

# MAKING AN IMPRESSION WITH THE PHONE INTERVIEW



The phone interview is increasingly used by organizations to screen candidates, the phone interview presents you as a job-seeker with the opportunity to make a strong and positive first impression on potential employers.

Consider these differences when preparing for a phone interview:

- The time of the interview
- Your surroundings
- Knowing your strengths and weaknesses
- How to project both your ideas and enthusiasm
- Researching the employer and gathering questions to ask
- Practicing answering to the various types of questions that you might be asked

The phone interview is your first step to securing a personal interview. Don't make the mistake of not being prepared!

## WHEN SHOULD A PHONE INTERVIEW OCCUR?

Hopefully, you will get the chance to correspond with an organization and set up a time to conduct a phone interview at your convenience. However, they may call you out of the blue based on a resume you sent out months ago. The call could start out with, "I just had a few questions about your resume..." and extend into an hour. Keep in mind that you have the option to say, "Right now is not a good time, but can I call you back in an hour?" so that you can collect yourself in order to give your best impression. However, also keep in mind that it is important to be prepared for a phone interview on a moment's notice. You never know when a recruiter might call.

## HOW WILL A PHONE INTERVIEW BE EVALUATED?

How you will be assessed in a phone interview differs from how you might be assessed during an in-person interview. Rather than making your first impression with body language and a firm handshake, your first impression will be your initial greeting on the phone. The interviewer may ask him or herself the following questions after the interview:

- Did you have an enthusiastic voice?
- Did you answer questions vaguely or directly?
- Did you research the organization well, or did you ask simple questions?
- Did you express interest in a second interview?
- Did you follow up with a thank you letter?
- Did you send supporting material (resume, portfolio, etc.)?

## WHERE SHOULD A PHONE INTERVIEW TAKE PLACE?

Place yourself in a private location, free from intrusions and distractions. Have your phone in a quiet room away from radios, televisions, family and friends, pets, or anything else that may make a noise or take your attention away from the task at hand. Select a comfortable place, preferably with a nice view to help you concentrate.

## PREPARING FOR THE PHONE INTERVIEW

Prepare for the phone interview just like you would for an in-person interview. Get dressed up so that you will be in a professional and confident frame of mind.

### Research the Organization and the Position

Before you conduct the interview, learn as much about the organization and position to which you are applying. Visit the organization's website, analyze the job description and try to match your experiences, interests, and abilities to what they are seeking.

### Behavioral Answers

The most common type of questions are behavioral. These questions aim to determine how you would operate on the job. One strategy for answering behavior-based questions is to use the **STAR** formula (**S**ituation, **T**ask, **A**ction, **R**esponse). The formula ensures that you deliver a complete and concise answer.

### Traditional Questions

Traditional questions include questions that clarify points on your resume, evaluate your accomplishments and goals, and assess your expectations of the organization. “Themes” also work in these questions, as well as many opportunities for you to showcase your strengths.

### Make a List of Questions to Ask

- What are the characteristics of a successful employee at your organization?
- What is a traditional career path for this position?
- Can you tell me something about how your career has developed working at your organization?
- Do you have any unanswered questions about my qualifications?

### Utilize Your Resources

Gather these tools near the phone for use during the interview:

- Resume and cover letter for the position
- Pen and paper to take notes during the interview
- Job description

## DURING THE PHONE INTERVIEW

- Have a self-confident and enthusiastic voice
- Smile as much as possible. This will create an enthusiastic tone of voice.
- Speak succinctly so that you are not rambling
- Keep the conversation going with prepared questions
- Do not eat, smoke, or chew gum while on the phone
- Speak directly into the phone so that you can be heard clearly
- Do not take other calls while on the phone. Try to turn off call waiting.
- Sit in an upright position or stand while talking. Your voice will sound stronger.
- Avoid nervous habits that will create noise
- Do not interrupt the interviewer
- Listen to what is said and asked and ask for clarification if needed

## ENDING THE CONVERSATION

- Let the employer end the interview
- Thank the employer for his/her time and reiterate your interest in the position
- Find the next steps so that you can follow up appropriately
- State that you would like to meet personally

## FOLLOW UP WITH THE INTERVIEWER

Send a thank you letter to the interviewer as soon as possible to show your appreciation and enthusiasm for the position. Make sure that the timetable of the hiring process and future steps have been discussed so that you are aware of where you stand in the interview process.

## PREPARE FOR THE FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEW

A phone interview may be all that is needed to convince your interviewer that you are the right person for the job. However, many organizations prefer to meet job seekers in person before making any decisions. Consult with Career Services for help with face-to-face interviews. We have many resources and can work with you during a taped practice interview to assess your interviewing strengths and weaknesses.

## Hints to Help You Transition to the in-Person Interview:

- Focus on what you can offer the organization
- Offer new information if possible
- Give new examples of what you have accomplished
- Ask more specific questions
- Let your research show



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