

Step 11: How to Prepare for a Phone Interview

Before your face-to-face interview with a panel of interviewers, a recruiter may contact you via a phone call to clarify some detail in your resume, or to get a feel of your personality before the actual interview. In some instances, a phone interview may be conducted before a face-to-face interview is offered.

A phone interview can either be scheduled, where your recruiter gives you prior notice, or unscheduled, with a call out of the blue to see how you handle the pressure of being put on the spot. Even when your phone interview is scheduled you should make adequate preparations to prepare for an unscheduled call.

If you receive an unscheduled call and are not in the appropriate environment, it's ok to say something along the lines of "It's great to hear from you, I'm out right now/ not at my desk, etc. and I won't be able to give this call the full attention it deserves. When is an appropriate time to call you back?" Make sure you also have a professional voicemail message.

Here are steps to take, preparing for a phone interview:

- **Do Your Research**

Prepare for your interview by researching your prospective employer and interviewer. Write out details you have discovered in a notepad, and create postcards that contain vital information that you can easily reach during the interview. A common question asked is "what do you know about us?" You should also prepare questions with two purposes in mind: to gather information needed to decide if the company is the right fit for you, and to show you are serious about the position.

- **Prepare for The Call**

- **Create a Conducive Environment:** Choose a room or a section of your home that you can set up as a meeting spot. Ensure the spot you choose has a strong signal strength. Get a table and organize all the research clearly and within reach. Print out your resume and highlight key areas you want to focus on.
- **Change Your Voicemail:** Create a professional sounding voicemail. Don't do bits or make your voicemail a prank message.
- **Keep Your Phone Around:** Keep your phone charged and always within reach. The last thing you want is to miss a scheduled phone interview—choose a ringer that is loud enough to wake you up.
- **Eliminate Distractions:** Keep your location noise-free and absent of distractions such as pets and young children. Absolute concentration is required to really ace any interview, especially one where your interviewer cannot be seen.

- **During the Call**

- **Be Courteous:** Address your interviewer by their title (Mr., Mrs., and Ms.) and their last name, unless they specify a name they wish to be addressed by.
- **Listen Attentively:** Keep note of everything the interviewer says—keep a notepad around to jot down details. The interviewer will likely discuss expectations, the requirements to be successful in the company and job role and any major challenges you will potentially face in the position. Taking notes will allow you to answer them properly when it's your turn to talk.
- **Answer Clearly:** Your voice can make or break an interview, so before the call, drink a lot of water to clear your throat. When you speak, be sure to project—choose a perfect position to maximize the clarity of your voice. Stand during the call, or sit with a perfect posture to ensure you are audible.

- **Smile:** Without the advantage of visual cues, you must rely only on your voice to make a good impression. People can tell when you sound frustrated during a call, so make an effort to smile while speaking. Test it out yourself by leaving two identical voicemail messages, one while smiling and another without. Smile as you talk about your work accomplishments, enthuse about the company and while asking questions.
- **Concluding A Call:** End on a positive note, showing your enthusiasm and interest in a face-to-face meeting and landing the role. Say something along the lines of “thanks for the call. Based on what we discussed, I believe I can fill this role. I’m very interested in this position and would be happy to meet you in person. What’s the next step?”

- **After the Call**

After the call, you can send a courtesy Thank-You note to your interviewer. Your note should be brief, thanking them for their time. You may also send a ‘chaser’ email telling your interviewer you look forward to having a real sit-down for further discussions. Avoid sending more than two emails to avoid spamming your recruiter.