

Telephone & Skype Interview Tips

Telephone interviews are becoming more popular with employers, primarily as a means to prescreen job applicants. In some cases, the telephone interview is the only interview.

Telephone interviews have a different feel than in-person interviews and have to be approached from a different vantage point. In many ways, it is easier to “blow” a telephone interview than the face-to-face variety.

Visualize a face-to-face interview.

Telephone interviewees may sound unenthusiastic, because neither party can see or react to the other party’s nonverbal cues or body language. The interviewee should consciously try to sound interested and enthusiastic by visualizing yourself in a face-to-face interview. This might be difficult if you naturally speak in a monotone or soft voice.

Do not ramble.

It is easy to fall into the rambling trap because you cannot see and interpret the visual cut-off signals from the interviewer. The best way to ensure that you do not wander into a monologue is to take off your watch and keep it in front of you so that you can see how long you have been talking. Keep your responses short and crisp—90 seconds max.

Have your résumé in front of you.

If questions arise regarding your work history, your résumé should be your guide. Be careful not to read your resume verbatim. If your résumé does not outline, step by step, what you do at work, prepare a list of responsibilities, so that you can paint a strong visual image for the interviewer. Moreover, if you work in an esoteric area not well understood or easily grasped by outsiders, put your activities into a framework and language that they will understand.

Have your cover letter in front of you.

The interviewer may ask you questions generated by your cover letter. Since job hunting usually means sending out multiple applications, make sure you have a copy of the specific cover letter that you sent the employer.

Have the job ad in front of you.

This will enable you to emphasize your background and capabilities that conform to what the employer specified in the job ad. In addition, it can serve as the stimulus for good questions you can pose to the interviewer, though you should also have questions prepared in advance.

Prepare to deal with the employer’s relocation concerns.

Many telephone interviews arise, in part, because good candidates reside out of the employer’s geographic area. Be prepared to indicate (1) your intention to move to the employer’s location, (2) any ties you might have to that location, (3) the steps you have taken or will take to meet any local bar requirements, (4) your willingness to travel to the employer for a face-to-face interview, and (5) your acknowledgment that you will be responsible for interview travel expenses and relocation costs (provided you have determined beforehand that the employer does not usually cover those costs).

Use a landline.

It is best to use a landline to ensure that you do not lose the connection and flow of the interview.

Find a quiet location.

Go to a location that is quiet and where you will not be interrupted. If you are at home, make sure that barking pets, screeching birds, etc. are far from the room you are in and will remain out of hearing. If you are conducting this interview at school, **ask for a quiet space and then make sure that you can get EXCELLENT cell reception.** If necessary, ask your career office staff to use a land-line. For reasons of **confidentiality and ambiance** (quiet enough so that you can hear and be heard), conducting a phone interview at a coffee shop is not a very good idea. Similarly, airports are generally awful locations for phone interviews.

Practice.

Practice by phone with a friend or CSO counselor.

InterviewStream.

Use InterviewStream, our web-based mock interview service to practice. Though your interview will be video-recorded, you can face away from the screen and just listen to yourself when you playback your answers.

Put on your game face.

For some people, dressing in business attire, even when interviewing from home, helps to create a stronger focus and strike the right tone. What you “feel” comes through in how you talk. If you feel professional and focused, that will come through.

Get dressed.

Put on shoes that tie so that you can't kick them off and get too comfortable. Wear a suit (or at least a jacket), without stripes or plaids that may be distracting to your viewer.

Sit at a desk or table.

Sit up straight. Re-read your resume and cover letter and have them in front of you. Have pen or pencil and paper so that you can take notes.

Make sure that your phone is fully juiced or that your computer is Skype-ready.

If Skyping, make sure that whatever is behind you is NOT your laundry, your unmade bed or last night's dishes.

Even with Skype you are relying primarily on your voice.

Speak clearly, distinctly and in Standard English (or in the language in which you are being interviewed). It is unlikely that you will be interviewed in "Teen-Age Mall Rat," so avoid "I'm like, you know" which will undercut the power of your speech. Do not mumble. On the other hand, ***you are not speaking to the third balcony.*** Ask your interviewer for a sound-check at the beginning of the interview. For additional Skype interview tips, please see http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-505125_162-47541444/ace-your-skype-job-interview-14-smart-tips/.