Skype is an app that allows you to have video or voice calls with any other person who is on Skype, FOR FREE. You can also instant message and file share. There are some paid functions as well. To use Skype, all you need is a computer or mobile device with a microphone and speakers, an internet connection and an inexpensive webcam.

Skype employment interviews have risen in popularity over the past several years. Why? It's because they allow employers access to the candidate pool without flying people in or wasting time. If done properly, Skype interviews can be an extremely efficient way to begin the interview process. For the job seeker though, it has some potential issues with how you present yourself.

Let's start at the beginning; do you have a Skype account? You must choose a Skype "handle" to set it up; this is the name you will use for your Skype interactions. Choose a variation of your name and/or initials. Do not use a crazy or funny name. Your goal is to cast yourself in the most professional light possible.

(Look for the RiseAboveResources.com website launching in January 2015)

Create a Skype friendly environment - Ideally, your backdrop should be a plain wall. I have actually removed a picture from the wall to reduce distraction in the video above. You want the focus to be on you for the interview. The lighting is important too. If the area is poorly lit, you can just put an additional table lamp on the desk. You don't want to be in the shadows. Children and pets should not be in ear shot during this time; a quiet, distraction free environment is important.

Position your computer so that the camera is at your eye level. For me this means that my laptop is sitting on a box that is six inches high. When the camera is at eye level, the "eye contact" is more natural. I used quotes on the "eye contact" because it is truly NOT eye contact. Good "eye contact" means looking directly at the camera. You may be inclined to look down to see how you look or at the interviewer, but that creates a visual disconnect. Keep your eyes on the camera.

One thing that is a plus in a Skype interview is that you can keep all your notes and papers close at hand. I recommend that you have your resumé, research notes and perhaps some post it notes with key points you want to bring up during the interview. Be sure you aren't reading them, but keep them handy to help trigger your mind during the call. You should be very familiar with the information from your preparation for this interview.
A Skype interview is like any other interview when it comes to your appearance. Pull out the interview suit and make sure your shirt, tie or blouse do not have any small, busy prints; they can create a "jumpy" effect which can distract from your presentation.

It's always a good idea to have a dry run. Ask a friend or family member to connect with you on Skype. You will get the feel for it and you will then eliminate any fears that it won't work. You want to ensure that all video and audio features on Skype are working. Additionally, on the day of the interview, I suggest that you use the Skype test feature as one last precautionary test of the audio system; do this one half hour prior to your call.

Even the best laid plans can sometimes go awry. Make sure you have a Plan B if your connection fails. Be ready to call in and have the interview via telephone. Thinking through all the possibilities in advance will keep you calm if there is any type of glitch.

Skype interviews are here to stay and as a job seeker (or an employer), you need to become comfortable with them. So prepare as you would for any other interview and don't forget to bring your smile and your "star power" on-screen presence, you will rock it on Skype!
If you have any additional tips, we'd love to hear from you… comment below!

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