

Phone Interviews

In today's job search, your first interview with a potential employer could very well take place over the phone. Most interviews will be scheduled at a specified time, but you should always be prepared for surprises. This Quick Guide gives some tips and guidelines for a successful telephone interview.

Reasons for Phone Interviews

- Human resources executives will often use phone interviews to pre-screen applicants.
- Companies may want to save on travel expenses.
- After a company runs an advertisement and receives hundreds of resumes, it may use phone interviews to screen the top candidates.
- After an initial interview, an employer may use phone interviews to gain more information or to decide which candidates to ask back for second interviews.
- After being recruited or giving credentials to a particular organization, you may receive a call; it could be about a specific project or about your aspirations.
- A conference call may be utilized in order to facilitate an interview with staff in a variety of locations.

How Employers Evaluate You

Rather than making your first impression with body language and a firm handshake, your first impression will be your initial greeting on the telephone. You will be evaluated by your enthusiasm and tone of voice. The interviewer may use the following questions after an interview to evaluate you as a job candidate:

- Did you have an enthusiastic voice?
- Did you answer questions vaguely or directly?
- Did you research the company well, or did you ask simple questions?
- Did you express interest in a second interview?
- Did you follow up with a thank-you letter?
- Did you pursue this opportunity with a phone call or e-mail?
- Did you send supporting material (resume, portfolio, etc.).

Note that many of these are the same criteria used by interviewers to evaluate candidates after face-to-face interviews. Knowing how to interview effectively in person will assist you with telephone interviews as well.

Final Tips

- Have a self-confident and enthusiastic voice; smiling while you talk helps.
- Speak succinctly; don't be long winded, but try to avoid "yes" or "no" answers.
- Don't allow dead air; have a list of questions to fill time.
- Be in a private place where you feel comfortable. If taken by surprise, ask for a second to move to a quiet, private location. If you are in the middle of another important task, ask if you can call the employer back in a few minutes or arrange another date and time. Speak directly into the phone.

- Don't smoke, eat, or chew gum while interviewing.
- Take notes for future use.
- Keep your job search materials in a convenient location so if you receive a surprise call you can easily retrieve them for reference during the conversation.
- Have your application materials (job posting, cover letter, resume, research notes, etc.) in front of you for reference.
- Practice by conducting a mock interview with a friend.
- Have a professional sounding message on your voicemail.
- Do not take other calls (ignore call-waiting) during the interview.
- It's acceptable to ask your roommate or family to keep quiet during the interview.
- Your posture can be determined by the sound of your voice; be sure to sit in an upright position or remain standing.
- Avoid nervous habits that will create noise, such as clicking a pen or scratching your head.
- Also avoid doing tasks that would create noise in the background (turning on water, having music on, etc.), you should have a quiet setting for your interview.