Virtual Interview Tips: Do's and Don'ts

Virtual Interview Tips: Do's and Don'ts

While many interview tips stay constant when moving to a virtual environment, there are many new variables that must be considered. As you prepare for virtual interviews or even just professional virtual interactions this guide will provide tips for before the interview, during the interview, what to do if something goes wrong, and professionalism.

1. Before the Interview
Being prepared can make the difference in an interview or any interaction you have on a virtual platform, see tips below on how to set up for success.

Know the platform
- Download the virtual platform you will be using beforehand
- Make sure you understand and practice using all functions of the virtual platform (in interviews it is possible you may have to perform more of the complex functions, e.g., sharing your screen)
- If you are not given the platform readily, consider asking when accepting the interview

Check your connection
- Set aside time prior to your interview to ensure your internet connection supports the virtual platform well

Test your speakers
- Try calling a friend through virtual platforms such as Zoom, WebEx, and Microsoft Teams
- Check your microphone volume and make sure there's no feedback or distracting background noises
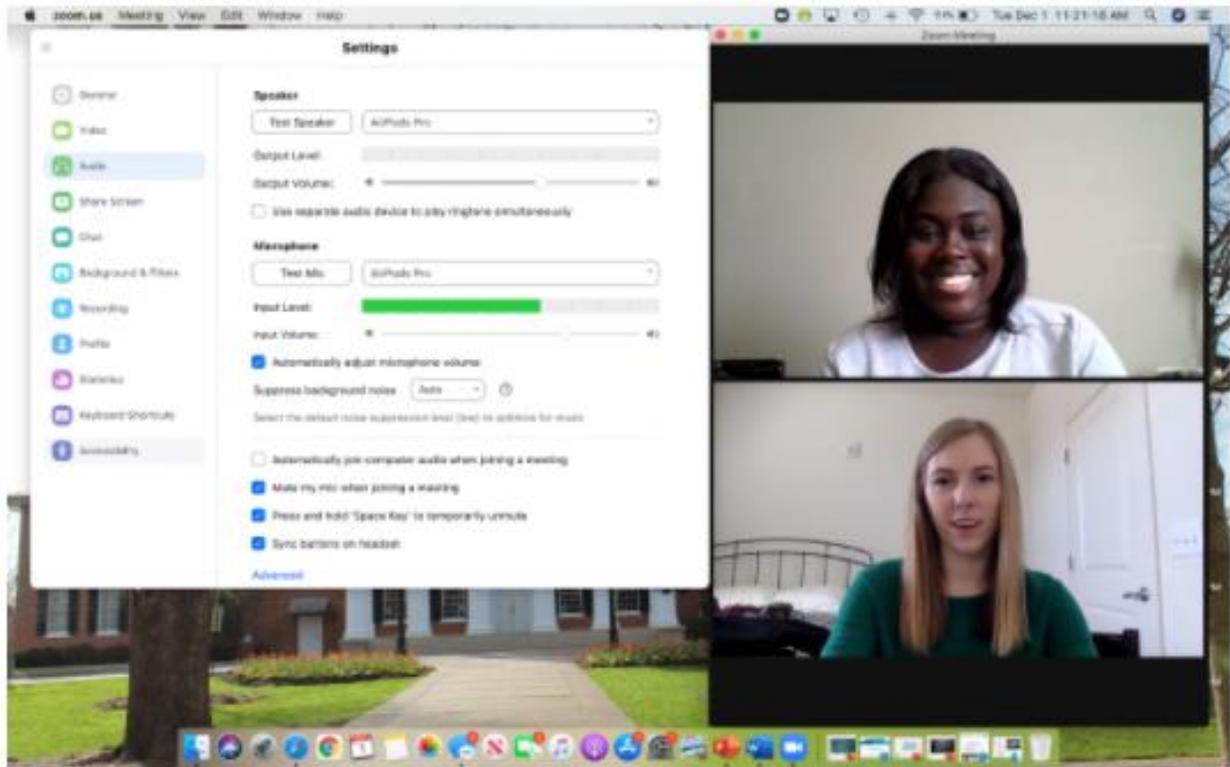
Dress to impress
- Dress professionally just like how you would in an in-person interview
- Business formal: neutral colored suit or blazer with slacks or a skirt

