



Top 5 Interview Tips for Recent College Grads

By [Maureen Gobeil](#), Senior Recruiter at [The Hiring Group](#)

Congratulations! Your hard work and perseverance has paid off – you're officially a college graduate and ready to make your mark in the real world! With this new designation comes a new level of responsibility and significant opportunity in terms of career goals. Landing your first job out of college is one of the most critical steps in life. You need to be on point to put your best self into the interview process.

As a recruiter, I'm often approached by friends and family to offer advice and preparation assistance for new college graduates. The company I work for, The Hiring Group, is an IT and Engineering staffing company and we frequently work with recent college grads to help place them in entry level positions. In this article, we'll discuss five best practice preparation tips for recent college grads who are going through the interview process.

1. **If you're doing a video interview, creating your setup and backdrop is important** Make sure you are in a quiet place with good reception and a simple background behind you. Video conferencing is a great channel to use for interviewing, but it can also be challenging because of the technical issues that can come into play. Be sure to test out the conferencing software (Skype, Google Hangouts, Webex, LiveMeeting), or practice before your "live" interview. Performing these technical "checks" will often eliminate potential problems ahead of time, resulting in a more pleasant interview experience.

Another best practice is to conduct your interview using a well set up laptop or tablet instead of a mobile phone. While most mobile phones today have excellent video capabilities, using them for interviews can be distracting.

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- 2. Dress professionally even for a video interview.** In today's digital universe, we have many clients who conduct introductory interviews via video conference. Projecting a professional image is an important aspect of the interview process. While you're not going into an office for an in-person interview, it's still important to keep your appearance neat and polished. My advice to candidates is to dress as if you're doing an in-person interview. This not only conveys to your potential employer that you're well prepared and eager to work there, but it also helps put you in the "business" state of mind.



- 3. Have your project portfolio in a format that is easily shareable.** For technology or engineering jobs, it's important to have examples of the projects you have worked on relevant to the position. Many candidates I work with today have their own website crafted to showcase their skills and serve as a digital resume. This is very helpful to have on hand to discuss during your interview and to guide the conversation. Be sure you have all of these elements organized and indexed so you spend less time locating these assets vs. covering the skills and certifications you obtained.
- 4. There's homework to do. Even after college!** Do extensive research. Once you know who you'll be interviewing with, go to LinkedIn to gain visibility into their network. Do you have any 1st, 2nd or 3rd degree connections?

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Leverage your own network to get insight into this person's personality, likes and dislikes, work philosophy or background. The more you know about your interviewer, the better your chances are of engaging, connecting and influencing that person in the decision-making process for this hire.

5. **Know what you know (and don't know).** While this might be an initial introductory interview, don't think you won't have to delve into a more technical discussion. Be prepared and polish up on any technical acronyms, lingo or industry terms. Most importantly, don't try to fake a response to something you do not know.

It is important for you to be transparent about your skills and knowledge. There is no harm in admitting that you aren't familiar with or don't have experience in everything that is covered in the interview.

Interviewing to find your first job out of college can be a stressful time in your life. Hopefully these five tips will help you be well prepared and polished to make an awesome first impression. Best of luck in your interviews!

Interested in learning more from Maureen and The Hiring Group? E-mail us at

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