

# TIPS FOR TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS

---

Employers sometimes conduct job interviews over the telephone if the candidate lives in a different location or a telephone interview is part of the job screening process.

Telephone interviews are different from person-to-person interviews in the following significant ways:

- You can't see or be seen by the interviewer. This means that you must market yourself and your qualifications using only words and the tone of your voice.
- You can use prepared notes to help you summarize your most relevant skills and achievements but it's important not to sound rehearsed.
- You must succeed in a telephone screening interview before you can progress to the next step of the screening process. Although this kind of interview may seem informal, it's a good idea to prepare for it like you would for any other job interview.

## Preparing for the interview

All of the usual suggestions for handling interviews apply to telephone interviews. Here are some additional tips to help you present yourself well over the phone:

- Ask a friend or family member to role play the interview with you. Record the role play so you can hear how you sound over the phone. Rehearsing your answers will help you keep them brief, clear and free of ums and ahs. Pay attention to your tone of voice—do you sound enthusiastic and positive?
- Confirm the time of the call and the telephone number you want the employer to use. Do not use your work number for a telephone interview or any other work search purpose.
- Plan to take the call in a quiet room away from distractions and noise. Close the door during the interview. If the call is coming to your home, tell your family not to enter the room if the door is closed.
- Use a land line rather than a cell phone, unless you are absolutely certain there will be no problems with reception. If you use a call waiting feature, turn it off.
- Keep your resumé, a list of your accomplishments and a pen and paper for note-taking near the phone.

## During the interview

- Don't drink, smoke or eat during a telephone interview. Give the interviewer your full attention. Don't be afraid to ask for clarification if you don't understand the question.

- Dress and sit as you would for a person-to-person interview. It's easier to sound businesslike when you create a businesslike atmosphere.
- Smile! It will help you relax and boost your confidence. The interviewer will hear this in your tone of voice.
- Answer questions courteously. Any trace of irritation in your voice is more obvious over the telephone than in a face-to-face interview.
- Answer questions in short sentences. They are easier to understand and allow for more interchange between you and the employer, making the interview more lively and interesting.
- Restate the question if you are not sure how to answer. This gives you extra time to think of an answer, ensures that you have correctly understood the question and avoids long silences. Be careful not to over-use this technique or it becomes tiresome for the interviewer.
- Ask if you have made yourself clear when you give a complex answer. This encourages the employer to ask additional questions and helps to avoid possible misunderstandings.

If an employer calls and wants to conduct an interview immediately, proceed with the call if you are in a quiet, private environment and have your resumé handy. Otherwise, it's probably best to explain your situation and politely request that you return the call or that the employer call back at another time.

At the end of the interview, thank the interviewer and ask about the next step in the interviewing process. While a telephone interview may not seem as intense as an in-person interview, it can be a significant step towards being hired. Preparing for a telephone interview with the same focus as you would for a face-to-face interview will help you make a strong impression and increase your chances of getting the job.

