

Phone Interviews

Introduction

More and more employers are using telephone interviews as part of the hiring process. Phone interviewing is an effective method for organizations to:

- Be able to interview candidates from a wider geographical area.
- Assess a candidate's interest in the organization and eliminate uninterested candidates from the search.
- Narrow a large candidate pool to a small group that will be invited for an in-person interview.
- Save time and travel expenses.

A phone interview will not generally get you a job; it is used as an intermediate step on the way to a face-to-face interview.

Before the Call

Just like an in-person interview, preparation is the key to a successful telephone interview. Most employers will call you to schedule a day and time prior to the actual phone interview. However, it never hurts to be prepared in case you receive a call out of the blue. If this happens and you feel unprepared, it is better to reschedule than to make a poor impression.

- **Develop your interviewing skills.** Prepare for the phone interview the same way as for a face-to-face interview.
 - Review the Career Services Center's online interviewing information.
 - Attend interviewing workshops offered through the Job Search Series.
 - Schedule a mock interview with a CSC staff member.

- **Check your answering machine.** Be sure you record a professional message for your answering machine.
- **Turn off call waiting.** Do not take any other calls while you are interviewing.
- **Alert others.** Let your roommates know that an interviewer will be calling. Ask that they allow you to answer the phone.
- **Find a quiet location.** Take the call in a quiet room and eliminate distracting background noise. Place a "Do Not Disturb" sign on your door. Turn off the speakerphone to eliminate echo sounds.
- **Take care of personal hygiene needs.** Use the bathroom prior to the scheduled call.
- **Get organized.** Set out all documents and information you might need, including :
 - Current resume
 - List of brief responses to anticipated questions
 - List of points, such as specific skills and achievements, that you want to mention
 - List of pertinent questions about the position or organization that you want to ask the interviewer
 - Calendar with all of your scheduled commitments
 - Notepad, pen, and calculator

During the Call

- **Eliminate extraneous noise.** Don't rustle papers during the interview. Turn off music and the television. Don't eat, drink, or chew gum. Don't type on your computer.
- **Be professional.** Be courteous to support staff who may place the initial call. Refer to the interviewer as Mr., Mrs., or Ms. unless otherwise directed.
- **Confirm the interviewer's information.** If you don't already have it, be sure to ask for the interviewer's exact title and the

spelling of his/her name along with a phone number, e-mail address, and street address.

- **Speak clearly and slowly.** The interviewer is only hearing your voice. Use good communication skills to leave a positive impression.
- **Smile when you speak.** It may sound silly, but smiling will help you to sound enthusiastic and friendlier.
- **Listen carefully.** The interviewer will notice if you are distracted. Don't do anything else while the interviewer is on the phone. Prove that you're paying attention by feeding back what the interviewer says.
- **Don't hesitate to ask for clarification.** Since this is not a face-to-face situation, you may need to ask, "Is this the kind of information you're seeking?" or "Have I sufficiently answered your question about my [skills or experience]?"
- **Tell the interviewer if you're interested.** Close the interview positively and reiterate your interest in the position. Let the interviewer know that you are interested in an in-person interview to further discuss your qualifications for the position.
- **Ask about the next step in the process.** As the call winds to a close, ask about the next step in the interview process as well as the hiring timetable. Offer to send, fax, or e-mail any additional information or supporting documentation.
- **Say thanks.** Conclude the call by expressing your appreciation for the time spent with you.

After the Call

- **Write a thank-you letter.** Just because the interview was conducted by telephone doesn't let you off the hook when it comes to sending a thank-you note. Visit the Career Services Center's website for information and examples.

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This publication and other interviewing resources are available online at www.clarion.edu/14174