

REMOTE INTERVIEWING

VIRTUAL MEETINGS WON'T STOP US FROM SHARING THEIR STORIES

We're all getting used to these virtual classes, but how do you have a meaningful conversation through a computer screen? Let's dive into all the best practices for facilitating meaningful interviews remotely.

COMMUNICATE EXPECTATIONS

Once someone agrees to an interview you need to do three things:

1. **Confirm** a specific date, time and *time-frame* with your interviewee.
2. **Tell them** how/where the meeting will be hosted.
3. **Take responsibility** for the invite and time line of the links.

Ex: Thank you! I will see you on October 15th at 1pm, I expect it should take 10 minutes. I will send you a Google meet code 30 minutes before we start.

TEST & PREPARE

You must make sure that your tech is working properly beforehand. Log on early, make sure your audio is functioning, check your WiFi connection and get to a quiet place if possible. Get a paper and pen out or set up a split screen so you can have a document open for notes. Review your questions, and and remind yourself:

Your number one goal should be to make them feel important and heard.

Dress for respect. I'm not saying you need to put on a suit and tie, but show up wearing something other than PJ's. This person is taking time out of their day to meet with you! Show them that you respect their presence by showing up as a version of your best self.

Camera on or off? You don't need to have a camera on to have a great interview! If it's possible, turn on yours so they can see you and know that you are listening. However, if they are more comfortable with it off - that's fine too! Without body language to read, it might actually make you a better listener.

THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

Let's not beat around the bush, virtual interviews can be awkward! The best way to make things so smoothly is to address it right away. Here are some tips:

1. **Thank them** for giving you their time!
2. **Show understanding** by addressing the position they're in and say something to lighten the mood.
3. **Give them a head's-up** about the pauses and note taking so your interviewee can expect some silences.

Ex: Hey Bob, Thanks for letting me interview you for the yearbook. I know these one-on-one zooms can be weird, but I'll try and make this one easy! Just so you know, I take notes to help me remember things later, and if I pause, I'm just writing things down.

START WITH THE POSITIVE

Even though this year might be full of stories about hard topics, (and yes — we should still cover the hard stuff) you have to respect their feelings and privacy.

Lead with asking about the lighter things in order to build the trust needed to discuss hard topics.

This allows them to feel more comfortable knowing that you're really trying to build a story rather than just pry.

Still feel weird? Try keeping questions about negative feelings or emotions strictly as follow ups. That means, if they bring something up, you can ask them to elaborate.

Ex: Tell me about your experience with online learning. "Online learning has been really hard for me." Can you tell me what's been the hardest part?

Remember to always thank them for sharing.

LET THEM DIRECT THE STORY

It's really hard not to go into an interview with some expectations of where it will lead, but I want to challenge you to give your interviewee space to tell **their** story.

"NO LID" QUESTIONS

You've heard of closed ended and open ended questions, but there is a third category of *super* open ended questions that allow the most space for interpretation and rich answers.

"Tell me about..."

"Can you describe..."

"Walk me through..."

These questions allow them to share what they want to share. These typically give you lengthy answers and can be used to build a story because there are usually a lot more possibilities for follow-up questions.

"Walk me through what it was like to..."

"Tell me about the time when..."

"Can you describe what it felt like when..."

These are the questions that will get people talking!

LISTEN TO FOLLOW UP

Follow-up questions can be tough, and even when you list out a thousand possibilities, it can be a challenge to make them flow into the conversation.

The best way to ask a follow-up is to take something they just said and try to build on it.

Ex: Tell me about your experience with learning from home. "Well, it's been kind of hard because I miss my friends and teachers. It's also harder to focus because of all the distractions." I see, thank you for sharing that with me. What would you say is the most distracting?