

Video Interview Tips

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Video Interviewing for Law Firm Associate Interviewees

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This article was published by Jason McCann, Esq. of [Gridline Search + Consulting](#). [Contact me](#) if you're considering a lateral move.

If you're in the middle of the interview process at a law firm at this particular moment, it is very likely that all or most of your interviewing is being conducted by phone and video. Interviewing by video conference is not new. When I was a first year associate 14 years ago, I interviewed by video while in NYC with attorneys in the London office concerning a possible relocation. It was more practical than being flown over. And it worked! They got a good understanding of me and my reasons for moving to London and I was able to ask questions and learn about their needs abroad.

Preparing for a videoconference law firm interview is generally the same as preparing for an in-person interview with a law firm. First and foremost, it is important to [anticipate and prepare for typical questions](https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/irac-outlining-legal-interviews-jason-mccann/) (https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/irac-outlining-legal-interviews-jason-mccann/). My [interview preparation worksheet](https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/prep-worksheet-law-firm-interviews-jason-mccann/) (https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/prep-worksheet-law-firm-interviews-jason-mccann/) can be helpful for fully organizing your thoughts.

However, there are certainly some practical and substantive differences when it comes to videoconference interviews. Here are my tips and suggestions:

1. ***Keep things conversational by asking questions back to your interviewer.*** The most difficult part of conducting a video interview is the lag time and connection issues that often occur. At the same time, law firm interviews are known for being highly conversational in nature. You will want to anticipate the possible lag, knowing that awkward pauses on both sides of the line will happen. But once your interviewer has completed a line of questioning and/or you are comfortable with the cadence and flow, ask a question back to the interviewer. Don't wait until the end to be prompted. This will confirm to the interviewer that you are fully engaged and interested in the interviewer, the opportunity and the firm itself. (Here are [my tips for asking questions in a law firm interview](https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/5-tips-asking-questions-law-firm-interview-jason-mccann/) (https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/5-tips-asking-questions-law-firm-interview-jason-mccann/).)
2. ***Connect your computer directly to your WiFi router for the video call (if you are able).*** Typically, video interviews with law firms are hosted in offices on both ends. The interviewer is located in their office's conference room and you are setup to come into a local office's conference room. All the technical details are handled by the potential employer's staff. In the current situation, that is unlikely. Both the interviewer and the interviewee will be located at home. Your interview may be arranged by the firm's technical staff using a remote version of their high end videoconference software (e.g., Citrix Webpresence). But for the ease of everyone involved, it's more likely that the interview will be conducted over an off-the-shelf program that is built for one-to-one video chats like Zoom, GoToMeeting, Skype or Google Hangout. If this is the case, the best thing that you can do to help ensure a smooth technical interview is to directly connect your

laptop or desktop to your WiFi router (or modem) by ethernet cord. This will ensure that your Internet signal is hard-wired to the incoming connection. You won't have to worry about competing devices that are on the WiFi network, so it will be less likely that your connection will drop. (*Note: If your laptop is relatively new, it's unlikely it will have an ethernet cord connection; but you can buy a USB-to-ethernet adapter online.*)

3. ***Get in a short version of your "pitch" before the interview ends.*** In a law firm interview, you may or may not get a chance to directly answer the question "*Why should we hire you for this position?*" For a videoconference interview, it is even more important to answer this question if you aren't prompted. Technical glitches, awkward pauses and cross-talk may take up a large chunk of your interview time. But if the interviewer leaves with nothing else, it should be a short 2-3 sentence explanation of why you are the right person for the position and how you will hit the ground running. Make sure to get this in before you disconnect the conference, even if it's quickly.
4. ***Make sure your videoconference program profile is professional.*** If your video interview is by Zoom, Skype, Google Hangout, etc., you will need to have an account and profile set up. For some of these, you may have an existing profile through Microsoft or Google. Make sure to go to your "account details" and ensure that you have a professional photo (or no photo) and that any other details are professional or removed. (For Google especially, it can be easy to forget about that funny photo and profile name that you attached to your Google+ account a few years ago.)
5. ***Be mindful of your appearance, clothes and video backdrop.*** Most people will be thoughtful about wearing professional clothes during a video conference, but it's also important to make sure you have brushed hair, trimmed facial hair, etc. When you are working from home, a video interview may be the only thing that you do all day where you need to look as professional as possible. Also, don't forget that when it comes to video interviews, all the interviewer will be looking at is your face and the backdrop. To that end, make sure there is no clutter, mess or anything you wouldn't want a future coworker to see in the background and throughout the room

(anticipating that it may be necessary for you to move your laptop around.)

6. **Test, test, test.** Depending on the videoconference appointment and software, you may or may not be able to test the videoconference using the software that the potential employer is using. However, you should still test your computer's microphone and video screen for clarity. Your computer might have a way to do this built-in. If not, Skype is free and has an easy and free testing. The picture is as important as the sound, so if there is cloudiness in the picture, make sure to wipe your camera clean.
7. **Keep your table clear of papers and notes.** You want to be as engaged in a videoconference interview as you would be in an in-person interview. Although it might be tempting to have your resume or notes in front of you but off-camera, you risk looking distracted. Additionally, you don't want to be caught reading from something. You want to ensure that you are having a natural conversation and that you are staying present.
8. **Most importantly, be patient!** There will be noises. There will be dogs barking. There will be kids talking. There will be connection issues. Everyone understands this is going to happen in the current situation. Be understanding and graceful. Make sure to remember to smile and laugh along. How you handle stressful or unexpected situations is an important part of being a lawyer. So it's natural for your interviewer to make your response part of their evaluation.

If you or someone you know is thinking about making a lateral move, please reach out to Jason McCann at [Gridline Search + Consulting](#). I provide candidate-focused legal search services with the perspective of an experienced career advisor.