

tip sheet



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PHONE INTERVIEWS

Be prepared to interview over the phone just as you would for a regular interview. Employers use telephone interviews as a way of identifying and recruiting candidates for employment. Phone interviews are often used to screen candidates in order to narrow the pool of applicants who will be invited for in-person interviews. They are also used as way to minimize the expenses involved in interviewing out-of-town candidates.

While you are actively job searching, it is important to be prepared for a phone interview on a moment's notice. You never know when an employer might call and ask if you have a few minutes to talk. Often the phone is an employer's first line of contact with you. What happens after they dial your phone number will be their first direct experience of you.

Are you ready to take the call? Here are a few pointers to make your phone employer friendly:

- Have a voicemail and personalize your message. If you do not have one, create a script of what you want to say prior to starting the recording. Speak clearly and slowly. Your recording should start like this: "Hello, you've reached the voice mail of (insert name or family residence here). I am currently unavailable, but if you leave me your name, number, and a message after the tone, I will get back to you as soon as possible."
- When returning a phone call to your potential employer, identify yourself with your name and the reason for your call.
- When leaving messages, speak clearly and slowly. Always, always identify yourself and leave your return telephone number as part of your message. Speak S-L-O-W-LY, repeating your telephone number at the end of your message.
- Do not allow interruptions to occur during conversations. The person on the telephone takes precedence over someone who happens to walk in your space or passes by while you are on the phone.
- Smile while you talk over the phone. Your tone and attitude will be noticed by phone distance!

Before the Interview

- Always reply to invitations, confirming the date and time and format of the interview in your acceptance email and keep the email formal.
- Check if the interviewer will call you or if you are to make the call.
- Prepare a summary of relevant your experience and skills for the position.
- Research the company. Memorize the basics such as: the industry, key awards/achievements, locations, services and products and size of employees.
- Look up any information available on the interviewers e.g. on linkedin.com so you are aware of their position and background. This can also help you identify common interests to bring up during the interview.
- Make a bullet list of reasons why you are interested in the role AND the company.
- Be prepared to answer standard questions such as where you intend your career to be in 5 years.
- Prepare 2 to 4 questions at most about the company and role. You may have more but that's enough to show interest in the company. No question is a bad question.
- Ensure you have your cover letter and resume on hand for reference. Be prepared to explain why you moved on from each role and also explain any gaps between jobs.



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During the Interview

- Ensure that you are in a quiet room ideally at home (not in a public space) and will not be interrupted.
- If you have more than one phone, ensure the other phone is on silent or switched off.
- Ensure you have access to the internet during the interview, just in case you are asked to look up a site or need to look at the company website as guidance during the interview.
- Answer the phone with your name so they know it is you.
- Smile over the phone! It really does make a difference.
- Tone again: use courteous, formal language even if the other person sounds more relaxed or more informal.
- Keep answers explanatory but concise. Avoid over-explaining or over-complicated answers.
- Never interrupt the interviewer if they are asking a question or commenting on an answer.
- If you are not sure you understand the question, say so and paraphrase back what you believe you understood.
- Be prepared to sell yourself. In North America modesty is not an option in an interview. But be realistic in expressing your skills and experience.
- When asked to talk about weaknesses or areas for improvement, show that with any area, you are taking action and believe it can improve.
- Do not discuss salary during the interview. This can wait until the end of the face-to-face interview.
- At the end of the interview, thank the interviewer and reiterate your interest in the role with specific reasons as to why, showing that you have been listening during the interview.

After the Interview

- Always send an email to the interviewer thanking them for their time and reiterating your interest in the role. Include a sentence summarizing what you could contribute to the role.

Source Materials: MOSAIC Workplace Connections Mentorship Program (Author: Sarah Dresser)