on camera.



**Maintain eye-contact  
with the camera lens**



**Dress like you're there  
in-person, head to toe**



**Avoid clothes with  
distracting patterns**



**Your surroundings  
should look clean and  
organized**



**Sit still, and practice  
good posture in a  
comfortable chair**



**Relax and remember to  
smile!**

Once you're on camera, focus on making great eye contact by looking directly into the camera. You'll be tempted to look at the screen to see yourself or the interviewer but keep your eye on the camera. Make sure you have great posture, sit still, and smile!



## 4. Your Interview

During your actual video interview, you should have a pen, paper, your resume, and your notes at your disposal. Close everything else on your computer and turn off any audio or visual notifications that might pop up to eliminate any distractions.

Project your voice. Check your volume controls and speak clearly so the microphone picks up your voice and the interviewer doesn't have to strain to hear you. And remember that digital connections can sometimes be delayed. To avoid talking over the interviewer or having your first few words cut out, let the interviewer finish the question and then pause for a couple seconds before delivering your answer.

Beware that sometimes, video can lag or the screen can freeze. And sometimes, of course, the technology can be glitchy or fail altogether. If that happens, remain calm. Log out and log back in, or look for direction from the interviewer. It happens!

**As far as the interview itself, do all your research and prepare thoroughly on your answers to potential questions, plus the questions you want to ask.**



# What could go wrong?

With technology, there's always a chance things could go wrong. Here are some backup plans to have ready just in case:

## **If your video or audio stops working...**

- Before the interview, ask the interviewer for a phone number where you can reach them if you experience technical difficulties. If the video cuts out, call them at that number. Ask if you can continue the interview by phone, or see if you can reschedule.

## **If noise interrupts the conversation...**

- If noises interrupt your video interview, apologize for the interruption and ask for a few moments until the noise has subsided. You may want to mute the microphone if the noise is severe.

## **If someone enters the room unexpectedly...**

- If family members, housemates, or pets enter the room while you're interviewing, apologize to the interviewer, ask for a few moments, mute your microphone and turn off your camera, and then step away to deal with the interruption. Make sure that the room is secure before beginning the interview again.

Finally, at the end of the interview make sure you're fully disconnected and fully off camera/microphone before you sigh, make a face, or make any comments.

As with any job interview, you should conclude by thanking the interviewer for their time. Send a follow-up thank you email later that day (or the next day if your interview was in the evening). This message may help build a stronger connection with your potential employer and help you progress to the next step.





# Interview Checklist

Use this checklist to ensure you're fully prepared for your next video interview!

- ☐ Ensure that you won't be interrupted, either by locking the door or by alerting others that you can't be disturbed (a note on the door of the room as well as the door to the outside may be helpful).
- ☐ Clear the desk space, except for a notepad and pen/pencil for taking notes.
- ☐ Have a copy of your resume and any other notes ready for you to reference.
- ☐ Set out a glass or bottle of water for yourself.
- ☐ Check that your webcam is working.
- ☐ Check that your audio is working.
- ☐ Close any windows, tabs, or applications on your computer that you're not using.
- ☐ Check your internet connection and make sure you're not downloading anything in the background.
- ☐ Set your phone to silent.
- ☐ Check that the background behind you is neutral and free from clutter.
- ☐ Adjust the lights in the room. If things appear dark or dim, you may want to bring in an extra desk lamp to brighten the space.



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