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# PHONE INTERVIEWS

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## What are phone interviews & screenings?

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

Some employers conduct interviews by telephone — they usually tell you this and formally schedule the telephone interview in advance, but some may informally do this without warning. A phone interview can be a screening step before an in-person interview. Keep in mind that different employers have different methods of screening candidates, so you should be prepared for all possibilities.

## Why employers use phone interviews & screenings:

### Narrow the applicant pool:

When employers receive many applications for an open position, they need to narrow the applicant pool. Obviously, first they screen resumes and cover letters to narrow the field. Contact by e-mail can be an efficient way to further narrow the pool (they can see who responds and who follows directions). Phone calls can be a next step to further narrow the pool.

Bottom line is that at any time you may be evaluated on your telephone conduct.

### Your own voice mail.

Obviously a caller can reach your voice mail, so be sure it is appropriate, meaning simple and with your name clearly stated so the employer knows s/he is reaching the intended person, and thus may be more likely to leave a message.

### Deciding to answer your phone.

If you are not in a situation appropriate to receive a call from an employer (noisy location, or quiet location in which you should not be speaking on the phone), let the incoming call go to your voice mail. Return the call promptly in an appropriate location.

### Efficiency and cost:

Obviously a phone call is easier and much less costly than an in-person interview, especially if travel is involved for you and/or the employer for an in-person interview.

### A step prior to an in-person interview:

A phone interview or screening usually does not take the place of an in-person interview. It is simply a means of learning more about the candidate, and letting the candidate learn more about the employer and the position, before both parties commit to the time and expense of an in-person interview.

Before you give your phone number to anyone!

When you give your phone number, you expect to be called.

The moment you in any way make your phone number available to an employer -- whether on your resume, an e-mail, an online application, etc. — you should be prepared for the possibility of receiving a call from an employer.

**Don't be surprised. Do be prepared.**

## Answering and inconvenient timing:

If you do answer your phone, and the employer has reached you at a time when you can't speak with him/her, it's perfectly appropriate to politely explain this and offer to call back at a time convenient to the employer. E.g.: "I'm so sorry I'm not able to talk with you now. Is there a time I can call you back at your convenience?"

## For scheduled-in-advance phone interviews:

In some cases, the employer will contact you (by phone, e-mail, etc.) to set 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 in advance about the scheduled phone interview:

If, in setting the phone interview appointment, the employer doesn't tell you the following, ask:

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

Most likely the employer will expect to call you, but don't assume; ask if that's not made clear.

### Approximately how long will the interview last?

It's reasonable for you to know this before you commit; you may need time to get to a class or a job. You don't want to feel or seem rushed during the interview because you didn't know how long it would last.

### Will you be speaking with one person, or more than one?

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

### Is this strictly a phone/audio interview, or a video interview?

If it's not strictly audio, then you need to be concerned with all the same personal appearance and conduct issues that are judged in an in-person interview. See [interviewing tips](#) to be prepared.

## 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 the chosen location
- Check that cell phone batteries are charged
- Turn off call waiting
- Keep your resume and job description in clear view (possibly tape it to your desk or a wall)
- Make a short list of accomplishments/things you think the employer should know about you that makes the connection between your skills and the position
- Have pen and paper ready to take notes on questions and answers immediately after the phone interview
- Practice through a mock interview or a tape recorder

## During the Interview

- Get dressed and cleaned up for the phone interview – 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/sneezing or coughing
- Speak clearly and enunciate
- Always use the recruiters title and last name
- If you are having difficulty hearing the recruiter, let him/her know
- Show that you are enthusiastic about the organization and the position
- Build rapport with the recruiter, be yourself, but always remain professional
- Follow recruiters' cues and don't ramble to fill silences
- Convey that you are interested in the position

## Anticipate the Interview

- Research the organization
- Review potential interview questions and come up with possible answers using examples
- Prepare questions to ask the interviewer- ALWAYS ask questions

## Successful Phone Interview – Summary

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

## Career Development

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