



How do you handle a phone interview?



So you have a phone interview!

In the current climate, employers are resorting to Video Interviews, however, many will contact you by phone.

You'll be contacted by an employee, a recruiter or the hiring manager direct and they will say something such as "We would like to invite you for an initial chat with Managing Director, Mr Joe Bloggs on".

DON'T be fooled, this is not **JUST** an initial chat. This is still part of the interview process.

No time to rest and think you can easily do this as they can't see you.

You will still need to prepare for the interview. Don't fall into the trap that you can "wing it".

This document will help you with the Do's and Don'ts of a phone call interview and how to prepare for one.

How to prepare for a phone Interview:



A phone call is a screening process that employers or recruiters are judging to see if you are suitable to move to a more in-depth interview. Treat it exactly as a normal face to face interview. Here are some top tips:

1) CHECK THE INTERVIEW DATE AND TIME:

Before the day of your interview, check the date and time so you know when to be ready to answer the call. Write it down when you first receive confirmation, put it in your calendar, set a reminder on your phone, put a post-it note on the fridge. The last thing you want to do is miss the call. Being punctual is always impressive.

2) WHAT IF I CANT MAKE THE DATE AND TIME?:

It maybe that you have a clash of appointments on that day so ask to reschedule and give the person a few dates and times to choose from. Don't feel that this may lose you the opportunity, it promotes honest communication.

3) RESEARCH THE COMPANY:

You want to create a good impression. You want the caller to know that you have researched the company. Make sure that you print off or make notes. You can have these in front of you to reference what you know. Check out their website, social media and any activity they have been up to. News sections of websites are good. It might be they have been acquired recently or made an acquisition themselves.

This step can let the interviewer know you're passionate about working there. It will also allow you to think of questions you'll want to ask at the end of your interview.

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4) **KNOW WHO IS CALLING YOU:**

Do an online search to find out exactly who the person interviewing you is. What position they hold in the company. This could be a recruitment agency, a HR recruiter or your future line manager.

5) **THE JOB DESCRIPTION:**

Make sure that you fully understand the job description. What are they looking for and how will you fit in with their values and mission? This should help you to tailor make your questions and also anticipate answers that demonstrate your transferable skills and the results obtained for certain work scenario examples.

6) **LISTEN:**

Make sure you listen to what the interviewer has to say. Make notes so you can ask insightful questions and engage. Take the interview seriously and demonstrate that you are attentive to what they are saying. Answer questions that show you are listening to what is being said. Wait until they have finished, it is rude to talk over someone. Remember, when in any interview, you have two ears and one mouth, not the other way round. Listen.

7) **PROFESSIONALISM:**

Create a good impression throughout the interview. If you're hired then you will be working with this person or even people. There may be more than one person on the call. A professional tone will leave a good impression on the other end of the line.

8) **SMILE WHEN YOU ARE TALKING:**

Believe it or not, smiling can help to create a positive tone when speaking over the phone. It also can make you sound enthusiastic and keen. It is a good thing to practice it in front of a mirror or with family and friends. The person on the end of the phone can't see it but they will hear it in your voice.

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9) MAKE SURE YOUR PHONE IS CHARGED:

Charge your phone overnight or have it charged on the day of the interview. Get someone to call you to make sure it is working and receiving calls. Make sure you are ready to receive the call from 15 minutes before the start.

10) HAVE YOUR CV TO HAND:

The interviewer will definitely ask you questions about your CV. Print it off in front of you or have it on a computer screen.

11) PREPARED NOTES:

Make notes that are relevant to the role that you want to get across in the call. Make sure they are clearly written down and easy to read and access. You could have them on Post-It notes around a lap screen or typed out on a piece of paper.

12) ANTICIPATE QUESTIONS:

Have a look on line or review your experience of typical interview questions. There is a lot of help on google. Research common questions and make sure your answers follow a structure. You don't want to waffle with your answers. Most Interviewers will be asking similar questions, they are just sometimes worded differently. They are looking for adaptability, leadership, collaboration, will you fit into the organisation, prioritisation, development. Particular skills relate to particular job roles/positions.

