

Helpful guides to supporting people remotely:

Guide 6: How to ace a Zoom interview - A guide for candidates to prepare for a virtual job interview.

Through conversations with our partners across the UK, it's evident there's a huge appetite for supporting people in the local community remotely. We've heard amazing stories about how staff at community organisations and libraries have been finding ways to substitute the face-to-face support that is valued by so many of the people they regularly help.

That's why we're working with various partners to create a series of easy-to-follow guides for delivering digital skills support remotely. Each guide will include a bit of background information, and a few simple steps you can follow to give it a try.

This guide comes from Hafsha Shaikh and Salim Shaikh, Managing Directors at [Smartlyte, Birmingham](#), who have created some guidance for getting used to using zoom for interviews.



The context

Smartlyte, Birmingham has developed a simple but helpful guide to support people when conducting a job interview online. Smartlyte has many years' experience of working with employers and individuals in preparing people for the job market and providing post-employment support. However, times have changed and now it is more than just completing CVs and application forms online. The pandemic has introduced new ways of service delivery for everyone including the use of technology and new found digital skills.

Job losses and unemployment have been a daily headline during the pandemic but slowly, as the country returns to business, so do new job opportunities. Candidates need to be prepared, as most interviews will more than likely be conducted online. There are many online platforms that can be used for delivering online interviews and Zoom seems to be a favourite.

Making it happen

The guide provides tips on how to prepare for your interview. Like all things, it's all about how well you can plan and prepare in advance. Attending an interview is a very stressful time and most applicants do feel very nervous. Candidates may not be familiar with taking part in online or virtual interviews and you need to show confidence in your delivery.

We strongly suggest candidates practice their skills with and without equipment before the actual online interview. Try to video yourself on your phone and evaluate how you communicate, your body language and tone of voice.

We would also recommend delivering a practice run on Zoom with a friend or someone else in your house to ensure all the equipment works and you are confident in using the software.

If it is your first time recording yourself, don't worry about how you sound. You always sound different to how you think you sound - and remember, it's not how you sound but what you say that matters!

Making it work

1. Internet connection:

Make sure your connection can handle live streaming. If you have other people in the house ask them to disconnect their devices so you have the best possible connection.

2. Technology:

The equipment you use will make a big difference. Select the best device available: tablet / iPad /laptop etc. If you have to, borrow equipment or buy a separate web camera.

3. Camera:

Make sure the camera is level to your face with your eye level about one-third of the way down the screen. Reduce the extra space above your head and your face should take up most of the screen. Use the camera app on your device to check. Remember to adjust your position once you enter your virtual interview

4. Lighting:

If there's light on in the room, make sure the light is on your face, not shining from behind. Natural light is always best, so face a window if possible.

5. Background:

Make sure the background is professional or just use a plain wall. If you choose a bookshelf background, make sure it's neat and tidy and the book titles are appropriate and reflect your personality.

6. Virtual backgrounds:

Avoid using virtual backgrounds as these can leave a bad impression for your interviewer. Especially avoid things like a summer beach or the wind blowing the waves and trees in the background, as movement can be a distraction

7. Avoid disruptions:

Make sure everyone in the house knows that you will be on a virtual interview and to avoid any interruptions at that time, including entering the room! Have a 'lookout' if possible, for that unexpected online delivery or doorbell ringing. Animals can be distracting. Consider securing them in another room or keeping them outside. Consider putting a "Do Not Disturb" note on your door. And remember to switch your mobile phone off!

8. Maintain eye contact:

Eye contact is a vital part of your non-verbal communication which is still important. Maintain good eye contact at all times with the interviewer or team

and avoid roaming your eyes away from the camera. Avoid over blinking as this can happen when nervous.

9. Dress the way you want to be addressed:

Make sure you are dressed completely from head to toe! Don't try to get away with formal on the top and informal down below. Expect the worse - the interviewer may ask you to stand up and present!

10. Be in control:

A benefit of a virtual interview is that no-one can see what's behind your camera/device. Use this opportunity to use props like cue cards, post-it notes, big pieces of paper with highlights or even a large sized monitor to provide you with helpful hints for your interview. Highlight key questions you think may be asked and create notes to help you respond. Try not to be too dependent on your notes and make it look as natural as you can.

Remember - first impressions count. It only takes a few minutes for an interviewer to make a decision to hire you.

Helpful resources

[How to use Zoom like a pro](#) - CNet
[Video calling course](#) - Learn My Way
[CV Assistant](#) - Create a professional CV in minutes

Keeping in touch

Remember, if you find this guide on how to prepare for a virtual job interview helpful, we'd really like to hear about it. You could either get in touch with your Network Specialist to give them an update, or tag [@Online_Centres](#) on Twitter if you're posting online about your own experience.

For more information on Smartlyte, [please visit their website.](#)

If you've got any feedback about this guide, or have an idea you'd like us to include in the series, please get in touch by sending an email to hello@goodthingsfoundation.org.