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# How to make your child stand out in a virtual preschool interview or tour, according to a consultant

Robin Madell Sep 23, 2021, 10:22 AM



The preschool interview is one of the most important aspects of your child's application process. StockPlanets/Getty Images

**Many private preschools will be doing tours and interviews virtually this year.**

**Manhattan-based consultant Wendy Levey offered several tips for nailing the video format.**

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**Don't get too creative in your approach and make sure you come prepared with smart questions.**

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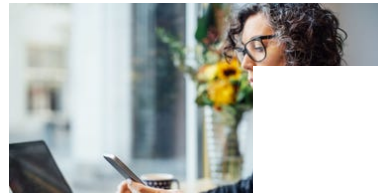
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Prior to the pandemic, [parents of preschoolers hoping to get their child into a prestigious program in New York City, Los Angeles, or other competitive cities](#) could expect to spend ample time at their schools of choice. Whether for tours, interviews, meetings with teachers and staff, or other visits, part of the admissions process revolved around in-person meetups.

But with COVID-19 still not safely in the rearview mirror, the elite preschool admissions game has changed.

"Last year was an anomaly with the pandemic and this year is more of the same — especially for the under-12-year-old set who are not yet vaccinated," Manhattan-based educational consultant [Wendy Levey](#) told Insider.

Most preschools are still doing open houses, interviews, and tours — just virtually, Levey said. "Some will have small groups at the school when children are not around, but suffice it to say, admissions are *not back to normal*" she said

NOT BACK TO NORMAL," SHE SAID.

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She added that since it's not easy to orchestrate video conferences with toddlers, parents are often at a loss as to how to leverage the video format to showcase their child and family in the best light possible.

"These interviews were more of data dumps last year, as it is very difficult to keep a two-year-old's attention for very long on [Zoom](#)," she said.

Levey offered the following tips for families who want to help their preschooler stand out:

## Push for a later interview date

Some preschool programs admit children as young as two years old. Levey suggested if you're scheduling a Zoom interview for a child this young, you should attempt to buy some time for maturity of your child if you have scheduling options.



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"For the youngest of children, try and set your interview date as late as possible — December or January if possible — so that your child is a little older, more verbal, and slightly more compliant," Levey said.

## Stick to the script

While creativity is encouraged in other contexts for preschoolers, how you approach the video interview submission isn't one of them, according to Levey.

"Be sure to follow the school's specific directions," Levey said. "If they ask for one minute, then do one minute; if they ask for two minutes, then do that."

She also noted that since admissions wants to get an idea of what your child is like, it helps to show them engaged in several activities, such as reading a book, doing a puzzle, painting, singing, or playing catch.

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"Do not have a production company come in and stage this," she said, adding that parents should make sure their child is dressed "cutely but comfortably."

## Don't forget parental prep

Levey reminded parents and guardians to take a formal approach to their own virtual performance.

"Make sure both parents, if possible, are on the screen — and the same one if possible — so that it is clear that you are both giving this adequate attention," she said. "Comb your hair, wear business attire, and do not have a liquor collection as your backdrop."

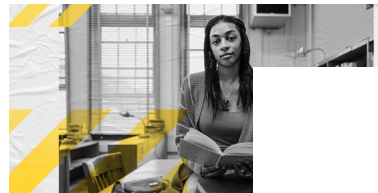
Parents should schedule these online meetings at their own convenience, but Levey stressed that they should come prepared with questions ready to ask the admissions team.

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"These should be questions that are not readily available on the school's website, so do your homework," she said. A couple examples of good questions include:

- How do you help the children resolve conflicts?
- What is the teacher-child ratio?

- In what ways are parents involved?
- How is communication between family and school handled?

Less good questions are: "What if I want to take my child out of town on a school day?" or, "What do you serve for snacks?"

## Remember follow-up protocol

Once you've completed a virtual tour or interview, follow up with a [thank-you note](#) to the head of admissions pointing out something of interest that you saw.

Finally, if your interview was slightly lackluster, Levey said you may want to call in reinforcements for damage control.

"Having a consultant can come in handy here since if they have done an assessment of your child, they will be able to advocate with the schools and add more information," she said.

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