

HackerRank 

# A Guide to Conducting Remote Technical Interviews

[www.hackerrank.com](http://www.hackerrank.com)



# Contents

## **04 Designing a positive interview experience (remotely)**

- For talent acquisition teams
- For hiring managers and interviewers

## **07 Best practices for remote interviews with HackerRank**

- Solidifying your internal interview plan
- Preparing interviewers to conduct a remote interview

## **10 Prepping candidates for a great remote interview**

- Messaging interview prep to candidates
- Remote interviewing candidate prep kit

# Introduction

As the world continues to grow more connected and companies embrace digital transformation, the necessity for a completely on-site workforce is rapidly dwindling. What comes with this is a decrease in the need for your interview process to always be on-site. Remote interviewing is on the rise given the newfound availability of web conferencing and online collaboration tools. This allows for a larger selection of candidates, ensuring that your business is hiring the right technical talent.

At HackerRank, we believe in matching the right developers to the right job, regardless of where they're located. In this guide, we want to provide you with guidelines and tips that can help you create a comprehensive remote interviewing process for both you and your candidates.



## 01. Designing a Positive Remote Interviewing Experience (Remotely)

With today's growing global health concerns over COVID-19, hundreds of tech hiring teams have halted their standard hiring processes in favor of remote interviewing, sourcing, and screening. While this transition may not affect all points of the candidate funnel, remote interviewing does directly impact the candidate experience.

When transitioning to an entirely virtual hiring process, there are a lot of new factors to account for—like the stability of the candidate's internet connection, or gauging a candidate's interest in-person through signals like body language—that are out of your control. But there are actions hiring managers and technical recruiters can take to cultivate a positive remote interviewing candidate experience.

If you have aggressive hiring goals this quarter, don't let the switch to remote work hinder your hiring efforts. Follow the steps in this section to stay on track and deliver a candidate-first remote interviewing process.

# For talent acquisition teams

## Introduce your organization's culture from afar

Inviting your candidate onsite to meet future co-workers in person is a crucial step in the interview process. When remote interviewing, your interviewees will be able to meet the hiring managers and potential teammates during video interviews, but they won't have that in-person meet and greet experience. To give your candidates a more personalized introduction to your company's culture and values, send them branded content.

Branded packages that have a mix of evergreen talent branding content are a great resource recruiters can use to quickly showcase the company culture, values, and mission.

### Here are some assets you should keep on hand:

- Company articles (e.g. major company announcements or meaningful press coverage)
- Employee profiles that highlight members from the team you're hiring for
- A list of the hiring manager's candidate team expectations
- Videos, photos or quotes of employees from your latest talent branding campaigns

## Communicate the interview workflow effectively

No one likes to show up unprepared, and agreeing to a completely remote interview is new territory for a lot of candidates. Now is the time to ramp up your communication and inform candidates what they should expect at every stage of the interview process.

Map out how many rounds of interviews the candidate will go through, which skills assessment platform you'll be using, and send them a copy of your company's mission and values. If you're using HackerRank to assess candidates, you can also send them interview prep materials like this [HackerRank Interview Prep Kit](#).

And again: don't forget to stay in constant contact. Lagging on communication is a common mistake companies make which can create a negative candidate experience. Stand out from your competition by staying in contact with your candidates from your first phone screen throughout the end of their [onboarding process](#).

## Position yourself as the candidate's go-to contact

When remote interviewing, you won't have the opportunity to create an in-person connection. So it's crucial that you stay connected to the candidate throughout the entire interview process.

To keep your interviewee in the loop and keep your role top of mind, reach out to them at every stage of the evaluation process. Simple gestures like uploading an email profile picture, hopping on quick phone calls, or sharing next steps via video calls will create a stronger bond between you and your candidates. Prioritizing constant communication with your candidates will make them feel valued, and will leave a positive lasting impression.

# For hiring managers and interviewers

## Master basic technical interviewing best practices

With today's competitive tech talent market, one mishap or error during the interview process is enough to turn off interested candidates. While conducting remote interviews, it's crucial that you master the basic technical interviewing best practices to attract the interest of the right developers.

## Before phone or video interviews, try skills assessments

Especially for high volume roles, use a skills assessment tool like HackerRank's [CodeScreen](#), to weed out any candidates that are uninterested or don't meet your hiring team's skill requirements. Requiring candidates to take a code assessment at the first stage of your remote interview process will cut down the number of applicants for high-volume roles, and will help you quickly identify which applicants should move on to the video interview stage. It ensures you use both your time and candidates' time wisely.

## Create a distraction-free interviewing environment

When remote interviewing, don't leave an opening for interruptions. To prevent other online interruptions, try putting notifications from apps like Slack and Gmail on mute.

If housemates or family members are home during your working hours, communicate the time of your interview so they'll know when you need a quiet, noise-free environment.

