



Job Interview—how to handle a telephone interview

A lot of employers these days use telephone interviews to identify and recruit candidates for their company. Employers use the telephone interview as a pre-screening method. Employers would like to narrow down the number of applicants who will be invited for in-person interviews. This saves them time, money for preparation and travel expenses for the candidate. For most applicants, this would be the first round of interview. It is therefore essential that you follow the correct telephone etiquettes to get through this round. It is obvious that in the telephone interview, your communication skills will be thoroughly tested.

For active job hunters, always expect a call from one of the recruiters. The call could be at an unexpected time or at an appointed time. In any case, be prepared at all times

If it is the first time for you, practice with a friend or family member and take feedback.

Some tips to help you:

Be Prepared

- Read your resume well. Remember all the points you have put down there. The dates for your education as well as employment history are important. This way, even if you get an unexpected call, you will be able to remember all the details the interviewer is questioning you about.
- Make a list of your strengths and weaknesses. This is one question most interviewers ask either directly or indirectly.
- Keep a list of your projects and achievements, along with the dates.
- If your phone interview is at an appointed time, you must keep your résumé, notes to answer technical questions, certificates and other documents handy, so that you do not take a lot of time to answer questions.
- Keep a pen and note-pad handy to take down numbers and other notes.

Body Language

- Posture is important. Stand or sit upright just as you would in a face-to-face interview. This increases your confidence.
- Your voice and tone change according to your posture. The person at the other end of the phone can always make out if you are in a slouched position or lying down and answering the call, even though they can't see you!
- Smile. A smile can be heard.

- Be casual and relaxed. If you are nervous, you will stammer a lot and not get your thought process right.

Be a good listener

- Make listening sounds like "hmm..", "yeah", "OK", "right" etc. to make the other person aware that you are listening and attentive.
- Never interrupt the other person. Instead, you can wait till the interviewer finishes speaking
- Clarify a point that you have not understood. Instead of saying "Please repeat," or "Sorry, I didn't get you," be more specific. You can say, "Are you asking about my recent project or the one I did in college?" or "I am sorry I couldn't hear the last part of your question...did you ask if I have traveled abroad?"

Communicate your intentions to the caller. Remember the caller does not know what you are actually doing:

- Explain your behavior to the caller. "I am sorry, I am driving. I can't hear you. Can I call you back in ten minutes after I park my vehicle?" "I am at work. I can't speak from my office. Can I call you later?" "Your voice is breaking up. I can't hear you well. I will go to another place and try again. Can I call you in two minutes?"
- If the phone gets cut off suddenly, call back and identify yourself again. The recruiter may not remember you. You can say, "Hi, this is Mukund. You were talking to me when the phone got cut. Can we continue with the interview or do you want me to call you another time?"
- If you want the caller to hold on, you must explain why and for how much time. "Can you hold on for a minute while I find the document you were referring to?" "Sorry, my pen is not writing. Can you hold on for a moment? I am finding another pen. Yes. I have got a pencil now. Please give me the number."

The actual Interview:

- Greet the caller. Show enthusiasm in your voice. "Yes, I am Ganesh. Yes I am ready for your questions."
- Be prepared with a frequently asked interview questions list with the answers.
- Do not speak too fast. Pause between sentences. Ask the interviewer if he/she can hear you and whether your speech is clear.
- When the interview is over, check once more if it is over and what you need to do next. "Do you have any more questions. Should I call you again? Which number should I call?"
- Thank the interviewer before hanging up.