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HOW TO GUIDES

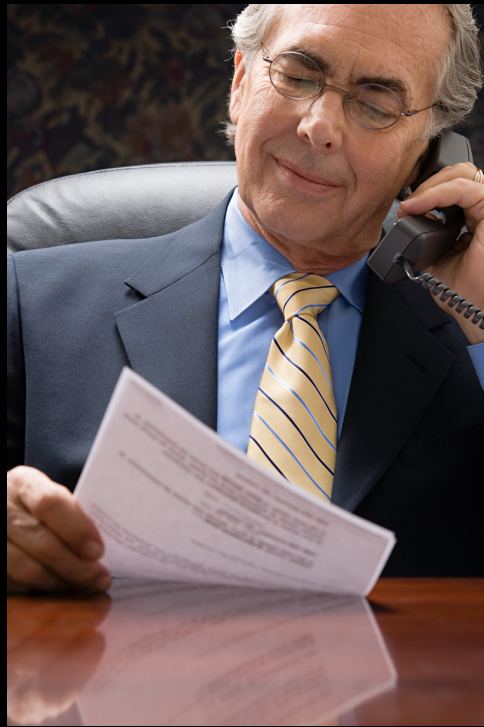
Employability Skills Guides

How to Handle a Telephone Interview

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HANDLE A TELEPHONE INTERVIEW



Telephone interviews are often used at an early stage of the student/graduate recruitment process to filter applicants and decide who to invite to an interview or assessment centre. The questions during a telephone interview are likely to focus more on your general competencies and skills, and it's a good opportunity to show your enthusiasm and commitment in a short conversation.

You could also be given a structured assessment such as a personality test over the phone. For example, your interviewer might read out a series of statements on areas such as working on your own, and ask you to rate how well these reflect your preferences.

The positive thing about phone interviews is that they are quicker and more convenient for both you and the interviewer than arranging a preliminary meeting face-to-face. From the employer's point of view, they provide useful insights into your verbal communication skills. If the job you're applying for relies as much on your personality or telephone skills as on qualifications and experience, the recruiter will be particularly interested in how you come across. However, phone interviews can be difficult because neither party can see the other, so the usual visual clues are absent.

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Research and plan your telephone interview

Be prepared. It's normal to be nervous before a telephone interview, but it will really help if you know you've done the groundwork. Make sure you find out as much as you can about the recruiter. Read the job description carefully and think about how you match the selection criteria. Write down any questions you might like to ask, as well as planning answers to those questions you think are likely to come up – especially questions such as 'Tell me about yourself' and 'What interests you in the job?'.

Practice before the Interview

Practice makes perfect. Any experience you have of using the phone in a professional context will help, for example a temporary telesales job, research during work experience or voluntary fundraising. If you feel you need more experience to build your confidence, ask a friend, a relative or someone at your careers service to help. They'll be able to give you feedback on how you come across by phone.

You could also record yourself so that you can listen back and identify any problems, such as speaking too quietly or quickly.

You can find resources to help you practise telephone interviews from [Shortlist.Me](#).

Control your environment

Turn off the telly. Let your housemates know what's going on and ask them to leave the room and give you some peace and quiet. Only use speakerphone if you're sure there will be no interruptions and you are comfortable with this way of using a phone.

Some people like to dress formally; if you feel professional you're more likely to sound professional. When the time of your interview comes round, make sure you are somewhere with a good signal and that your mobile is charged, topped up and switched on. Check that your answerphone message is appropriate and will help to create a professional first impression.

You might want to sit next to a table or desk with your notes, a copy of your application or CV, the interview details and a pen and paper to hand. Put them into a good order so that you can easily reach for information you might want to refer to.

If the call comes at an unexpected or awkward time, you could ask your interviewer to wait for a few minutes while you move to a quieter room or make other adjustments.

Alternatively, if necessary, you could arrange another time to speak, but make sure you stick to it.

If you're the one making the call, take a couple of deep breaths before you dial and remember to smile. It will come across in your voice, and you'll forget about your nerves once you're focused on the interview.

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Stay Calm

Answer clearly and at a reasonable pace. If you're asked a tricky question, take time to think you can always say something like, 'Let me just reflect on that for a moment,' to buy time.

Pauses are OK, just as in any interview. If you couldn't hear or didn't understand a question, it's fine to ask for clarification.

Be Professional

Answer the phone professionally: 'Good morning, Joe Bloggs speaking' should do the trick.

Address your interviewer as Miss, Mrs or Mr unless invited to use his or her first name.

Be animated and enthusiastic, but polite. Don't be overfamiliar and don't start chatting as if you were talking to a friend. Remember to listen carefully and try to be succinct.

It's unlikely that you will need to ring in to an interview, but if you are ringing in, think beforehand what you will say so that you don't fluff it: 'Good morning, please may I speak to Miss Jones; I have a telephone interview with her this morning.'

Remember this is only the preliminary round

Do ask questions at the end, but this is not the time for a discussion about salary, training and start

dates. You may find that the telephone interviewer is working on behalf of the employer to do the initial screen of applicants and cannot answer detailed questions about the job and company. If you progress to the next stage, you will have a chance to assess the company in more depth.

Take Notes

If you can, jot down notes during the interview, or write down what you can remember about the questions and your answers immediately afterwards, while it's still fresh. It will be a useful record to refer to when you go through to the next stage.

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Telephone Interview Turn-Offs



Lots of background noise: cafes are not good places to take the interview call. Munching and slurping: have a glass of water nearby just in case your mouth goes dry mid call, but in general don't eat or drink while taking part in a telephone interview.

Taking other calls or responding to texts: switch off your mobile if you are using a landline; switch off your landline if you are using your mobile... or move to another room.

Multitasking: resist the urge to reply to emails, check your Facebook page, make your lunch, wash up and so on. Focus only on the person at the other end of the line.

Being too laid back, literally: Don't slouch on the couch; sit up straight, as it will help you feel and sound more confident and alert. Some people find taking calls standing up immediately gives energy to their conversation.

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Contact the Careers & Employability Service



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