



Telephone Interviews

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Imagine several interviewers staring at the speakerphone in front of them. They may have interviewed other candidates in person ... and now it's your turn.

The interviewer's impression of you will be based on your voice and your answers. You will have no chance to read the body language of your interviewers nor will you be able to communicate using all of your senses. You will also be relying on the quality of the speakerphone at the other end.

An advantage of telephone interviews is that you are able to have notes right in front of you and you have the comfort of familiar surroundings.

INTERVIEW PREPARATION

Preparing for telephone interviews is similar to preparing for face-to-face interviews. Researching the employer is identical for both formats, however there are some special tips for a successful telephone interview.

Don't make your first telephone interview a practice interview. Do a few mock interviews by phone with friends or relatives and record them so that you pick up any imperfections in your answers, your tone or conciseness.

PRIOR TO THE INTERVIEW

Make sure you create a comfortable and quiet location in which you can concentrate on the questions from the interviewer. Try to locate the telephone next to a large table or desk where you can lay out all the material you want to use in the interview.

Things you will need:

- your current resume;
- a list of answers to common questions (see the 'Interview Skills' Fact Sheet);
- examples of your experience, skills and achievements;
- your company research (all dot pointed to prompt you);
- a notepad and pen;
- a glass of water; and
- a watch and calculator may also be useful.

Some authors suggest that you dress as you would if the interview were face-to-face; thereby creating a professional atmosphere and making you really feel the part. Standing up for the interview can be useful because it can give an impression of authority. The main aim though is to be comfortable.

When the telephone rings:

- Introduce yourself, greet the interviewer/s and thank them for offering you the interview.
- Speak clearly (not in a monotone voice) and at a level that can be heard. Check with the panel that the sound and noise level from your end is clear before you begin.
- Make the interviewer/s feel at ease – they probably don't like the telephone interview process any more than you do.

During the telephone interview you will be judged by the same non-verbal criteria used in an in-person interview, that is, self-confidence, enthusiasm for the position and pleasant personality. In a telephone interview, the interviewer/s will determine these attributes by the sound of your voice and your level of friendliness and engagement with them. You might consider sending a photo of yourself to give them visual cues about you – perhaps ask the chairperson prior to the interview if a photo would be useful to the panel.

OTHER USEFUL TIPS

- Answers to questions should not be long-winded. Note down the key points of the question as it is read to you and then respond to the question taking care to address each aspect of it. It is vitally important that you use examples of your skills and knowledge to enable the interviewer/s to visualise your achievements.
- Be concise. You won't be able to see whether the interviewer's eyes have glazed over or if they have nodded off in response to your answer. Also, be aware that some conference links sound very empty when no one is speaking. Don't be put off by the silence, but tell the panel you are pausing or thinking.
- Guide the interviewer/s by highlighting main points so they don't drift away from focusing on you and your talents. Summarise key points at the end of each criteria.
- Always seek clarification of a question if you are not sure you heard it correctly.
- At the end of the interview, reiterate your key attributes and reasons why you should be considered for the position.

Good luck with your interview!