Imagine several interviewers staring at the speakerphone in front of them. They may have interviewed other candidates in person … and now it’s your turn. Telephone interviews have their advantages and disadvantages. Some employers are now using telephone interviews in their first stage of screening out candidates, so at some point in your career, you may be offered a telephone interview.

The interviewer’s impression of you will be based on your voice and your answers. You will not have the opportunity to read the body language of your interviewers, nor will you be able to communicate using all of your senses. You will also be relying on the quality of the speakerphone at the other end.

However, an advantage of telephone interviews is that you are able to have your resume / any notes right in front of you, you have the comfort of familiar surroundings and you can hide any visible signs of nerves.

INTERVIEW PREPARATION

Preparing for telephone interviews is similar to preparing for face-to-face interviews, so take the time to also read our fact sheet ‘Interview Skills’.

Don’t make your first telephone interview a practice interview. Do a few mock interviews by phone with friends or relatives and record them so that you pick up any imperfections in your answers, your tone or conciseness. UTAS Career Development and Employment (CDE) can also assist you to prepare your telephone interview performance. They can call you and ask questions relevant to the position you are going for, or complete a mock interview face to face. Bookings are via CareerHub, or email Careers.Service@utas.edu.au

PRIOR TO THE INTERVIEW

Once you start actively applying for positions, you could receive a phone call from an employer at any point. Therefore, ensure you promptly and professionally answer the phone, and consider having a simple but professional voicemail. Some employers may call to ask for a phone interview on the spot. If the time isn’t convenient, or you do not feel prepared, ask if you could talk at another time and suggest some alternatives.

Make sure you create a comfortable and quiet location in which you can concentrate on the questions from the interviewer. If you live with others, let them know you have a phone interview, and ask that they keep the house quiet at that time. Try to locate the telephone next to a large table or desk where you can lay out all the material you want to use in the interview. If using your mobile, make sure it is fully charged!

Things you may want to have ready:

- your current resume, cover letter, selection criteria responses;
- a few examples of your experience, skills and achievements;
- your employer research (all dot pointed to prompt you);
- a notepad and pen;
- a glass of water; and
- a watch and calculator may also be useful.
Some people suggest that you dress as you would if the interview were face-to-face; thereby creating a professional atmosphere and making you really feel the part. Standing up for the interview can be useful because it can make you feel more authoritative. The main aim though is to be comfortable.

WHEN THE TELEPHONE RINGS

- Introduce yourself, greet the interviewer/s and thank them for offering you the interview. Perhaps write down their names to prompt you if needed.
- Speak slowly and clearly (not in a monotone voice) and at a level that can be heard. Check with the panel that the sound and noise level from your end is clear before you begin.
- Try to make the interviewer/s feel at ease – they probably don’t like the telephone interview process any more than you do.
- During the telephone interview you will be judged by the same non-verbal criteria used in an in-person interview, that is, self-confidence, enthusiasm for the position and pleasant personality. In a telephone interview, the interviewer/s will determine these attributes solely by the sound of your voice and your level of friendliness and engagement with them.

OTHER USEFUL TIPS

- Answers to questions should not be long-winded. Note down the key points of the question as it is read to you and then respond to the question taking care to address each aspect of it. It is vitally important that you use examples of your skills and knowledge that evidence your abilities clearly.
- Be concise. You won’t be able to see whether the interviewer’s eyes have glazed over or if they have nodded off in response to your answer. Also, be aware that some conference links sound very empty when no one is speaking. Don’t be put off by the silence, but tell the panel you are pausing or thinking. Equally for the employers, they could be busy scribbling down your responses before they ask you their next question. If you are concerned about their silence, ask if there is another element of the question they would like you to address.
- Guide the interviewer/s by highlighting main points so they don’t drift away from focusing on you and your talents. Summarise key points at the end of each question.
- Always seek clarification of a question if you are not sure you heard it correctly.
- At the end of the interview, reiterate your key attributes and reasons why you should be considered for the position, and thank the panel for their time.

Good luck with your interview!

CONTACT US

Career Development and Employment offer support across all UTAS campuses. You can contact us by email or phone.

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