



TIPS ON HANDLING TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS

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More and more companies, school districts, universities and government agencies are using the telephone interview to pare down the number of applicants for a job opening. Why? The cost is minimal and the interview can be completed quickly, enabling the employer to spend more time with applicants they want to meet face-to-face.

Since you are unlikely to get a job offer from a telephone interview alone, your goal is to land an in-person interview with someone who has the authority to hire. But how can you get to that place?

Suggestions on Preparation

- Make sure, if you have not already done so, to record a professional-sounding message on your machine or voice mail.
- Have your resume (and cover letter, if applicable) with you by the phone, as well as the job description for the position in question. Also have a pen and paper handy, along with any research you have done on the employer, a list of questions you have about the job, and a calendar.
- If at all possible, sidestep a 'surprise' interview and ask to reschedule by saying you have a conflict. This way you can buy time to get better prepared.

Show Professionalism and Polish

- Turn off the TV, the computer, the radio and call waiting. Minimize distractions by taking the call in an unoccupied room.
- Don't eat, drink, smoke or chew gum during the interview.
- Stand up while speaking on the phone-it makes your voice sound stronger.
- Smile-your enthusiasm comes through in your voice.
- Work on avoiding verbal ticks like "um" and "er". Avoid jargon, such as the overuse of the word "like".

Other Tips for a Successful Interview

- Make sure you have the caller's complete name, job title, phone number and e-mail address.
- Avoid "yes" and "no" answers. This interview is your opportunity to make the employer remember you, so use it to sell yourself and to elaborate on your responses.
- Talk slowly and clearly and show confidence (this is something that can be detected over the phone).
- Find a way to fit in your knowledge to the employer. (A major complaint of employers is candidates' utter ignorance about the companies/agencies with which they interview).
- Be positive. Never bad-mouth a previous employer or school. Never say anything that could possibly offend your interviewer.
- At the end of the interview, thank them for their time, repeat how you feel your skills and experience could fit their needs, and ask if you can provide further information about yourself.
- Don't forget to formally thank your interviewer. If you found out about the job via the internet, you can send a brief email thank you. Otherwise, mail a short letter the same day as the interview.