

PHONE INTERVIEWS



What are Phone Interviews and Screenings?

Some employers use phone calls to pre-screen candidates before offering in-person interviews.

Some employers conduct all interviews via phone. They will usually tell you this, and formally schedule the telephone interview in advance, but some may informally call without warning. Keep in mind that different employers have different interview methods, so you should be prepared for all possibilities.

Why Employers use Phone Interviews and Screenings

To Narrow the Applicant Pool

When employers receive many applications for an open position, they will first screen resumes and cover letters to narrow the field. They may need to utilize phone screenings to narrow the applicant pool even further. Some employers will reach out via e-mail to see who responds quickly and follows directions.

Efficiency and Cost

A phone call is easier and much less costly than an in-person interview, especially if travel is involved.

To Screen Potential Employees

A phone interview typically does not take the place of an in-person interview. It is simply a means to learn more about the candidate, and lets the candidate learn more about the employer and position, before either party commits to the time and expense of an in-person interview.

You May Be Evaluated by your Telephone Conduct at Any Time

Don't be Surprised When you get a Call

The moment you make your phone number available to an employer, whether on your resume, an email, or an online application, you should be prepared for the possibility of receiving a call from an employer

Record of Professional Voicemail Message

An employer will reach your voicemail if you are unable to answer the phone. Be sure your message is appropriate and simple. Make sure it includes your name, clearly stated, so the employer knows he/she has reached the intended person.

When to Answer the Phone

If you are not in a situation where it is appropriate to receive a call from an employer, let the incoming call go to your voicemail. Return the call promptly in an appropriate location.

Inconvenient Timing

If you answer your phone, but the employer has reached you at a bad time, it is perfectly appropriate to politely explain this and offer to call back at a time that is convenient to them.

Scheduled-in-Advance Phone Interviews

In some cases, the employer will contact you to set up a specific time to conduct a phone interview. When you agree to that scheduling, you are committing to a business appointment and you should be fully prepared.

Details to Know

Will the employer call you, or are you expected to call the employer?

Most often the employer will call you, but never assume this to be the case.

Approximately how long will the interview last?

It is reasonable for you to know the length of the interview before you commit. You may have another commitment after the interview that you will need to be at. You don't want to feel or seem rushed during the interview because you didn't know how long it would last.

How many people will you be speaking with?

If more than one person is speaking and listening on the employer's end, this can involve conference or speaker phone, which may interfere with sound quality.

Is this strictly an audio interview, or is video expected?

If it is not strictly an audio call, you will need to be follow personal appearance and conduct expectations that are judged in an in-person interview.

How to Prepare

- Choose a place to conduct the phone interview without distractions (if you have roommates you may want to give them notice)
- When using a cell phone, make sure you can get a good signal in your chosen location
- Check that your cell phone is charged
- Turn off call waiting
- Keep your resume and job description nearby so you can reference them
- Make a short list of accomplishments/skills you think the employer should know about you that makes the connection to the position
- Have pen and paper ready to take notes, and to write down any questions that come up
- Practice through a mock interview or by recording yourself
- Research the organization
- Review potential interview questions and come up with possible answers
- Prepare follow-up questions for the interviewer

During the Interview

- Get dressed and cleaned up for the phone interview, looking and feeling like a professional will help you convey confidence
- Posture will affect how you sound. Sit up or stand while conducting the interview
- Smiling can affect how you come across
- No food/drink/gum
- Speak clearly and enunciate
- Always use the interviewer's title and last name
- If you are having difficulties hearing the interviewer, let them know
- Show that you are enthusiastic about the position and organization
- Be yourself, but always remain professional
- Follow the interviewer's cues, and don't ramble to fill silences

Summary

- Demonstrate a connection between your skills and the position
- Answer questions thoroughly, demonstrating you have done your research and prepared well
- Develop rapport with the interviewer and demonstrate sincere interest in the position
- Show that you are articulate and can conduct yourself professionally

If you would like to practice your interview skills, please schedule an appointment with the Career Development Center