13) HAVE YOUR ANSWERS READY:

Rehearse your answers to the questions you have anticipated. You can have them in front of you but practice so you know them off by heart. They will come in handy for interviews when you can't have the answers in front of you. So that you don't waffle, use techniques such as PAR – Problem (What was it?), Action – (What did you do?) and Result – (What was the outcome?)

How to prepare for a phone Interview:



14) **SPEAK SLOWLY AND CLEARLY:**

Take your time when answering questions. The interviewer will be listening to your phone technique and whether they are able to understand you. This is an important skill as communication is key in the majority of roles.

15) **BE CONVERSATIONAL:**

Be friendly, yet professional. You don't want to sound like a robot. Practice your answers with family or friends, even record your voice and play it back. Seek input from family and friends as to how you sound and come across and the tone of your voice. If you record yourself then play it back and listen to how you come across. Certainly at the start it may be a bit more informal with the usual pleasantries being said. Maybe talk about something topical but don't go overboard.

16) **TAKE NOTES:**

It is good practice at any interview to take notes. Normally on a face to face or video call it is polite to ask as your gaze will be away from the interviewer. Make sure you have a pen and piece of paper available. It allows you to come back to points discussed and reference parts of the conversation and to clarify or re-visit points that need clarification to remove doubt.

17) **DRESS PROFESSIONALLY:**

Just because the interviewer can't see you, doesn't mean that you shouldn't dress smart and treat this as a face to face interview. You'll actually feel more professional. Sit up straight, even standing up is also good and helps with confidence and how you come across. Lounging in your pyjamas on the sofa, lying down or even in bed is not a good idea. Take a phone interview seriously.

How to prepare for a phone Interview:



18) YOUR ENVIRONMENT:

Make sure you are taking the call and are set up in a place that is noise free and away from distractions. Create the impression that you are taking the interview seriously. No one wants to hear the TV, background music or even family or pets if possible.

19) NO DISTRACTIONS:

Make sure you have removed distractions when you are waiting for the call. Turn everything off, close tabs on your laptop that you don't need at this point. Turn off notifications and especially notification sounds. Inform family and friends that you are unavailable between the preparation time and the interview and not to contact you. You need to focus.

20) PROFESSIONAL VOICEMAIL:

In the event that the call switches direct to voicemail or something technical goes wrong, make sure that you have a professional one. If the interviewer can't speak to you then create a good professional image. "You've reached the voicemail of (your name), I am unable to take your call at the moment. Please leave your name, number and a short message and I will respond to you as soon as I possibly can. Thank you."

21) PREPARE YOUR QUESTIONS:

Prepare questions that you want to ask the interviewer. Show the interest that you have in the company and the role. Try and ask questions that are relevant and demonstrate that you take the interview, role and company seriously. Ask open ended questions so you don't just get a yes or no answer.

How to prepare for a phone Interview:



22) WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?:

This shows you are interested in the role and the company. It also allows you to place a time on a decision and what the next stage will be, so ask the question. So ask, What is the next stage after today and when can I expect to hear? You don't want to be hanging around waiting for that phone call. This allows you to focus on other things. You may be lucky and they tell you that they will be inviting you back for a video or face to face interview there and then.

23) SEND A THANK YOU EMAIL:

Soon after your phone interview, send a thank you email. Thank them for their time, include a few details that you discussed that are relevant and express your continued interest in the role. If there is also something you forgot to mention or wish to elaborate on something then this is the point to do it. Also confirm that you look forward to hearing from them in the time frame agreed.

24) FOLLOW UP:

If you haven't heard back within the time frame agreed then a gentle reminder to see where you stand and shows you are very keen still in the role. It could be they are still interviewing and they haven't made a decision yet.

This will hopefully help you with your preparation for a phone interview. It is also good practice to help you prepare for future interviews and is good experience. Learn from your mistakes and do things better next time.



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