

TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS

Telephone interviews are becoming a major part of the interviewing process when applying for internships, part and full-time jobs, and graduate schools. Employers may contact you anytime during the day, night, and weekend, either informally or formally. They may request additional information, set up a formal interview, reschedule a time or simply chat with an applicant to get a sense of their personality. Nowadays, telephone interviews may indeed be “first round” screening measures for employers deciding whom they would like to invite for face-to-face interviews. It may also be your only interview for the position!

Unpredictable Calls

Control your environment in advance by preparing and reminding roommates, parents, or anyone else that might answer your telephone that employers may be contacting you in the next few weeks or months. Ask them to take thorough messages that include the following information: caller’s name, company, time, date, and why they are calling.

- Record a professional greeting on your answering machine.
- Don’t answer the telephone if you are sleeping or busy – let it go to the answering machine.
- Do not ask an employer to “call you back later.” If you are job searching you must be prepared to speak with an employer anytime you answer the telephone – if not, don’t pick up the telephone. It is best to talk with employers when they call!
- Thank the employer for calling. Reiterate important points and follow-up procedures.
- Send a letter to the employer thanking them for the call.

Formal Interview: Establish the Logistics

- Who will contact whom? Will you contact the company or vice versa?
- Where will they contact you? Choose a place you will not be interrupted at home.
- What time is the interview? Ask if it is “a.m.” or “p.m.” and clarify the time zone.
- What is the purpose of the interview? What types of questions may be asked?
- How long will the interview be?
- How many people will be in the interview? What are their names and positions?
- Who is the contact person in case you need to reach him or her before the interview?

Additional Tips

- Telephone interviews are awkward for the interviewer too, so don't think you're alone.
- Be ready 10-15 minutes in advance. Use the restroom in advance. Don't eat or drink during the interview.
- Dress up for you interview even though you can't be seen. This step will allow you to act in a professional manner.
- Smile while you are talking. This will "brighten" your voice.
- Place your pets in a secure place where they cannot be heard over the phone.
- Review your application materials.
- Tape your resume, papers, and documents to the wall or desk in front of you. You can refer to these while you are talking without rustling papers.
- Don't click away to answer calls during your interview. Let your interviewer know that your "call waiting" is beeping but should stop shortly.
- If there are multiple interviewers on the call, diagram a seating arrangement with each person's name and position – then you know to whom you are responding.
- Silence isn't bad. Lag time is common in telephone interviews...don't be frightened. Often the interviewer may be jotting notes down or gathering thoughts. Technology issues may also cause lag time.
- Thank your interviewers on the telephone. Determine the next steps for you as an applicant.
- Send a thank you letter reiterating your interest in the position.