Headphones

- You can use wired headphones or Bluetooth ones, but typically a less distracting headphone set (like on the left) will be preferred

Lighting

- Interviewers want to be able to see your face and get to know you
- Lighting is incredibly important, make sure your face is well lit
- Lighting should be in front of you, rather than behind you
- Consider different times of the day, you may not always be able to count on natural light so know what artificial lighting you made need to

Check your background

- Your video background should be clean and not cluttered
- Artwork on your walls can spruce up your background, but make sure it isn't too distracting
- In a professional setting, avoid taking interviews or meetings outdoors
- Avoid bold artificial virtual backgrounds
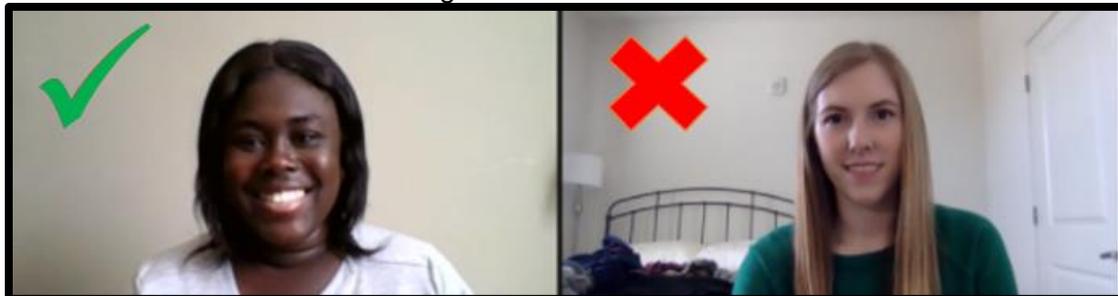
Eliminate distractions for yourself

- Inform everyone in your household that you will be on an interview

- Avoid chairs and/or desks that cause you to make a lot of movements (e.g., rolling chairs)

2. During the Interview:

Now that your virtual interaction has begun, there's a few things to keep in mind, see tips below for what to be aware of.

Camera angle

- Understand the positioning of your camera, make sure to set it up where you'd like it beforehand
- Make sure your whole face is in the frame, you don't want to be too close or too far

Be attentive

- Avoid activities that will make you seem disinterested and unprofessional (e.g., being on your phone, searching something on your computer), it is likely those also on the call will notice
- Place your phone and computer notifications on silent and take your smartwatch off, so they don't distract you while you're interviewing
- Be aware of your non-verbal's, consider recording yourself to pick up on any habits you would like to adjust
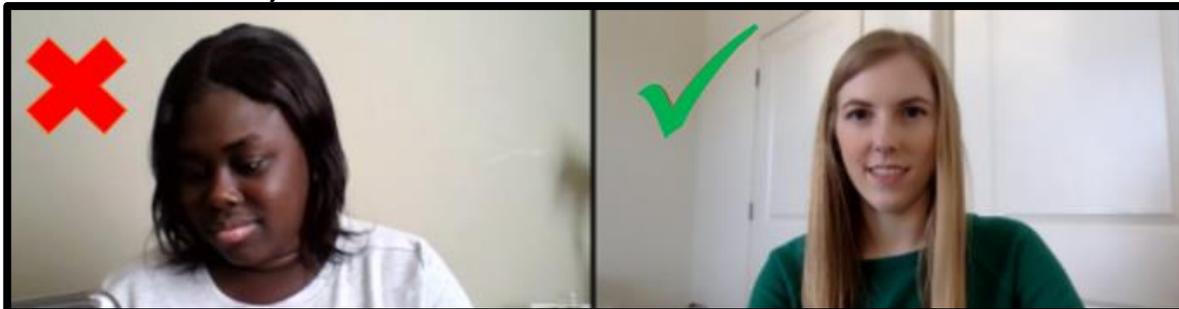
Eye Contact

