



Phone Interviews

What to expect and how to prepare

Job hunting can start with a phone interview. To get the job, you need to present yourself well over the phone - say the right things, mind your tone, and be confident overall.

Phone interviews are frequently used by companies to save time by pre-qualifying your interest and expertise. The following are some recommendations to ensure your next phone interview is successful for you.

Scheduling the Phone Interview

If you can not speak comfortably when the first call arrives, ask the interviewer if you could schedule a specific time for the phone interview. Be sure to define who will call whom. It is recommended that you offer to call the company. This ensures you are fully prepared and in a situation where you can speak without interruptions. Schedule the phone interview just like you would any face-to-face interview.

Many companies schedule phone interviews in advance just as they would a face-to-face interview. It is important that you ask how much time is needed for the phone interview appointment so you schedule your time appropriately. You should not assume how long it will take. Some phone interviews may last from 30 – 50 minutes.

Find the Right Environment

Isolate Yourself

Phone interviews place you at a disadvantage because you only have one tool of communication, your voice. The interviewer's impression of you is shaped by all the sounds coming through the phone. Insulate yourself from distractions and background noises. Do not have your phone interview when you are surrounded by a lot of noise like an outdoor café at a busy intersection or in your living room where your room mates are talking. If the call is on your cell phone make sure the caller can hear you clearly.

When the phone interviewer first contacts you, make sure it is comfortable for you to talk on the phone for at least 20 minutes. If it's not convenient, recommend scheduling another time for the call.

Stand Up

During the call you may want to stand up, walk around and smile. All these things make a big difference in the projection and quality of your voice. Have paper and pen available to write down the questions they ask you. It will help you focus your answer.

Prepare Your Responses and Questions

Phone interviews follow a similar pattern of questioning with the purpose of screening you out of consideration. Below is a list of questions most phone interviewers ask. Write down and practice your responses. It is very important to think about the words you use that will show your enthusiasm and motivation since the interviewer can not see your smile. Be clear and concise. You do not have the visual cues to help you so you may need to pause and ask if that is enough or would they like additional clarification. They may be ready to move to the next question.

You should also prepare questions. Questions are your primary tool of influence with an interviewer. Questions help you direct the conversation and assess if the company is right for you.

Questions You Could Ask

Questions you ask at the beginning of the phone interview.

- What position are you considering me for?
- What are the key things you'd like to learn about my background?

Questions you could possibly ask in the middle of the interview.

- What will the first few months be like? Is there training provided?
- Describe the three top challenges that I'll face in this job?
- What are the characteristics of people who are most successful in your company?
- What are the key deliverables and outcomes that this position must achieve?

Questions you may ask at the end of the phone interview.

- What additional information would you like me to provide?
- What concerns do you have at this point?
- When is the best time to follow up with you?

Questions You Might be Asked

- Tell me about yourself.
- What do you know about our company?
- How did you learn about this position?
- What are your salary requirements?
- What are your strengths?
- What are your weaknesses?
- What job-related skills have you developed?
- Where do you want to be in five years?
- Describe your communication style.
- Do you have any questions?

For more possible interview questions, go to icc.ucdavis.edu/interview/questions.htm

Get Face-to-Face

If you are interested, ask for a face-to-face interview. Remember that your objective (during the phone interview) is to secure a face-to-face interview. You will be most effective discussing your background and assessing the company in a face-to-face meeting.

Be sure to send a thank you note after the phone interview!