

## Telephone Interviews

---

Telephone interviews often precede in-person interviews, and are used as a screening tool to filter out potential candidates for a position. In an employer's point of view, they are an efficient way to further narrow the candidate pool to those who will best fit the position. Naturally, telephone interviews are less in-depth and lengthy than face-to-face interviews. They can be more unnerving to the candidate due to their spontaneous nature. Keep these tips in mind to make the most of phone interviews:

- If available, consider giving the employer your landline number instead of cell. This will allow you more control over your surroundings.
- No matter which phone number you give them, make sure your voicemail message is professional and do not have a ringback.
- If you use a landline number, keep a log of which employers you are expecting (or hoping!) to hear from and brief roommates, partners, or children how to take the best message for you – possibly by letting your voicemail take the message!
- You can feel free to call them back if you are not ready for the interview at that moment, just make sure you convey your interest, find a time very soon to return the call, and make sure you follow-through on any time commitments you promise.
- It is also okay to say something like, "I'm so happy you called. I have about 10 minutes before I have to run out the door. Is that enough time, or can I call you back later this afternoon?"

### How to prepare

The first step to being prepared is to make sure you know the organization and position very well. Besides that, you will want to keep the following items handy (and preferably set up in a private, quiet place where you will be able to concentrate):

- Your resume
- Any info you have about the organization (maybe their webpage up on your computer)
- Paper and pen to take any notes you need to during the interview
- Notes to help you answer common interview questions
- A list of questions to ask the interviewer
- A glass of water

Although it may seem trivial, it may be helpful to dress in a professional manner as a way to psychologically assume the right mindset. Do not slouch or roll your eyes at any point during the interview, and remember that smiling will single-handedly enhance the tone of your voice, giving warmth and energy, which can be harder to convey over the phone!

### During the interview

- Slow down, breathe, and concentrate!
- Watch for pauses. They are dead air, unlike in a face to face interview, they cannot see you are thinking.
- Speak in a normal tone – do not use speakerphone and make sure they can hear and understand you.
- Remember to smile, sit up straight or stand, and make sure your surroundings are not distracting you!
- When the interviewer seems to have no questions left, make sure you have questions prepared to ask them.
- It is all about getting a face to face interview – let them know you are interested in meeting in person, ask the interviewer for an approximate timeline of when the company will be notifying candidates for in-person interviews.
- Hanging up can be awkward. Have a closing line planned, end on a high note, not an awkward one! Thank him/her for making the time to call you, confidently hang up.
- Then get busy writing a thank you note!

# Skype Interviews

---

To save on interviewing costs, companies are turning to their computers instead of phones and offices to conduct interviews, including using programs like Skype to conduct long-distance interviews. An in-person interview is still probably preferable, but if your prospective employer can't reimburse your travel costs, you are still at least able to be seriously under consideration if you can interview via Skype. All you need is a computer with a webcam and a microphone. Here are a few tips:

## Prepare ahead

Download the software well in advance of the interview:

- Practice makes perfect: do training/test calls with your friends to become more comfortable with using Skype
- Create a professional username
- Conduct a quick test the morning of the interview to make sure the lighting looks OK, your face is visible and the camera and the microphone are working correctly.

Give yourself plenty of extra time before the interview to make sure your Internet connection is working fine, camera is set up, the camera is at the right angle (with a laptop, it often looks like the viewer is looking up your nose!), mic works etc. Have the interviewers' names and phone numbers written down on a piece of paper in case Skype doesn't work and you have to call them.

Make sure you have at least a cell phone fully charged and ready to go in case the audio drops out of your Skype call. Ideally, have a land line ready. Be ready for any manner of technical hiccups, ranging from the audio cutting out to the picture freezing. Don't let this distract you—VOIP is never 100% reliable.

## Smile and Focus

One of the easiest rules to remember when interacting with anyone is simply to smile. There is nothing more engaging than smiling throughout your call with a friendly expression. Also important, is to make direct eye contact. When you scan the room or look away from the camera, you might appear untrustworthy or indifferent. The person with whom you are speaking deserves your full attention so make sure to stay focused and friendly.

## Choose your Colors Wisely and Look Professional

Certain colors like many shades of blue - royal, navy, sky blue - look great on video while others like reds and hot colors like magenta can be too bright. Patterns like small dots or stripes can be less attractive than solids so think about a color to wear that is easy on the eye and a pattern that won't be distracting to your viewer. Dress (at least from the waist up!) in a business suit or appropriate business attire.

## Background Check and Lighting

While you are the focus of the call and the video, remember that there will be background material that the viewer will see. Think about how your webcam is set up and what can be detected behind you. Try your best to make the background really boring (a blank wall) or make it look office-y if possible (a big potted plant, or a nicely framed, not-distracting picture would be fine). Check to be sure you have enough lighting that doesn't create shadows or throw too harsh a look into your screen.

## Script

Use the fact that you're not right there to your advantage: have a copy of your resume and some of your "problem-action-result" accomplishment stories on your lap where you can refer to them without being too distracting. (Remember at all times that you are on camera! It's very easy to forget this and start doing something hilarious or just distracting). Try to maintain some amount of eye contact with the camera—but you can briefly glance at your notes if you need to. You can also take notes in a way that's not distracting and might help you focus your answers.

## Get a Visual

Research interviewers and find photos if possible to get a visual introduction to the people who are interviewing you. It makes the interview much better if you can visualize who's interviewing you even if they aren't all on camera at one time.

*Adapted from Heather Krasna's Public Service Blog and Alison Doyle, About.com Guide*