- The best place to look is the camera since it will look the most like eye contact
- Consider placing something under your computer or device (e.g., books) to raise it to eye level
- Move the zoom window right below the camera to help you look at the camera and the person talking at the same time
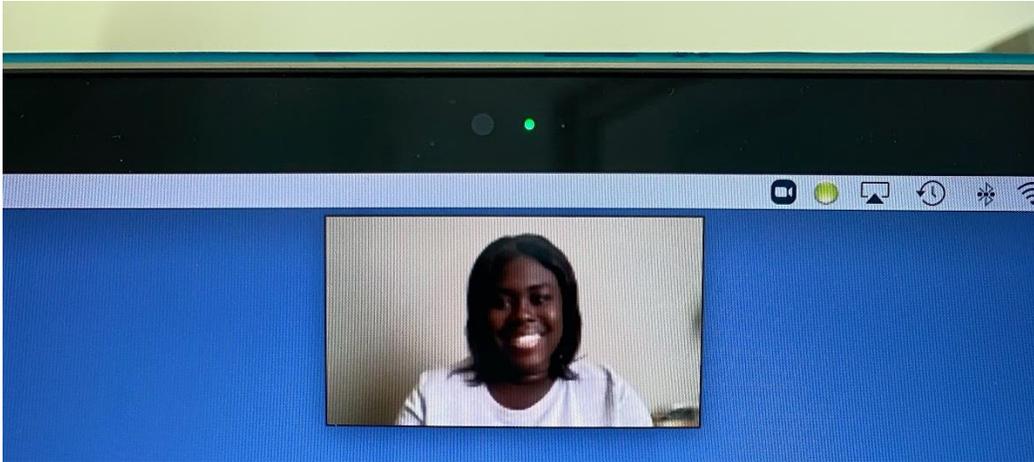
3. Something Went Wrong, Now What?

Despite extensive planning, there is always room for error, see tips below on how to handle some issues that might come up.

In any situation

- Stay calm, maintain positive speech and facial expressions
- Apologize and continue where you left off

Connectivity issues

- Have your interviewer's phone number or email handy so that you can contact them if you lose connection
- Have your video meeting's "call-in by phone" number written down to call in if you cannot regain video connection

4. Professionalism

Professionalism is just as important in a virtual setting, see tips below on how to display professional behavior.

Display name

- Make sure to display your full name, not an automatically generated username, nickname, or other variation
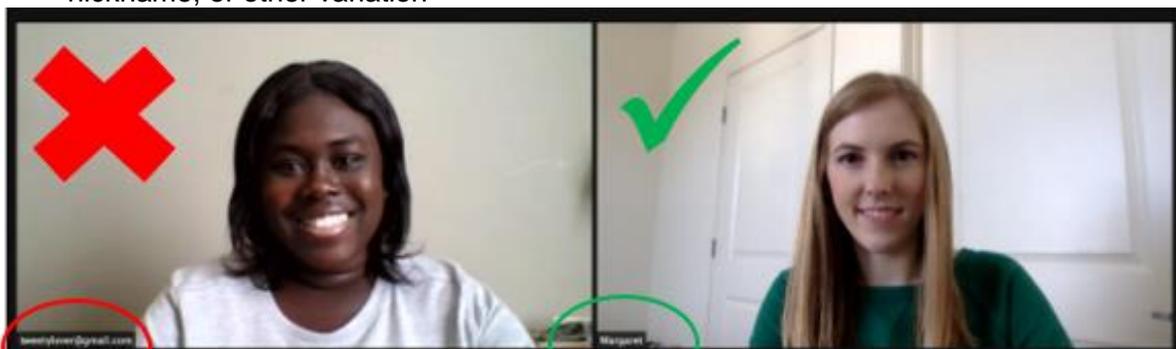
tweetylover@gmail.com   Margaret

Punctuality

- Just like with in-person interviews, it's important to be on time to your interview
- Try to arrive on your call a few minutes before the interview starts or be ready to join right on time
- If you arrive early and start chatting, remember this is still part of the interview so maintain professionalism at all times
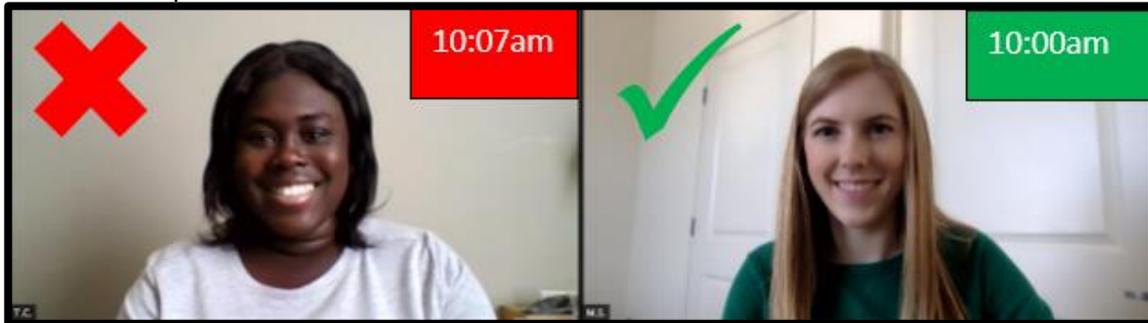
Muting

