

Tips for Mastering the Phone

Phone interviews as a first step in the interview process are here to stay. There are many advantages to conducting a first interview by phone for you and the employer. Both parties save time. As a candidate, you also eliminate the expense of travel to the company site and missed work in this scenario. In addition, it is psychologically beneficial to both parties to determine a lack of interest before too much time has been invested in the planning, preparation and travel for on-site interviews.

There are, however, many disadvantages to conducting phone interviews. First and foremost, much of human connection or chance for chemistry is lost over the line. Interviewer and Interviewee cannot gauge each other's reactions to questions and answers. Also, with less time and energy invested, it is easy to decline the next step. Finally, distractions and poor phone service can turn what should have been a good interview into a nightmare. So, how do you ensure that you make the best of your next phone interview? Here's how:

1. Plan as you would for an in-person interview. Since the phone interview is the preferred method for 90% of hiring companies, you should expect it and plan for it. Reserve time for the interview, away from your office or home distractions where you are free to listen completely and talk freely.
2. Research the company and be prepared. Don't make the mistake of taking the call on the fly, without reviewing the job description & company website, and your background as it relates to the position. This is the first interview. The decision to invite you in to formerly meet with the company rests on this call.
3. Use a landline if at all possible. Cell phones are great, but reception is often too unpredictable for an interview. Dropped calls can be annoying. In addition, it is sometimes very difficult to get a rhythm going on the phone when both parties are experiencing delays in timing, possibly talking over one another, etc. If you must use a cell phone, make sure you are in a nice quiet place and are fully charged.
4. Make up for lack of visual contact. Take some extra time to send your personality, interests, goals, character traits, etc. over the airwaves. Without the help of your facial expressions and body language, you must verbally communicate your thoughts. If you are enthusiastic and interested in what you hear, say so. If you do not hear something correctly, ask for clarification. Speak clearly and confidently.
5. Ask for feedback/Onsite Interview. As the conversation is coming to a close, ask the interviewer how you did. "Did I answer all of your questions? Is there any other information you need from me at this time? Do you feel I am a good candidate for

the position? When can I expect to hear from you?" Also, let them know you are interested in coming in to speak with them further, if you are.

With a little practice, everyone can master the telephone interview. The key to success is to recognize that this step of the process is critical, and will ultimately net you additional interviews, job offers and career choices--your goal when you took the time to create a resume.