

STRATEGIES FOR A SUCCESSFUL PHONE INTERVIEW

You just got word that you landed a job interview with a company that really interests you -- only there's a slight catch. You won't be meeting with your interviewer(s) face-to-face. Instead, you'll be taking part in a phone interview, the results of which will determine whether you're invited to meet with company representatives in person.

WHY PHONE INTERVIEWS ARE SO COMMON

Companies use phone interviews as an initial employment screening technique for a variety of reasons. A few of the most important reasons are that they can save companies time and they serve as a more realistic screening alternative for cases in which companies are considering out-of-town (or out-of-state and foreign) candidates.

So the chances are pretty good that, at some point in your job hunt, you'll be asked to participate in a 20 to 30 minute phone interview with either one person or several people on the other end of the line.

HOW TO PREPARE FOR YOUR PHONE INTERVIEW

Preparing for a phone interview is fairly similar to preparing for a face-to-face interview, but you have to remember that you cannot communicate using non-verbal cues. You'll have to adjust the tone and pace of the conversation appropriately to convey your enthusiasm and confidence.

Here are some key ways to prepare before the call:

1. **Do Your Research** – Be sure to research the company, study the job description and practice your responses to anticipated questions, just as you would for any interview.
2. **Make a Cheat Sheet** – One of the main advantages of a phone interview is that you can jot down notes to help you. Include all of the following on your cheat sheet:
 - The name and title of the interviewer(s)
 - Notes about the company
 - Skills and experiences you want to emphasize
 - Interests or passions you want your interviewer(s) to know about
 - Answers to common interview questions (we've posted a document devoted to this topic in our Resource section)
 - Any questions you have about the company or the job

You can touch on these topics throughout the interview or at the end of the session when the interviewer asks you if you have any questions or anything to add.

3. **Get a High-Quality Phone** – This is not the time to use a cell phone or a phone that cuts in and out. Figure out which reliable phone you'd like to use and then disable the call-waiting feature before your interview begins.

4. **Dress for Success** – Although you are not meeting for a face-to-face interview, the way you are dressed during the phone interview can affect how you project yourself over the phone. While this is a mental concept, dressing for the part can really help you get into the right state of mind and take the interview as seriously as you would a face-to-face interview.

5. **Prepare Your Interview Environment** – Select a quiet place in the house where there is no background noise and make sure to tell everyone in the house not to interrupt you. Then, bring all of the following items into the room:

- A pad and paper for notes
- A glass of water
- Your resume
- Your cheat sheet

KEY STEPS TO FOLLOW DURING THE PHONE INTERVIEW

1. **Stand up, or at least sit up straight during the interview** – Research has shown that you will project better when you're standing up and that you will feel more knowledgeable and confident.
2. **Greet the interviewer(s) with enthusiasm** – This will help you set a positive tone you can carry throughout the interview.
3. **Speak clearly and maintain an upbeat tone** – It can be hard to hear you over the phone, especially if you are put on speakerphone.
4. **Respond with well thought-out answers to all questions** – It's okay to pause briefly before your answer, but don't take too long so you can avoid awkward silences. Since the interviewer(s) can't see you, they won't know if the question has completely baffled you or if you are merely collecting your thoughts.
5. **Ask questions** – This helps demonstrate your interest in the job. Be sure to ask about the next steps in the interview process and take notes.
6. **Confirm the interviewer's address** – You'll need this so you can send a thank-you note immediately following the interview. If you have the interviewer's email address, you should also email a very brief thank-you note to him/her after the interview concludes.

Phone interviews can be tricky, especially since you aren't able to read your interviewers' non-verbal cues like facial expressions and body language during the session -- a big difference from the typical interview. But, if you prepare well for your phone interview, you won't need to read anyone's non-verbal cues to gauge your performance. You'll know for sure how you've done if you're invited to a face-to-face interview and can continue proving you're the best person for the job.