- Make sure you are not on mute while you are speaking
- Place yourself on mute while the interviewer is speaking so that there won't be background noise coming from your microphone

No Mute Symbol
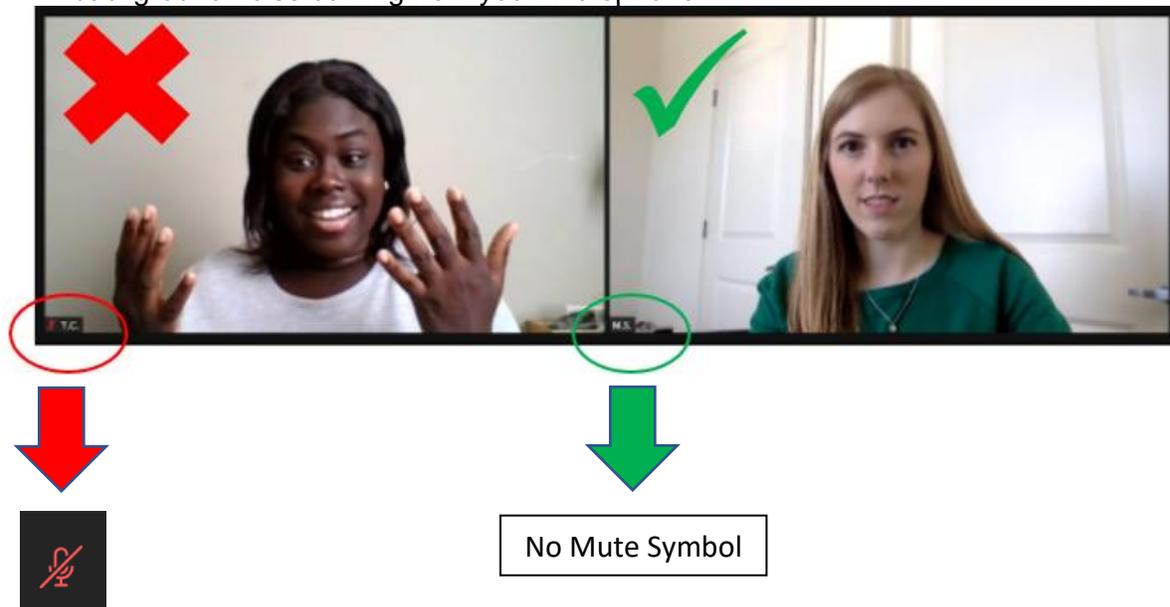
Addressing those on the call

- Make sure to listen when the interviewers introduce themselves so that you can address them professionally by name if you have specific questions for them

Navigating the chat function

- Be professional both verbally and through the chat function
- Use proper grammar and spelling if you need to use the chat function

5. Conclusion and Resources

Remember to treat virtual interviews like you would during an in-person interview. Being prepared prior, composed and professional during, and ready to take on any challenges that a virtual environment may present will be essential in this new interview/meeting setting. Good luck in your interview, and please consider using additional ASHP resources that are included below:

Other Virtual/Phone Interview Guidance:
Video and Phone Interview Best Practices

AJHP Articles:
Tips for succeeding at pharmacy residency phone interviews
Strategies for successfully navigating the pharmacy residency interview process

Interview Skills Packet:
Interview Skills Packet for Residency Candidates

To Practice Interview:
InterviewStream: ASHP's mock interview platform

Podcasts:

Etiquette Tips for Virtual Interviews and Networking During Residency Season

Virtual Residency Recruitment - Advice from Residency Program Leaders

Virtual Fellowship Recruitment - Advice from Fellowship Program Leaders