

HOW **2** guide:

Interviewing: Phone Interviews

You probably have experience with the traditional “in-person” job interview. However, companies are increasingly using telephone interviews for the first interview. This allows them to conduct a preliminary screening of the candidates to decide who they want to advance to the next stage of the interview process. For employers, this saves them time and money (on candidate travel expenses), and enables them to screen large numbers of candidates efficiently.

For the job seeker, the challenge of the phone interview is that it is often more difficult to build rapport with the interviewer(s) since you can’t see each other. You also lose the positive elements of non-verbal communication and body language. Therefore, one key to success in the phone interview is ensuring you are prepared to answer the questions. This is the same type of preparation you would use for an in-person interview. If you haven’t already, we strongly recommend that you review our comprehensive instructional guide titled “Interviewing.”

Another key to success is utilizing your “voice” properly. Consider some of these helpful tips:

Tone – Enthusiastic, expressive, but warm. (Remember, they can’t see you smile!) Avoid monotone!

Pitch – Try to end sentences on an “up” tone.

Volume – Appropriate for the situation. Most interviewees do not speak loud enough. At the beginning of the interview, ask them if they can hear you adequately.

Tempo – Watch your pacing. Try to get in a rhythm.

Clarity – Concentrate on proper enunciation. Avoid mumbling.

Hesitation – If you feel you are struggling to find words and starting/stopping, this will sound even worse to them since they can’t see you. Prepare your answers in advance so you can answer the questions confidently.

Pauses – It is acceptable to briefly pause for emphasis or dramatic effect.

Language – Absolutely no slang or profanity. Avoid clichés and colloquialisms.

Being mindful of your speech patterns during the stress of an interview can be difficult. We suggest that you practice a phone interview with a friend and ask them to give you feedback on the areas above.

Other helpful tips:

- Clarify with the employer the time zone, the length of the interview, and who will be conducting the interview.
- If possible, use a land line, which is typically clearer and doesn’t have a delay. (Turn your cell phone off!)
- Conduct the interview in a quiet room where there will be NO interruptions or distractions.
- Write down the interviewer(s) name(s) and use it frequently. This helps build rapport.
- Dress professionally. Even though they can’t see you, it will keep you in the right frame of mind.
- Have your resume and notes organized in front of you, including the questions you want to ask at the end.
- At the beginning of the call, confirm who will call who back if you get disconnected.
- If you need time to think about an answer, let them know. Otherwise, your silence will be disconcerting.
- Place a mirror across from you. Check it periodically to ensure you are smiling. A smile on your face will produce a smile in your voice.
- Monitor the time on a nearby clock. Respect the time parameter set by the interviewer.
- Have a professional voicemail message (that includes your name,) just in case you miss the expected call.

Some companies are using “video calls” since emerging technologies, such as the Skype software application, are making it easier. It may be prudent to at least be aware of these technologies so you are ready in the event one is requested.