## Dedicate time to learning interview tools inside & out

Tools like [CodePair](#) allow interviewers to conduct pair programming technical interviews with build-in video calling, which creates a collaborative coding environment where hiring teams can assess a candidate's coding skills from afar.

With pair programming tools, hiring teams can watch candidates build on code from pre-screen challenges in real-time, or run and test code together, all in a single session. If you're new to the platform, practice using it by conducting a mock interview with a fellow panelist. Take turns playing the role of the interviewer, and the candidate to better understand the functionalities and limitations of each role within the platform.



## 02. Best Practices for Remote Interviews with HackerRank

For companies hiring software developers today, remote interviews are the new normal in technical interviewing. Companies across the world are [moving from in-person onsite to remote interviewing](#) to preserve the health and safety of their teams, and their candidates.

At HackerRank alone, we've seen a 200% increase in use of our remote interviewing tool, CodePair. To that end, we're sharing some of our best practices for CodePair users undergoing this transition. In this section, we'll share tips on how to best prepare both interviewers and candidates for a remote technical interview. Plus, we'll walk through best practices for getting the most out of your CodePair sessions.

# Devote time to defining interview questions up front

The goal of the onsite interview—or in this case, the remote interview—is to get an in-depth look into each candidate’s skillset. The more accurately you can evaluate their skill sets, the more likely you are to be able to ensure you’re choosing the candidate best suited to the role.

## Leverage internal experts to define a question library

One way you can ensure thorough evaluations is through standardizing your questions. And that starts with forming an internal expert panel.

First, you’ll have to assemble a team of internal interview experts. When forming your expert panel, the goal isn’t necessarily to choose the most senior developers, or even the most tenured. The key is to look for developers at the organization with the most interviewing experience. They not only have in-depth knowledge of your engineering org; they also have an in-depth understanding of the company’s hiring process.

Ultimately, the goal is to work with the expert panel to create a library of interview questions that can be shared with the rest of the organization. By providing standardized questions across the org, you’ll not only make interviewers’ lives easier in the long run—you’ll also help to ensure you’re upholding a consistent bar of requirements when evaluating candidates.

## Don’t forget about CodeScreen questions

Assessments can also be a huge help when identifying interview questions. If you’re using an assessment tool like [HackerRank CodeScreen](#), the remote interview is a great time to build on that. Consider starting the interview by pulling the candidate’s CodeScreen assessment into a live CodePair session.

Try referencing their assessment to ask questions like:

- How did you arrive at this solution? What was your thought process when approaching the problem?
- Can you share some pros and cons of the solution you provided?
- If you had to improve upon the imperfect parts of your solution, what would you do differently?

By building off of the code they’ve already submitted, you can start to understand their problem solving skills off the bat. It’ll also give the candidate a chance to give context to the choices they made during the assessment.

# Prepping interviewers to conduct a remote interview

In a lot of ways, a remote technical interview might not seem like a huge shift from a traditional onsite interview. But there's more to think about than you might expect, especially for those used to face-to-face interactions and whiteboarding sessions.

## Prepare your (physical) environment

First thing's first: like any remote interview, it's key that both interviewers prep their physical environment for a remote interview. Here's a checklist you can share with your panel preparing to conduct a remote interview:

- Test your internet connection for stability 30min before the interview. Hardwired internet is ideal, but any stable internet connection will do.
- Make sure you're in a comfortable, professional space. Dress like you would for an in-person interview.
- Be prepared to use video chat. Working together in the shared integrated developer environment (IDE) might be the crux of the interview, but it's important to give the other person a chance to connect face to face.
- To enable video chat, ensure you're using either Chrome or Firefox, and have enabled camera and audio access to your browser.

## Spend plenty of time in CodePair

In addition to preparing your physical environment, it's equally important to familiarize yourself with the CodePair platform. That means spending time learning how it works.

Here's what we suggest:

- Start by taking a look at the [Introduction to CodePair support page](#). It details the key features you'll need to use while interviewing remotely with CodePair, and a brief video tour of the platform.
- Spend time in the CodePair interface. If you can, practice key tasks like loading questions into the IDE and reviewing the candidate timeline. You can get started with [this how-to article](#), or spin up your own session to practice in.
- Prep your interview questions ahead of time. If your organization has defined a standardized content library, make sure you know which questions you're expected to use during your interview. If you're [creating your own questions](#), you'll need to set them up ahead of time in order to pull them into a CodePair session.
- Take advantage of all question types. Remember: CodePair supports both coding and diagram questions.



## 03. Prepping Candidates for a Great Remote Interview

As a candidate, going through the hiring process is naturally nerve-wracking. But interviewing when the entire hiring process is moved online can be downright intimidating.

