

Phone Interviews

How employers use phone interviews

Employers use phone interviews to screen applicants they've identified as potential candidates for a position. Interviewers ask questions to review your background and to assess if you are a fit for the position and organization. A phone interview may be scheduled or unscheduled. Unscheduled phone interviews let the prospective employer know how well you can think on your feet.



In a phone interview, you don't observe visual cues. This means you have to pay more attention to intonation and tone. Telephone interviews can be as long as in-person interviews, so prepare just as you would for an in-person interview. This guide gives you strategies for managing a phone interview that will increase your chances of being chosen to continue in the selection process.

Before the Interview:

- Confirm all details (date, time, and who you will be talking to).
 - If you will initiate or receive the call
 - Who to contact if you are unable to participate due to an emergency
- Set up a professional, friendly voicemail message (hopefully you already have one). Make sure your voicemail box is not full.
- Review the position description carefully and make sure you understand the responsibilities and desired qualifications for the position. Research the company and culture.
- Practice a phone interview and record it so that you can listen to it. Use headphones for your practice interview that you can also use for your actual phone interview.
- Choose a quiet, comfortable, and private space for the interview. Be sure to communicate with others that you wish to not be disturbed. Remove all possible distractions before the interview.
- Make sure your phone is fully charged and notifications are silenced.

During the Interview:

- Use the interviewer's formal title during the conversation (Mr. or Ms. and their last name). Only use a first name if they ask you to.
- Stand up or sit up straight and smile when you speak. Your position affects the quality of your voice. (If you are sitting down or relaxing, you don't project the same readiness and intensity as when you stand up.)
- Speak slowly and enunciate clearly. Match the interviewer's speed and tone of voice to help you build rapport and be relatable on their level.
- Be enthusiastic by showing interest in the position and organization.
- Take notes (important dates, times, duties, trainings, etc.).
- Answer the questions you are asked directly and succinctly. Your answers to more complicated questions should be one to no more than two minutes in length.
- Listen to the interviewer and don't interrupt. If you have something you want to say, jot it down and mention it when it's your turn to talk.
- Keep your answers focused on experiences from your internship, class work, professional association, or other degree-related experiences. Do not use personal or friend/family-related examples or those from religious organizations.
- If you need a few seconds to gather your thoughts, don't worry, but don't leave too much dead air. If you need the interviewer to repeat the question, just ask.
- Ask relevant and targeted questions about the job and company. Show them you've researched the company and you want to know more.
- Let the interviewer end the interview.
 - Ask about the next step in the process.
 - Ask for the interviewer's email address. Send a thank you email to thank them for their time and reiterate your interest in the position. It is important to show your appreciation regardless of how the interview was conducted.

Things to have handy

- ✓ Resume and position description
- ✓ A "cheat sheet" with talking points
- ✓ Pen and paper to take notes
- ✓ Company research (with relevant information highlighted)
- ✓ Questions to ask about the company and position
- ✓ Water (in a spill-proof container)

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After the Interview:

- Follow up with a thank you email that reiterates your interest in the position the same day of the interview.
- Send materials or documents requested by the employer immediately.
- Wait before adding a potential employer on LinkedIn; connecting on social media during the interview process can be perceived as too forward.
- Unless otherwise specified, follow up with the interviewer after about two weeks to check on the status of the job selection process.
- Send a thank you note even if they notify you that you didn't get the job.
 - Thank them for their time and tell them that you enjoyed learning about their organization and the position.
 - Ask for feedback, "Would you mind providing feedback on what I can improve upon in the future?"
 - Let them know you would be interested in hearing about future opportunities.

Thank-You Email Checklist

- ✓ Thank interviewers for their time
- ✓ Personalize your message with details from your conversation
- ✓ Reiterate your interest in the position
- ✓ Thank them (again)
- ✓ Let them know you are looking forward to hearing from them
- ✓ Do a spelling/grammar check

Sources:

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Way Up (2020) [Top 20 Entry-Level Job Interview Questions and Answers](#)

Interview Sample Questions**

Visit the [Interviewing](#) page on the Career Center Resource Guide for more information on how you can prepare for an interview. Employers interview candidates by phone to narrow the field of candidates for a position before moving finalists on in the interview process, so be prepared to answer questions like the ones below.

1. Tell me about yourself/Tell me about your background.
2. What are your strengths? Your weaknesses?
3. How would your past professors or managers describe you?
4. Describe a situation in which...
 - a. You faced conflict or difficulty in either work or school*
 - b. Had difficulty or disagreed with either a supervisor or peer on a project*
 - c. You had a leadership role or project you are particularly proud of*
 - d. You handled a looming deadline*
 - e. You worked on a team*
 - f. You taught a concept to a co-worker or classmate*
 - g. Someone critiqued your work. How did you respond?*
5. Tell me about this (class / internship / activity) I see on your resume?
6. Why are you interested in this role?
7. What do you know about our company?
8. How has your internship experience prepared you for this position?
9. What were some of your favorite/least favorite classes? Why?
10. How would you assess your writing and communication skills?
11. What activities do you do outside of work or school?
12. What are your salary requirements?

*Behavior Based Questions

Interviewers want to know what you DID rather than what you WOULD do in a given situation. Use the S.T.A.R. method to help you organize specific, thoughtful, and concise answers.

S. = Situation Describe a specific event or situation from a previous job, from a volunteer experience, or relevant event.

T. = Task What goal were you working toward?

A. = Action Describe the actions you took to address the situation with appropriate detail. What specific steps did you take and what was your particular contribution?

R. = Results Describe the outcome of your actions: What happened? How did the event end? What did you accomplish? What did you learn? Include multiple positive results.

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