



Phone Interview Tips



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.

Preparing for the Phone Interview

- Research the company, prepare an interview location, confirm the date and time.
- Use a quiet, comfortable, and private space. Tell roommates you will be in a phone interview and ask them to keep turned off the stereo/TV. Close the door.
- Turn call-waiting off so your call isn't interrupted.
- Clear the area where you plan to conduct your call. Have your resume in clear view taped to the wall or on your desk. Also, have a short list of your qualifications and skills specific to the job you're interviewing for close at hand. A "cheat sheet" will help you respond to related questions without fumbling for words.
- Have a pad and pen ready to jot down notes.
- If you are concerned about your cell phone dropping the call or having static on the line, consider using a landline instead. With advance notice, the Office of Polar Careers can provide you with a small private office for such a call.

How to Prepare for Unexpected Calls/Interviews

If you receive a call and the time isn't convenient, ask if you could talk at another time and suggest some alternatives. Otherwise:

- Know some information about the employer, the job. In addition, plan on being prepared for a phone conversation about your background and skills.
- Keep your resume handy so it's at your fingertips when you need to answer questions.
- Have a short list of your accomplishments available to review.
- Have a pen and paper handy for note taking.

Phone Interview Etiquette

- When you answer the phone, answer with your name i.e. Jane Doe (in an upbeat tone of voice) so the interviewer knows they have reached the right person.
- Use the interviewer's title during the conversation (Mr. or Ms. and their last name.). Only use a first name if they ask you to. Otherwise, use their formal/last name.
- Listen to the interviewer and don't interrupt. If you have something you want to say, jot it down on your note pad and mention it when it's your turn to talk.
- If you need a few seconds to gather your thoughts, don't worry, but don't leave too much dead air. If you need the interviewer to repeat the question, ask.
- During the phone interview, you'll need to sound as professional as you would if you were meeting the interviewer face to face:
 - Don't smoke, chew gum, eat, or drink. Do keep a glass of water handy, in case you need to wet your mouth.
 - Standing up is an option to consider. Sometimes you can focus better when you're standing.
 - Be sure to smile. It will project a positive image to the listener and will change the tone of your voice. Use a mirror to watch yourself.
 - Speak slowly and enunciate clearly.

- Take your time - it's perfectly acceptable to take a moment or two to collect your thoughts.
- Don't ramble on so the interviewer can't interject or ask more questions.
- Take notes about what you were asked and how you answered.

Remember your goal is to set up a face-to-face interview. After you thank the interviewer ask if it would be possible to meet in person.

After the Interview:

- Follow with a thank you note which reiterates your interest in the job.

Phone Interview Questions to Ask

Always be prepared with two or three questions that you can ask the interviewer about the organization and/or the job. Here are some possible questions:

- How would you describe the responsibilities of the position?
- What qualities are you looking for in the person you hire to join this company?
- If I was hired, how would I be interacting with you and your department, what would be your expectations, and your measures for success?
- How would I get feedback about how well my work meets the expectations?
- What do you view as the most challenging part of this job?
- Why is the last person who held this position leaving?
- Who does this position report to?
- How would you describe the company culture?
- What is the typical work week? Is overtime expected? How about travel?
- What are the opportunities for advancement with the company?
- Is there anything else I can tell you about my qualifications?
- Could I schedule an in-person interview at your convenience?
- If I am extended a job offer, how soon could I start?
- Would you like a list of references?
- When can I expect to hear from you regarding your hiring decision?
- Are there any other questions I can answer for you?

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