Before, During & After the Telephone Interview...
Career Services Has You Covered!

TELEPHONE INTERVIEW
Employers use telephone interviews as a way of identifying and recruiting candidates for employment. Phone interviews are used to screen candidates in order to narrow the pool of applicants who will be invited to face-to-face interviews. They are also more efficient and minimize the expenses involved in interviewing out-of-town candidates. Your objective is to establish a rapport with the interviewer(s).

WHO CALLS WHO?
Employers typically prefer to call candidates and will arrange the interview time accordingly. However, employers may ask a candidate to call them to test their seriousness. It is important that you select an interview time that suits your schedule as you do not want an employer to call you at an agreed upon time and you are not available or only have a few minutes to talk. Don’t be afraid to reschedule your interview prior to the interview date in the event of the unexpected. Remember to clarify who will be conducting the interview so you can research them as well.

BEFORE
Prepare for a phone interview just as you would a face-to-face interview. Not doing so will result in a catastrophe for you.
- Practice Interviewing. Talking on the phone isn’t as easy as it seems. Have a friend or family member conduct a mock interview and if possible, record it. Doing this allows you to hear your “ums”, “uhs” and “okays” and practice reducing them. See the handout “Interview Questions” for a list of sample questions.
- Research the organization by utilizing several tools such as the company’s web site, current employees (if you know any) and Reference USA.
- Compile a list of your strengths and accomplishments.
- Prepare a list of questions about the job and the organization. See the handout “Interview Questions” for sample questions.
- Have a pen and paper handy for note taking.
- Turn call waiting off so your call isn’t interrupted.
- Limit distractions (e.g., kids, pets, TV) and close the door.
- Unless you’re sure your cell phone service is going to be perfect, consider using a landline rather than your cell phone to avoid a dropped call or static on the line.
- Keep your resume and list of strengths and accomplishment in clear view. Place them on your desk or taped to the wall near the telephone to reduce shuffling paper noises.
- Warm up your voice and practice smiling. A smile can be heard over the telephone.
- Have a clock nearby to monitor the time you have remaining in the interview.
- Mimic the traditional interview setting. Dress in a professional manner because when you look professional you feel confident and that feeling is verbally conveyed. Be early to the location where you are going to have the phone interview so you’re not rushed.

DURING
- Don’t smoke, chew gum, eat, or drink.
- Keep a glass of water handy in case your throat gets dry.
- Smile. Smiling will project a positive image to the listener and will change the tone of your voice.
- Know who’s on the line. If there are multiple interviewers, ask each one to identify himself or herself before posing questions.
- Speak slowly and enunciate clearly, use correct grammar and complete sentences.
- Sit upright or stand to ensure that your voice doesn’t sound too relaxed or nervous.
- Use the person’s title (Mr. or Ms. and their last name).
- Don’t interrupt the interviewer and ask them to repeat the question for clarity if necessary.
- Take your time when responding to difficult questions. It is perfectly acceptable to take a moment or two to collect your thoughts.
- Reaffirm your qualifications and end with a strong closing.
- Remember your goal is to set-up a face-to-face interview. After you thank the interviewer ask them what the next step will be (i.e., second interview, timeline, hiring date).

**AFTER**
- Take notes about what you were asked and how you answered.
- Evaluate the conversation to improve your performance for future interviews.
- Follow-up with a thank you note which reiterates your interest in the job.
- Send all requested information/material immediately.

**ADDITIONAL PHONE INTERVIEWING TECHNIQUES**

**Personality Matching Technique**
Although you obviously cannot match the interviewers’ physical characteristics, try to match the interviewers speaking rate and pitch. Remember to stay within your personality range, but venture toward that portion of your range that most closely matches that of your interviewer. This is an excellent way to establish rapport quickly over distance and phone lines.

**The Open and Available Technique**
You have a major advantage in a phone interview that does not exist in a face-to-face interview. Namely, you cannot be seen. Have all of your materials on yourself and the employer open and available on your desk. This includes not only your resume, but also a sheet with compelling story subjects you would like to introduce and a cheat sheet about the employer, including specific critical points describing the employer and their products/services/clients. Keep in mind that this preparation is not cheating at all. It is interview preparation.

**The Stand and Deliver Technique**
Here is a simple technique to increase the enthusiasm and positive image you project over the telephone: stand up. Whenever you are talking with a potential employer on the phone, stand up. It gets your blood flowing, improves your posture, and improves your response time. Keep your mind focused on your phone call. Remove all distractions from your line of sight.

**The Vanity Technique**
In preparation for a telephone interview (or any telephone contact), make sure you have a mirror within view. Why? To ensure that you are smiling throughout the phone call. You will improve your telephone presence 110 percent just by using this simple technique. You will find yourself coming across as much friendlier, more interested, and alert.
Employers are using telephone interviews with greater frequency; so take them seriously. Preparation will serve you and achieve your goal of scheduling a face-to-face interview. To schedule a mock interview, please contact your Career Counselor at 672-1098.

Sources:

