

Master the Call: The Ultimate Guide to Phone Interview Success

The Purpose of the Screen



The Initial Gatekeeper

Employers use phone interviews to screen candidates and ensure they meet the minimum qualifications for the job.



Beyond the Resume

The call enables interviewers to evaluate your communication skills, depth of knowledge, and level of interest in the specific position.

Phase 1 - Before the Interview



Secure Your Environment

Charge your phone fully and choose a quiet location with reliable service to avoid technical interruptions.



Do Your Homework

Research the organization and the specific job role thoroughly to demonstrate your preparation.



Organize Your Materials

Have your resume, certificates, personal calendar, and a pen/paper ready for note-taking during the call.

Phase 2 - During the Interview



Posture Affects Your Voice

Sit upright at a desk; slouching or laying down can make your voice sound too casual or difficult to understand.



Project Energy and Clarity

Speak slowly and clearly, and remember to smile—it improves the enthusiasm and tone of your voice.



Manage the Silence

If you need a moment to think, ask for it directly rather than using "umms" or "ahhs" while thinking aloud.



Maintain Professionalism

Avoid speakerphone, ignore incoming calls, and never eat, drink, or chew gum during the conversation.

Phase 3 - Ending and Following Up



Establish Next Steps

If the interviewer doesn't explain the timeline, ask when you can expect to hear back or what the next stage involves.



Capture Contact Details

Ensure you have the interviewer's correct name, title, and contact information before hanging up.



Send a Personalized Thank You

Email a brief note referring to specific items discussed and reiterating your interest in the position.

Telephone Interview Tips

Why a Phone Interview?

Phone interviews are typically used to screen candidates before in-person interviews.

- Getting to know the candidate
- Determine if the candidate meets the minimum qualifications for the job
- It enables the interviewer to evaluate your communication skills, knowledge and interest in a specific position.

Before the Interview:

- Charge your phone!
- Plan the location where you will do the interview. Make sure it's a quiet place with reliable phone service.
- Research, research, research! Know about the organization you are interviewing with and the job role.
- Gather materials needed for the interview:
 - Copy of your resume, certificates/licenses, etc.
 - Paper and pen for taking notes
 - Any correspondence you have had with the employer – including any organization info/details
 - Copy of your personal calendar/schedule
- Prepare questions to ask at the end of the interview.

During the Interview:

- Answer the phone in a pleasant and professional manner.
 - If you answer the call in a noisy location, ask the interviewer to wait a moment, then quickly move the phone to a quieter location, turn off music, ask roommates to be quiet, etc.
- Avoid using a speakerphone for an interview.
- Posture while on the telephone can affect your voice.
 - Slouching or laying down can cause your voice to be more casual and harder to understand.
 - Sit as you would in an actual interview or at a desk with your notes in front of you.
- If you receive another call during the interview, do not stop to take the other call.
- Avoid chewing gum, eating, drinking or smoking while on the telephone interview.
- Energy and enthusiasm need to come across in your voice.
 - Try to occasionally smile, talk slowly and clearly during the telephone interview.
- Ask for time when you need it, rather than stuttering. If you are asked a question which will take you a couple of minutes to gather your thoughts - ask for it! There's nothing more frustrating for the interviewer when you are thinking aloud in 'mmmmm' or 'ahhh'.
- Be sure to express interest in the company and appreciation for the telephone interview.

Ending on a Positive Note

- Establish next steps: the interviewer will usually explain what you can expect to happen next: an email or another phone call from the interviewer or someone else in the company. If not, ask.
- Before the telephone interview is ended, be sure you have the interviewer's name, title, and contact information.
- Treat all telephone calls from any company contact as equally important.
- Send a brief thank you note by email. Refer to the interview, mention one or two items that were discussed, and reiterate your interest in the position and their organization.

Commonly Asked Interview Questions:

- Tell me a little about yourself.
- What made you decide to pursue a career in this field?
- What do you know about our organization?
- Why do you want to work for us?
- Why should we hire you over other candidates?
- What sort of hobbies do you have?
- How do you work in a team?
- How do you take constructive criticism?