Remote interviews are a new hiring format for most people. As a member of the hiring team, it's important that you provide clear, transparent advice on what the hiring process will look like, and how to best prepare for it.

To help your candidates get ready for the interview, send them a remote interview prep checklist like the one on the next page. Feel free to share the checklist on the next page as-is to help them get prepared for the interview. You can also [customize your own version of the checklist here](#)—just make a copy of the document and tweak for your role as needed.

# Remote Interview Candidate Prep Checklist

We're excited to host you for your upcoming interview! To help you put your best foot forward during the interview, please take a look at this remote interview preparation checklist.

## ☐ Clarify what the remote interview process will look like

Make sure you understand what your online interview process will look like. Ask up front about the interview rounds to expect to make sure you're mentally prepared. Every team is different, so make sure to sync with your recruiter on:

- Expected number of interview rounds
- Technical topics covered in each round of the interview
- Expected dress code

## ☐ Set up your physical interview space

When interviewing remotely, it's important to take some extra time to think about your interview environment. Here are a few setup factors you may want to address before the call:

- Tidy clutter in the background that could distract the interviewer
- Close any unnecessary tabs you might accidentally click during the call
- Ensure your internet connection is stable
- Put phone and laptop notifications on mute
- Set your camera on the same monitor that you'll be looking at during the interview (to mimic face-to-face communication)
- Check that your camera is enabled, and your internet browser has camera access

## ☐ Brush up on your skills

Just like you would for an onsite interview, spend time preparing yourself to answer common questions and problems. Be prepared to showcase your coding skills and system design skills if both apply to your role. Try practicing via the [HackerRank Interview Preparation Kit](#), [LeetCode](#), or [Interviewing.io](#).

And don't forget about soft skills. Spend time reading our mission statement or values, and practice answering any value-related questions. Practice answering [common non-technical interview questions](#) out loud.

## ☐ Get familiar with the interview tools

The IDE you get during practice coding questions on [hackerrank.com](#) is the same one you'll see during your assessments and interviews—so spend some time working in it. Practice via the HackerRank interview Preparation Kit mentioned above to get familiar.

While HackerRank supports 30+ languages, available libraries are intentionally sparse to help interviewers better evaluate your raw technical skills. Make sure you know what tools you will (and won't) have access to ahead of time.

## ☐ Be confident!

Interviewing can be stressful, but remember that you made it to the interview round for a reason. Don't be afraid to ask for feedback and ask clarifying questions during the call. Our interviewers want you to succeed, and are here to support you.

# Final Tips: Conducting Effective Remote Interviews

Especially when it comes to technical roles, remote interviews aren't always easy—but they are doable. If you're transitioning from an in-person interview process to a remote one, remember to be patient with your team (and yourself) as you adjust.

As you refine your remote interviewing process, keep these 3 tips in mind:

## 1. When in doubt, err on the side of overcommunication

Every remote technical interview process is different—so you need to make sure that both your interviewers and candidates are crystal clear on what to expect. Make sure that both parties are clear on the process itself, the tools they'll be using, and the intended outcome of the hiring process. Don't be afraid to repeat yourself, and to convey the same information through multiple touch points (e.g. a phone call and an email); what's intuitive to you might not be obvious to interviewers or candidates.

## 2. Carve out time to regularly revisit your workflow as a team

Most recruiters, interview panelists, and hiring managers are accustomed to conducting interviews in-person. Even if you've already made the transition to a remote interview process, there's always room for iteration. Check in with your interviewers and your candidates to get feedback every few weeks. Adapting a remote interview process running is one task, but refining it is a continuous process.

## 3. Practice flexibility & empathy where possible

Again, remote interviewing and hiring is new to most organizations. Like any new process rollout, change management is key to success—but it's always safest to plan for the unexpected. Do what you can to prepare yourself for mishaps, but remember that this is likely an unfamiliar experience for all parties involved. Give your interviewers, your candidates, and yourself room to adjust, and try to roll with the punches as new curveballs arise.

Trusted by



LinkedIn

stripe



Booking.com

vmware®



# HackerRank

## Accelerate the World's Innovation

HackerRank is a technology hiring platform that is the standard for assessing developer skills for over 2,000+ companies around the world. Our mission is to accelerate the world's innovation. By enabling tech recruiters and hiring managers to objectively evaluate talent at every stage of the recruiting process, HackerRank helps companies hire skilled developers and innovate faster.

Our remote hiring solution helps companies transform their remote hiring end-to-end and engage developers in an environment they love from anywhere.

We're backed by YCombinator, Khosla Ventures, Recruit Holdings and JMI Equity.

[www.HackerRank.com](http://www.HackerRank.com)

Request Demo

Free Trial

USA:

+1-415-900-4023

India:

+91-888-081-1222

UK:

+44-208-004-0258

hello@hackerrank.com

www.hackerrank.com