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TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS

Telephone interviews are sometimes offered to applicants who are unable to attend an interview in person for reasons such as cost or distance, or as a screening interview. For example, a telephone interview may be a screening interview to determine whether an applicant will be invited, at the company's expense, to attend a face-to-face interview in another city. If it is a screening interview, the interviewer typically asks about your experience, availability, and salary requirements.

There are several advantages and disadvantages to telephone interviews:

Advantages

- You have unlimited control over the setting and the environment of the interview.
- You are able to have prepared notes, a resume, and your cover letter in front of you to reference at any time.
- You have the comfort of familiar surroundings.
- You do not have to travel to the interview.

Disadvantages

- You cannot see or respond to interviewers' non-verbal cues, which are often important in interpreting how to respond properly.
- The interviewer cannot see or respond to your non-verbal cues, which limits the capacity to demonstrate your interpersonal skills.
- You have to sell yourself using only words and the tone of your voice

Most of the tips about preparing for and handling in-person interviews also apply to telephone interviews. Remember that your objective is to *sell yourself and your skills* in order to receive a face-to-face interview!

Before the Interview

- Make sure other members of your household are aware that you might receive a call from an employer.
- Leave a notepad or phone message form and a pen or pencil near the phone so that anyone who takes a call can record the employer's name, title, organization name, telephone number and other pertinent information.
- Make sure that the message on your answering machine is clear and sounds professional.
- Make appropriate arrangements before the interview to ensure you will not be disturbed. It is important to have privacy and minimal distractions.
- Practice your telephone manner and obtain feedback from others about your ability to project your personality over the telephone.
- Practice your answers to anticipated questions.
- Have your application, cover letter, resume, and the job posting near the phone.

- Prepare notes, including a summary of key details about the organization, as well as important concepts and key words for responses to questions.
 - The notes should be organized, short and easy to find quickly, so that you can maintain your spontaneity.
- Prepare questions for the interviewer about the position and the organization.
- Not all employers will advise you in advance of a telephone interview. In the event that you are called in the middle of a project or task that you cannot interrupt, politely explain the situation to the employer and ask if you could call them at a specified time or if they could call you at a specific time.
 - Doing so will give you the opportunity to complete your task and settle yourself, so that you can devote your full attention to the interview and prepare for the interview.

During the Interview

- **DO NOT** drink, smoke, chew gum, or eat during a telephone interview.
- Give the interviewer your undivided attention.
- Dress appropriately and sit up straight, or stand, during the interview.
 - Remember that your mental set is important. You are more likely to conduct yourself in a business-like manner if you act like you are at an in-person interview than if you are lounging on your bed in your pajamas.
- Speak slowly and clearly.
- As introductions are made, write down the names of the interviewer or interviewers. Attend to and try to remember interviewers' voices so that you can address individuals by name.
- Take notes! Any notes that you make during the phone interview will be invaluable to you in preparing for the face-to-face meeting.
- Pauses will seem more pronounced than they do during face-to-face interviews. Explain any obvious pauses on your part - if you wish time to consider your answer, indicate this.
- Confirm the appropriateness of what you're saying or clarify points of confusion. You will not receive non-verbal responses to your answers such as nods or quizzical faces. Use phrases such as "Have I given enough information?" and "Would you like more detail about this?"
- Ask questions about the organization. Prepare for this
- Smile and be pleasant! A smiling response can usually be sensed over the phone.

Ending the Call

- If you don't already have it, be sure to ask for the interviewer's exact title and name spelling, along with their email or mailing address, so that you can send a thank-you note.
- If the interviewer has not asked you about your schedule or availability, it is a good idea to ask, "What would the next step be in the process?" This will allow the interviewer to re-establish control of the interview with this question.
- Confirm information about the interviewer.
- Thank the caller for his or her time and communicate your interest in the opportunity.