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.