



Telephone Interviewing

Employers use telephone interviews as a way of identifying and recruiting candidates for employment. Phone interviews are often used to screen candidates in order to narrow the pool of applicants who will be invited for in-person interviews. They are also used as a way to minimize the expenses involved in interviewing out-of-town candidates.

While you're actively job searching, it's important to be prepared for a phone interview on a moment's notice. You never know when a recruiter or a networking contact might call and ask if you have a few minutes to talk.

If this telephone interview has been arranged through an agency/recruitment consultant, you should know exactly when to call the hiring manager, or when they will call you. In other circumstances, you may have to be prepared to receive a call 'out of the blue'.

From the telephone interview, your objectives should be:

- To obtain enough information to decide if you would like to proceed with the interview process
- To give enough information to answer the hiring manager's questions and persuade them that you are indeed worth interviewing face-to-face
- To 'close' the interview effectively and agree a time, date and place for your face-to-face interview

Be Prepared

Prepare for a phone interview just as you would for a regular interview. Sometimes telephone interviews are used for preliminary screening and at other times they are essential components of the hiring process. You may not know the situation, so it's best to be as prepared for your telephone interview as you would be for an in-person interview.

Be thoroughly familiar with your accomplishments, skills and professional history. Make sure that you have researched the organization and the position you are applying for sufficiently to discuss your qualifications in the context of organizational needs. Be prepared to overcome objections to your qualifications or to discuss your weaknesses if asked, just like in a face-to-face interview.

Some tips:

- Keep your resume in clear view, so you can refer to it if needed.
- Have a short list of your accomplishments available to review.
- Have a pen and paper handy for note taking.
- Turn call-waiting off so your call isn't interrupted.
- If the time isn't convenient, ask if you could talk at another time and suggest some alternatives.
- Clear the room - evict the kids and the pets. Turn off the stereo and the TV. Close the door. Eliminate the possibility of background noises intruding on your conversation.

During the Phone Interview

- Don't smoke, chew gum, eat, or drink.
- Do keep a glass of water handy, in case you need to wet your mouth.
- Smile. When you smile, your facial muscles help your voice to sound upbeat and convey a positive image to the listener.
- Speak slowly and enunciate clearly.
- Use the person's title (Mr. or Ms. and their last name.) Exercise judgment and discretion before going on a first name basis. If the interviewer introduces themselves by their first name, then you can confirm that first names are appropriate (e.g., "may I call you Jane?").
- Don't interrupt the interviewer. Let them finish speaking before you speak.
- Take your time - it's perfectly acceptable to take a moment or two to collect your thoughts.
- Give concise answers; attention spans are shorter on the telephone.
- Remember your goal is to set-up a face-to-face interview. After you thank the interviewer ask for the next steps in the interview process. If you remain interested in the job, make it known that you'd be enthusiastic about continuing the hiring process.

After the Interview

- Review your notes about what you were asked and what you learned.
- Remember to say "thank you." Follow with a thank you note that reiterates your interest in the job.

Sources: • <http://jobsearch.about.com/cs/interviews/a/phoneinterview.htm>
• *CGU Office of Career Management*