

TELEPHONIC INTERVIEWS



There are two types of phone interviews: scheduled and unscheduled.

Often the first contact for a scheduled interview comes via an agency, email or LinkedIn, but theoretically, if you have put yourself on the job market, your phone could ring at any time. So, make sure you answer it yourself and have a professional voicemail message.

If you get a phone call out of the blue and you think it could be for a phone interview, rather let it go to voice message, listen to the message, prepare for the phone interview appropriately and then call them back. Or, if you do

happen to answer the phone unknowingly, let the interviewer know that you aren't able to speak freely and ask if you can schedule a time for you to call them back - this will then enable you to be properly prepared. DON'T TRY AND WING IT!

THE PURPOSE OF TELEPHONIC INTERVIEWS

Telephonic interviews are used to:

- Save time, i.e. instead of spending the time and resources needed to bring an applicant in for in-person interviews, they'll want to see if you have what they are looking for, and then decide if you should go to the next stage of the recruitment process.
- Interview candidates that are out of town or aren't able to attend an in-person interview for whatever reason.

PREPARATION BEFORE A TELEPHONIC INTERVIEW

Phone interviews are quite similar to any other interview and should be taken just as seriously, if not more seriously.

You see, one advantage of an in-person interview is that the employer gets to physically meet you, shake your hand, and see one on one just how the chemistry works.

All of these things, which might seem rather insignificant, are actually critical parts of any interview.

When you're interviewing via phone, you're going to have to work even harder to make sure you are coming off as personable and capable.

Here are some tips specific to phone interviews that can really be of help:

Take It as Seriously as an In-Person Interview

Be ready! Make sure you're well rested, alert and feeling good.

This is just as much a mental game as a physical game and dressing the part (even if they can't see you) can really help you kick your mind into the right frame to be at your best. Feel good, sound good, be good!

Focus and Cut Out all Distractions

- If you're doing the interview at home and you're not alone, make sure everyone knows you're going to be busy for a bit and to give you some privacy. Clear the room, evict the kids and the pets and close the door.
- Turn off the TV and the radio.
- Turn call-waiting off, so your call isn't interrupted.
- Find a good spot to sit down like at the kitchen table or at a desk.
- Have a glass of water handy
- Have a pen and paper handy for note taking.
- Keep your resume and other notes in clear view, on the top of your desk, or tape it to the wall near the phone, so it's at your fingertips when you need to refer to them to answer questions.
- Have a short list of your accomplishments available to review.
- Sit up straight – good posture improves the sound and projection of your voice.
- If you haven't talked in several hours, do some voice exercises before the call.
- If you have a landline, use that instead of your cell phone. That way, you'll eliminate the possibility of poor reception or dropped calls.
- If you are using a cell phone, make sure it's fully charged.



Do Some Research Before the Interview

- The hiring company is looking for a specific set of knowledge, skills, abilities and character/personality qualities, and it's the person that embodies all of these that is going to get the job. So, double check the job description you're interviewing for and be sure to prepare examples of where you have had similar experience with the various job criteria.
- Research the company to see what they're doing, how they're doing it and what they stand for. Identify the things you admire about them, including their way of working, values, vision and mission, etc., and where these overlap with and reflect your own personal values and belief systems about work and life. This will enable you to discuss how you can fit into their culture and add value. For example, when you are asked a question like "Tell me about yourself," you could include in your answer strengths that are aligned with what the company values. Another common question asked, is "Why do you want to work for us?" This will also give you an opportunity to express where your values, etc. match theirs.
- If you know who's doing your interview find out more about them on LinkedIn, if possible.

Predict and Prepare Answers for Possible Questions

- It's a good idea to prepare answers to typical questions that get asked in interviews. We can't guarantee that the interviewer will ask you these, but it's always better to be prepared so you're not caught off guard if they are asked! Practice answering them before your interview. It'll not only help with nerves (it's like knowing the answers to a test before you take it!) it'll make your responses more targeted.:
 - "Why did you choose this Line of work?"
This is designed to break the ice, get to know you a bit better and help you relax. Be sure to mention your passion for the work you do.

- “What interests you about this job?”
When you answer this question, make sure to tailor the answer to fit the qualifications listed in the job posting, then loop them back to connect to your skills and experience. You want the employer to see you not only know about the job you’re interviewing for, but that you’re qualified and a good fit!

- “Why are you the best candidate for this position?”
This is an opportunity to communicate your strengths and how you can add value. Here you need to refer to relevant qualifications and how discuss examples from your current and/or past working experience of how your skills match the job criteria. You should also mention your strengths regarding your personality qualities/soft skills, e.g. having initiative, problem solving, team player, working independently, conflict resolution, and give examples of how you have displayed these to good effect in the work place.



