

B-SCHOOL NEWS

09 Oct 2020 21:48 IST



Akshaya Chandrasekaran

## Cracking a Skype interview



Teenager Siddhant Kumbhat has published a booklet with advice on how to tackle interviews

**G**iving an interview in a high-stake situation is never easy. It can send shivers down your spine each time, no matter how long you've been doing it. The ability to articulate your thoughts effectively, under intense scrutiny, in a room or in front of a screen filled with wide eyes staring at you, can crack anyone. But not this teenager, it seems.

Siddhant Kumbhat, all of 17, is a newly-published author with the launch of his book, *Getting into your dream school*, published by Notion Press, priced at ₹200. This self-help book serves as a guide to ace high school or college Skype interviews. "It is written by a student for a student. I am the most average student there is, and I got into so many of my dream schools simply because of my communication skills. More than a guide, it's about two friends having a conversation."



Kumbhat is a twelfth grade student currently enrolled in the IB Diploma programme at Stonehill International School, Bangalore, and earlier a student of Sishya School, Chennai. He had applied to several renowned high schools in the US for over two years. Although he deferred his plans of studying abroad, preferring to go for undergraduate studies instead, he learnt a lot about the crucial role of Skype interviews in the admissions process.

The inspiration for the book came, he says, when he flew 6,500 km for 11 hours and couldn't even speak for 11 seconds at K. International School, Tokyo, for a high school interview. His interviewer shot question after question, all of which flew right over his head. By the end of the interview, he got a stern nod and a "have a safe trip back home." Kumbhat realised the real essence of those words and the significance of getting an interview right when he received the rejection email five days after he reached India.

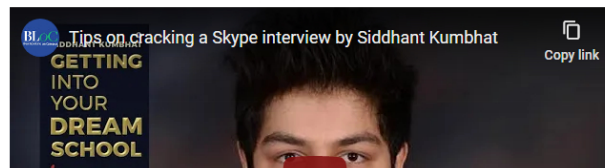
He reflected upon every question that the interviewer had asked him in Tokyo and started preparing diligently for the ones ahead. Soon, things started turning in his favour. In a Skype interview for EF Academy, New York, the interviewer gave him a spot offer and ended the interview with "see you on campus in September."

From then on, he has received several on-the-spot offers and merit-based scholarships for up to \$30,000 from renowned high schools such as Saint John's Preparatory School, Darrow, and Winchendon. Throughout the process, he gathered detailed feedback from the best interviewers and admission committees in the US and across the world. Seeing value in these first-hand experiences, he compiled them together in the form of a book.

With an increasing number of aspirants applying with similar test grades and scores, an interview becomes a game-changer in the admissions process. It helps you portray the person that you are behind the test scores and grades, and there are only two ways to do that – essay and interview. The essay has a word limit of up to 1,000 words but an interview is a 30-minute long conversation where the potential employer or dream school, learns so much about who you are and what you stand for. One shouldn't let opportunities slip away simply because they don't know how to succeed in an interview, Kumbhat explains.

As he's applying to universities in the US for a major in finance, all of the standard advice in his book about how to prepare for and perform during an interview is applicable to face-to-face as well as online interviews, he says.

Here are three tips from his book to crack a Skype interview:



BizWiz



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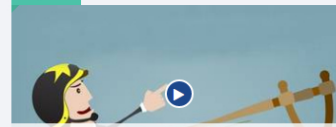


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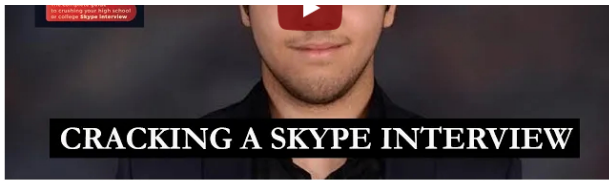
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#### Dress well

The first impression is the best impression, and the last impression is a lasting impression. You are creating both your first and last impressions with your interviewer now, so dress smartly. It is one of the key components to a successful interview. Dress as if you are attending a face-to-face interview, even though the camera will predominantly focus on you only from above the waist.

#### Practice before the interview

Before your interview, test your microphone, camera quality, and make sure they're working right. Have several mock interviews with your parents, friends, or family. As the saying goes, "practice makes perfect." Having mock interviews will help build up your confidence and you'll be better prepared when you're actually being interviewed.

#### Research about the school

By demonstrating knowledge of the school's clubs, organisations, mottos, programmes, history, traditions, and aspects about the school that appeal to you the most, you really show your commitment to becoming a part of the school community. This will take you a long way in the admissions process.



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