



## TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS

Telephone interviews are often offered as the initial screening interview. The initial screening telephone interview may help in determining whether an applicant will be invited to attend a face-to-face interview. If it is a screening interview, it is typically around 20-30 minutes (although sometimes shorter or longer), with the interviewer typically asking about your experiences.

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 for the interview.

### Disadvantages

- You cannot see or respond to the 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

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- You will often receive an invitation for a phone interview via email. Make sure you quickly respond with excitement and interest, verifying the interview time (be aware of different time zones) and who is calling whom.
  - Note that 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 can call them, or if they could call you, at a specified 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.
- 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 just like you would for an in-person interview.
- 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. Do not read scripted answers. It is often more obvious than you would think.
- Prepare questions for the interviewer about the position and the organization.

## DURING THE INTERVIEW

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- **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. Writing down names and titles will also assist when it comes time to writing thank-you emails.
- Take notes! Any notes that you make during the phone interview will be invaluable to you in writing your thank-you emails and 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 on this?"
- Often there will be silence on the phone as you finish your answers. This is often because the interviewers are writing notes. Avoid filling the space with chatter due to your discomfort with this silence.
- Ask questions about the organization. Prepare your list of questions in advance.
- Remember to practice as if you were meeting in person.
- Smile and be pleasant! A smiling response can usually be sensed over the phone.

## ENDING THE INTERVIEW

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- If you do not already have it, be sure to ask for the interviewers' exact titles and name spellings, along with their email or mailing address so you can send a thank-you note/email within 24 hours. If you do not get their addresses, you will need to look up this information on the employer website or call their Human Resources office.
- If the interviewer has not asked you about your schedule or availability, it is a good idea to end your question section with, "What would the next step be in the process?" This will allow the interviewer to let you know what to expect as well as to re-establish control of the interview with this question.
- Confirm information about the interviewer.
- Thank the caller for his/her time and continue to communicate your interest in the opportunity.