



Eazl's Guide to Phone Interviews

Eazl's mission to equip you with all the tools necessary to make you a powerful job searcher. In this reference, you'll find a toolkit that includes:

- A step-by-step guide to preparing for a phone interview
- Hacks that will increase your confidence and clarity during the interview itself

Everyone has their own voice, their own “personal brand,” and their own approach. Tailor these templates and word tracks to suit the situation and your need.

How to Prepare for the Interview

Step 1: Collect and Organize All Application Materials

When you pick up the phone and an HR representative asks to speak to you for five minutes, you don't want to be scrambling for the job description—know exactly what skills this position requires. If you absolutely can't find the original job description, ask the recruiter to send you a copy before your phone interview. It's best to ask rather than try to wing it and not get that in-person interview.

Step 2: Reverse Engineer and Identify the Skill Set from the Job Description

Usually, the phone screener is not the line manager (the person working in that function), so they're typically going to have less specific knowledge of the position and instead, rely on hearing skill-related keywords to “tick the box” for you in that interview. For example, if the job description requires “Advanced Microsoft Excel Skills” then you'll want to say something like “you know, my Microsoft Excel skills are pretty advanced...” when the time is right.

Typically, job descriptions are written with the primary job responsibilities listed in descending order of importance. For instance, a simple job description may



read like this: “The most important part of this job will be a candidate’s ability to create advanced Excel spreadsheets, followed by data analysis, then macro creation.” That means that the hiring team will be generally prioritize advanced Excel skills first, data analysis skills second, and the creation of Excel Macros third. To revisit this hack, find Eazl’s video on the “Big Six Skills” to learn how to reverse engineer the skill set sought by the employer.

Step 3: Write Down a Few STARs

Create an S.T.A.R. document. This is an acronym for Situation, Task, Action, Results, and it is the key to answering behavioral-based interview questions. Usually the phone screener will be someone from the human resources (HR) team and they will probably ask you questions about how you handled specific types of situations in previous jobs. These situations are likely going to be connected to the skill set that you’ve identified in Step 2. The HR representative is looking for you to respond to these questions in a clear and succinct manner.

Here is an example of a behaviorally based question:

“Tell me about a time when you most effectively used financial or quantitative data to identify and solve a critical problem.”

You want to answer the question in way that demonstrates your ability to handle the situation and Team Eazl recommends that you break it down into Situation, Task, Action and Result. For example:

Situation:

Our team was finding it hard to develop an initial community of users.

Task:

To find sustainable sources of people interested in our offerings.

Action:

- Identified lead users to find out where they hang out online



- Brainstormed 3 different ways that we could connect with potential users at these places, then tested each

Result:

Found that one particular strategy was much more effective, then worked on the team to execute the strategy more fully.

Team Eazl recommends that you create at least two S.T.A.R. documents for each position on your resume.

Step 3: Keep Key Documents at Hand

Print out (or get on your iPad or computer) a copy of your resume, your cover letter, and your STAR document.

Hacks for Handling the Interview when the Phone Rings

Being prepared for a phone interview means more than just preparing the right reference materials. You also need to get into character and deliver those materials convincingly.

Hack #1: Give Yourself Enough Time to Get Prepared

Set up a specific time for the phone interview. Often times, an interviewer will call you and say, "Is this a good time for you?" This approach doesn't allow you any time to get prepared. If you aren't, in some cases your reply should be, "Can we schedule a time either later today or tomorrow to discuss this particular position?" If you sense that there is no time to waste or the interviewer won't bother calling back, ask if he can wait for a couple of minutes while you get the necessary documents together.

Hack #2: Dress Nicely and Get Yourself Quiet Space



Researchers at the University of Toronto have found compelling evidence that, for most people, the way they dress impacts their performance. So dress like you would for an in-person interview—or at least dress somewhat professionally. You'll also want to get yourself some quiet space to take the interview so that you don't get distracted.

Hack #3: Make Each Response about One Specific Point

While it's important to make the interviewer enjoy speaking with you, it's easy to lose communication nuances (body language, eye contact, etc.) over the phone. The hack here is to make each response have one specific point so that you can ensure that your message is being received clearly. Here are two examples:

Question: "Tell me about your perspective on the future of digital media."

Unclear Response: "Yeah you know, the future of digital media is really exciting. I mean, I know that YouTube has become a huge source of traffic on the internet and that traditional broadcasters are scrambling to keep up. I think that's because people just hate ads and that is threatening their business model. I mean, YouTube does have ads but it's just not the same as an ad on an old-school television set."

CLEAR Response: "I can see a digital media future where content owners have increased power. For example, YouTube has become a huge source of traffic online and content owners have an ever-evolving set of tools that they can use to monetize their audiences—from ads, to sponsored content, to paid premium channels. It seems that content owners are positioned well for the future."

Hack #4: Break Down Multi-part Questions

If the interviewer asks you a multi-part question, break it down into parts and address each one individually. For example, you might proceed like this:



Interviewer: “Can you tell me a little bit about what you learned in your comparative literature degree and where you see the future of digital content?”

You: “Okay sure—I’ll first tell you my key takeaway from my comparative literature degree and then my view on the future of digital content...”

From there, you can go on to answering each part of the question succinctly.

