

Hello again COMSEP members! We're back with another installment of the Career Advising Corner. As your 4th year students begin the virtual interview season, we prepared these top ten tips for success to help the students master this new interviewing format.

Top Ten Tips to Crush the Virtual Interview

- 1. Internet connection is key!** If you are going wireless, make sure you have a strong wireless internet connection throughout the day at the location you plan to use for your interview. If you have uncertainty about your Wi-Fi – go “old school” and invest in an inexpensive ethernet cord and connect your computer directly to the modem. Depending on your computer's ports, you may need an adaptor to connect to the ethernet cord. *Pro tip:* Consider downloading an app that tests your internet speed and compare that to what is needed to run the program to be used for the virtual interview.
- 2. Turn off all other programs on your device during the interview, especially email.** Not only does this free up bandwidth on your device, it eliminates background noises generated by the computer and prevents you from being distracted during the interview. *Pro tip:* Keep email open on your phone so you have rapid access to email in case of technical difficulty with the virtual interview. Remember to put your phone on silent/vibrate mode.
- 3. Practice with the platform that the program will use to conduct the interview.** There are many platforms out there for conducting interviews (WebEx, Zoom, Blackboard, Streamyard to name just a few...). They all have slightly different features and controls. Most programs will tell you the platform that will be used. Practice to be sure your device and internet (see #1) work well with the platform and that you are comfortable managing the controls of the platform. *Pro tip:* Do mock interviews with your peers on all of the different platforms for virtual interview.
- 4. Be charged up!** Make sure both your phone and your device are fully charged. Be sure you have access to a working electrical outlet and have chargers available for all of your devices. *Pro tip:* Have a portable charger fully powered up and ready to go in the event of a disruption in your electricity.
- 5. Have an extra set of functioning earbuds/headset with a microphone ready to go.** In case your primary headset/earbuds fail, you will want a back-up set immediately available. If you are planning to use wireless ear buds, be sure you have a back-up set of earbuds that jacks directly into your device. You can interview using your computers audio set without headset/ear buds but this will allow more environmental noise to be heard during the interview.
- 6. Make sure your camera is positioned at the top of your screen.** Having the camera positioned at the top of your screen is best position for eye contact with the interviewer. Avoid having the camera positioned on the side of your device as frequently looking to the side can be interpreted as odd or distracted behavior.

7. **Lights, camera, action:** make sure your environment is well lit, day and night. You do not want to appear shadowed or back lit. You want to be clearly visible to the interviewer but not washed out by lighting that is too bright. This does not mean you need to buy expensive supplemental lights. Play around with the lighting you have available to get the best effect. *Pro tip:* When you think you have your lighting maximized, take a screen shot and send it to a trusted peer and your career advisor for review. Better yet, do a mock interview with the lighting you plan to use.
8. **Body language matters.** Be sure your seat is comfortable and position yourself well for the camera. Ideally, your head, shoulders and upper 1/3 of your torso will be visible. For women, pay attention to where the camera cuts you off on the torso. Sit up and stay engaged. Avoid touching your face, neck and mouth during the interview. Try to be natural while also limiting excess use of the hands. Remember that with most webcams or computer cameras, your hand will appear disproportionately large relative to the rest of your body because they will be closest to the camera. This may take practice. *Pro tip:* record yourself answering a few questions and then review the tape to critique your positioning and body language.
9. **Stage your interview environment.** Pay attention to what is visible in the background. Interviewers will learn about you from what they see. Background items may even become a topic of conversation for the interview so be intentional about what is in your background. Have a cup of water in a clear glass available for drinking if you need it. Try to assure that there will be no distractions during the interview. Partners, pets, roommates and children should be safely out of sight and sound. If you can't manage this at home, check with your school to see if they are providing interview space for students.
10. **Know the back-up plan.** Be sure you know what instructions the program has provided for action in case of technical difficulties with the interview. If this is not clear, establish the plan with the interviewer. The simplest option is to provide them your telephone number at the start of the interview.

Most importantly, have fun and be yourself!