

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 a way to minimize the expenses involved in interviewing out-of-town candidates.

While you're actively job searching, it's important to be prepared for a phone interview on a moment's notice. You never know when a recruiter or a networking contact might call and ask if you have a few minutes to talk.

1. Be Prepared to Interview

Prepare for a phone interview just as you would for a regular interview. Compile a list of your strengths and weaknesses, as well as a list of answers to typical interview questions. In addition, plan on being prepared for a phone conversation about your background and skills.

- Keep your resume in clear view so it's at your fingertips when you need to answer questions.
- Have a short list of your accomplishments available to review.
- Have a pen and paper handy for note-taking.
- Turn call-waiting off so your call isn't interrupted.
- If the time isn't convenient, ask if you could talk at another time and suggest some alternatives.
- Clear the room - evict the kids and the pets. Turn off the stereo and the TV. Close the door.
- Unless you're sure your cell phone service is going to be perfect, consider using a landline rather than your cell phone to avoid a dropped call or static on the line.

2. Practice Interviewing

Talking on the phone isn't as easy as it seems, so it is helpful to practice. Have a friend or family member conduct a mock interview and tape record it so you can see how you sound over the phone. Any cassette recorder will work. You'll be able to hear your "ums" and "uhs" and "okays" and you can practice reducing them from your conversational speech. Also rehearse answers to those typical questions you'll be asked.

3. During the Phone Interview

- Don't chew gum or eat.
- Keep a glass of water handy, in case you need to wet your mouth.
- Smile. Smiling will project a positive image to the listener and will change the tone of your voice.
- Speak slowly and enunciate clearly.
- Use the person's title (Mr. or Ms. and their last name.) Only use a first name if they ask you to.
- Don't interrupt the interviewer.
- Take your time - it's perfectly acceptable to take a moment to collect your thoughts.
- Give short answers.

4. After the Interview:

- Remember your goal is to set-up a face-to-face interview. After you thank the interviewer ask if it would be possible to meet in person.
- Take notes about what you were asked and how you answered.
- Remember to say "thank you." Follow with a thank you note which reiterates your interest in the job.



Common interview questions

Below are questions you may be asked at some point in your interviewing process. Practice answering these questions with this in mind: be **positive, specific, and concise**.

1. Tell me about a project that really got you excited.
2. Tell me about a situation where you had to deal with an angry or frustrated customer or coworker. Specifically, how did you handle it? Why did you choose that approach? What were the results?
3. What is the most important thing you have learned from your professional experience? Why do you attach such great importance to it?
4. Tell me about a situation you faced that seemed to be impossible. How did you handle it and what was the result?
5. Why do you want to work at X Company?
6. What are your biggest strengths and weaknesses?
7. Give an example of your initiative in handling a challenging situation.
8. Are there certain tasks or types of people that you find challenging for you?
9. Why do you want to leave your current job? Or why are you looking for new employment?
10. Tell me a suggestion you have made that was implemented.
11. Why should we hire you?
12. What are some things that you find difficult to do? Why is that?
13. Tell me about your training. What have you done to become a better _____?
14. How would your current or former colleagues describe you?
15. How are you when you're working under pressure?
16. Of all your work, where have you been most successful? To what do you attribute that success?