

The #1 Mistake People Make on Phone Interviews

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Increasingly, employers are phone screening job candidates before inviting them for an on-site interview.

Maybe this is good news. Phone interviews are easier, right? You can have a bunch of cheat sheets in front of you—your resume, sample answers to common interview questions, and key facts about the company. You can wear your pajamas—heck, you can even stay in bed while you chat!

Well, not exactly. In fact, the number one mistake job candidates make on phone interviews is sounding tired, bored, or disengaged. Good luck avoiding this if you're reading from a script or tucked away in bed!

Without visual cues, interviewers are paying extra close attention to the content of your answers and anything else they can glean from your voice. So, lackluster answers or low energy could be read as lack of interest—and can keep you from getting in the door for that next interview.

So, how can you maximize what you convey with your voice? Follow these simple steps.

1. Do Some Power Poses

A few minutes before the interview, prep by doing some "power poses." Research shows that standing with your legs shoulder-length apart with your hands on your hips and your chest out for just two minutes raises your testosterone levels, lowers cortisol, and makes you sound more confident. You might feel silly, but at the very least, it'll help calm some nerves. Definitely a good thing!

2. Stand Like a Speaker

Like anyone who's speaking or telling a story, you want to sound dynamic and engaged. And slouching in a chair is just not going to help with this. Instead, try positioning yourself like a speaker: A good setup is having some relevant materials on a desk or table in front of you as you stand. (And by relevant, I mean bulleted talking points, not prepared documents—remember, you want to sound natural and energetic!)

3. Don't Forget to Smile

And feel free to laugh! Yes, this is an interview for a job, but ideally it's also a conversation between two mutually interested parties. Don't make the mistake of sounding overly serious or timid. Your skills and qualifications got you the interview, but it's your personality and commitment that wins over hiring managers. The fact is, no matter how standardized companies try to make their interview processes, being friendly and getting the interviewer excited about working with you will have a huge effect on whether you get invited to the on-site interview. So, smile! Even if they can't see it, your voice will sound more cheerful.

As a final note, treat this as you would an on-site interview, and do the proper logistical preparation. Make sure you have a quiet place to conduct the interview, and check to see if you have good phone signal (better yet, use a landline). Confirm the date and time with your interviewers a day before, along with a line letting them know you're looking forward to it. Because, you are! Especially now that you're ready to blow them away with your energy and drive.

Photo of man on phone courtesy of Shutterstock.

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