- “Where do you see yourself in 5 years?”
Potential employers ask this question for 2 reasons – they want to see if you intend to stay with them for a reasonable period of time and if you have direction in and goals for your career development. This is where you mention furthering your studies, if that’s what you intend to do, that you would like to be seen as someone who adds value, learn and grow your skills base and become an integral part of the organisation. It’s ok at this point to ask what growth opportunities you would have in the company.
- “What are your weaknesses?”
We all have weaknesses, including the interviewer, and there’s no shame in admitting these, however, it is important that you say what you do to overcome them, e.g. if someone battles to delegate as they feel they lose control of the task, they may overcome this by putting a tight monitoring system in place that allows them to keep a close watch on things.

Put Yourself in the Shoes of the Interviewer

Try to imagine 4 or 5 technical questions you would ask if you were hiring for the position, and prepare answers for these.

Practice Interviewing

Talking on the phone isn't as easy as it seems. As with an in-person interview, practice can be helpful. Not only will this help you rehearse answers to common phone interview questions, but it will also help you realize if you have a lot of verbal ticks, fail to enunciate, or speak either too fast or too slow.

For practice, have a friend or family member conduct a mock interview and record it so you can see how you sound over the phone. Once you have a recording, you'll be able to hear your "ums" and "uhs" and "okays" and then practice reducing them from your conversational speech. Listening to the recording will also help you pinpoint answers that you can improve.

DURING THE INTERVIEW

Proper Phone Interview Etiquette

Review these guidelines for appropriate phone interview etiquette, so you make the best impression on your interviewer:



- Answer the phone yourself, let family members and/or roommates know you are expecting a call. When you answer the phone, answer with your name i.e. Jane Doe (in a perky 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 the formal title.
- Listen carefully to the interviewer and don't start speaking until the interviewer finishes the question. If you have something you want to say, jot it down on your notepad and mention it when it's your turn to talk.
- Don't worry if you need a few seconds to think of a response, but don't leave too much dead air. If you need the interviewer to repeat the question, ask.
- Listen first. Usually, the interviewer will set the stage. He or she will talk about expectations, why the person before you left, what it takes to be successful in this company and what the major challenges will be. Take notes so you are able to respond to all these points when it is your turn to talk.
- The leitmotif of a successful interview is finding things that you have in common. Flagging them helps you bond with your future boss or the human resources manager. Look for ways to make these connections – for example, by saying, "Sounds familiar: We had a similar situation at company ABC. Here is what I did. And, these were the results."
- Smile as you speak. If you don't believe the difference this makes, test it by leaving yourself two identical voice messages, one with and one without smiling. During the phone interview, a good time to smile is when you talk about the work you've done, ask questions, or express your enthusiasm about the company.
- Remember your goal is to set up a face-to-face interview. At the end of your conversation, after you thank the interviewer, ask if it would be possible to meet in person.
- Listen and don't dominate the conversation, let the interviewer guide the conversation, and let them know you're good at listening too.
- Ask a few follow-up questions. It helps to reinforce to the interviewer that you're truly interested in the company and the job and that you've paid attention during the interview.
- Make sure you prepare your own list of questions before you start. Make sure your questions are thoughtful and have a purpose. Remember though to keep these questions short and sweet.
- Remember, "It's not about you, it's about them." How can you fulfil their needs?

[AT THE END OF THE INTERVIEW](#)

Be sure to end on a positive note and to thank the interviewer for the opportunity and their time, let the interviewer know you enjoyed it and that you are invested in the process; at this point, you can ask what the next step will be.

[AFTER THE INTERVIEW](#)

[Send a Thank You Email after the Phone Interview](#)

Making good first impressions and the fact that you're doing this all via phone makes the follow-up even more critical, so not only end your phone call on a positive note, but follow up in a timely manner with a thoughtful thank you email after your interview.

It will help you stand out and reinforce that you're truly interested in the position. Above all remember that the focus here is on how you add value to the company, confirm your interest in the company, ability to do the job and desire to take things to the next step.

[Direct Them to Your Personal Branding Website \(BONUS\)](#)

A personal website will allow you to impress hiring managers, differentiate yourself from your competitors, increase your visibility online and create a hub for your personal brand online. It lets you show off so much more of your personality and skills, than your CV or cover letter can. And, this is absolutely HUGE for someone having a phone interview, when the name of the game is standing out and being memorable. Take a look at some examples on the web to get some ideas.

