



Interviews: Don't "Phone It In"

Find the right sound for phone interview success.

Time to dial it in

Good news—the employer wants to arrange a time to speak about the position you applied for! However, before the company invites you to an in-person interview, you may be asked to do a phone interview as part of the screening process. To pass this qualifying heat and remain in the race, you'll need to know how phone and in-person interviews differ, as well as how to conduct yourself before, during, and after the call.

Before you take the call

Set the right tone: If employers call your home or personal phone, answer in a professional manner. For example: "Hello, this is Deborah" or "Hi, you have reached Judy" or "Mike speaking." Avoid saying just "Hi" or "Yes?" or "Hello." Also, set up a formal voicemail. Don't include songs, slang, or even humor. Plus, your business-like spoken greeting in a quiet environment is preferable to an automated voice recording. (For more, see: "Interviews: Hello?")

Know the best time to connect: Typically, employers will first call to arrange a time for your phone interview. If you're not prepared to speak or are in a noisy area, have the caller leave a voicemail message or ask if you may call them back later that day. This gives you time to compose your reply and choose your environment. Take notes on who called you: get their name and contact info so that you can reach them. When scheduling your interview, try to select a time of day when you're at your peak. If at work, be careful of scheduling during lunch in case the interview runs long. Confirm details in an email, check time zones, and make sure it's clear who will be initiating the call.

Preparing for a phone interview

Text more than you telephone? Practice your phone skills! Interviewers listen for credentials, as well as communication skills and confidence. Know your résumé inside and out and research the company thoroughly. Be situated and ready 15 minutes prior with your résumé, the job description, notes about the company and role in front of you. Jot down ideas about why you're a good fit for the role that you can quickly reference during the interview.

And, while the caller can't see you, they can be distracted by background noises or the clicking of your keyboard if you're multitasking. Block off enough time: most phone interviews take between 15-30 minutes, but good phone interviews can last as long as an hour.

Keeping the lines open

Without visuals, it's harder to make your enthusiasm show. Small physical changes like standing up or, yes, smiling during a phone interview will naturally allow you to project your voice and make you sound more excited about the position. And, don't keep talking; give the listener a chance to speak. Watch your tone of voice and don't be defensive when asked difficult questions. Stay focused, and listen—is the interviewer engaged and asking questions, or using phrases like "it was nice speaking with you" or "we will be in touch" to end the call? Understanding their tone and language will help you adjust the flow of your exchange. Also, respect the interviewer's time by keeping an eye on the clock.

Finally, prepare one or two questions to ask toward the end of your interview. "Is there anything else that I can tell you about my background or qualifications?" or "Do you have any other questions for me?" give you the opportunity to sell your skills and clear up any confusion from your interview. You can also ask "When do you expect to make a hiring decision?" or "How should I follow up regarding the position?" Smart questions allow you to get a better sense of the next steps in the interview process, and help emphasize your interest in the role.

Conclude by re-emphasizing why you would be a good candidate and make a notation of the next steps in the interview process. Close by thanking your interviewer for their time and email a proper thank you within 24-48 hours.



i n a nutshell:

benefits.

Plan your phone interview well in advance of that first call:

- **Email confirmation of time, date, and call initiator**
- **Be prepared, dressed, and ready 10-15 minutes ahead as if for an in-person interview**
- **Politely ask for a number in case you're disconnected**
- **Be tuned in: the interviewer is listening and so should you**
- **Have résumé, calendar, pen, papers, questions, and a glass of water ready**
- **Don't ask about salary, perks, benefits, or vacation**
- **All manners of etiquette apply**

Don't take a phone interview for granted: trip up here and you'll never make it to the finals.

CollegeCentral.com/

Visit the above URL to access our school's exclusive jobs database **and MORE!**