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# The Telephone & Virtual Interviews

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## THE TELEPHONE & VIRTUAL INTERVIEWS

With tighter budgets and the cost of recruiting increasing, many companies are using the phone and Skype to screen applicants or to conduct entire interviews. These interviews are used for two main purposes: to follow up after on-campus interviews or to evaluate candidates they have not seen in person for an initial screen. Organization and good preparation are the keys to success for these types of interviews.

### PREPARATION FOR THE TELEPHONE INTERVIEW

In the days leading up to the time when the interview will take place, answer the phone in a professional manner as though you were in a business setting, i.e., "Good morning, this is Sam Jones." Warn roommates and others of your expected call so that they understand that you need privacy.

Sit or stand using good posture. This positively impacts your telephone language by helping you be more alert both in listening to the interviewer and in giving your responses.

Be prepared to take a telephone interview during day or evening hours, sometimes as late as 9:00 or even 10:00 p.m., and even on weekends. Phone interviews can last anywhere from 20 minutes to one hour in length. When picking up the phone, respond pleasantly and professionally. It is important to have a good first impression even though the interviewer cannot see you. Treat this interview as seriously as a face-to-face meeting. Energy and enthusiasm are important to convey in a telephone interview.

If the interviewer calls at an inconvenient time, ask the caller for permission to leave the line so that you can close the door or move to another room if necessary. If you need to move to another location which would require you to leave the line for a longer period of time, politely ask for the caller's name and number and promptly return the call after preparing.

### REFERENCE MATERIALS

Keep these key items near the telephone during that time in which you are job seeking. It is useful to conduct a mock interview to help yourself have the best set-up of the following items.

1. Pad of **paper** and **pen**. You may want to write down key notes or points before the call so that you can fill in information during the call.
2. Your **resume**, so you can follow along with the recruiter if he/she asks you questions regarding your resume.
3. Your **college catalog, curriculum** and **transcript**.
4. The **cover letter** you sent the company, as well as **company literature**.
5. Your **calendar** and **course schedule**.
6. **Checklist** of the information you wish to find out from the company, as well as a list of your questions.

## ENDING ON A POSITIVE NOTE

At the end of the interview, the interviewer will explain what you can expect to happen next:

- A letter or email within two weeks
- Another contact from the caller
- A telephone call from someone else in the company

Express appreciation for the telephone interview. At this time, offer to send extra copies of your resume, transcripts or other materials that might be helpful to them in their hiring process.

Make sure that you have the caller's correct name, title, email and phone number before the call is ended, so that you can follow-up with him/her on any questions you have, as well send the person a thank you note or email.

## HELPFUL HINTS

- Treat all calls from any staff member as equally important. Opinions of receptionists and other professional staff are highly valued by managers.
- Do you have a list of questions prepared about the company and the opportunity that you can refer to when caught in "dead air"? Although good communication seems to be up to both of you, typically that dead air will be *your responsibility* to fill.
- The person on the other end of the phone may be just as uncomfortable as you are. Try not to concentrate on your feelings of nervousness and focus on how to make the conversation flow as smoothly as possible. Most people do not like the telephone interview process -- remember that it works both ways.
- Smile over the phone. Believe it or not, smiling while you are talking will actually help you sound more friendly and open.
- During the telephone interview, you are judged by the same criteria used in an in-person interview, (i.e., self-confidence). Self-confidence is judged differently by phone than in-person (where eye contact, for example, can be an excellent barometer). Instead, you'll be judged by a much more subtle set of factors -- the sound of your voice, your level of friendliness and enthusiasm, etc. Remember to be confident!
- Answer "This is (s)he" when the caller asks for you.
- Write a brief thank-you note or email in follow-up to the interview. Reiterate your strong points, refer to one or two specific topics which were discussed and close by thanking the person for taking the time to talk with you about your qualifications. Sometimes you can change the interviewer's neutral or negative opinion of you by taking these positive steps; this type of courtesy always reinforces a positive opinion.

## PREPARATION FOR THE SKYPE/VIRTUAL INTERVIEW

Virtual interviews using Skype or other video conferencing tools are increasingly being used in order to save companies time and travel costs. They are very similar to phone interviews in that they are typically used to conduct a first-round interview with a candidate. So, they typically last anywhere from 30 minutes to one hour in length.

Many of the tips mentioned above for phone interviews by way of preparation can also be applied to Skype interviews. The difference, however, is with respect to the technology involved and the fact that it is a face-to-face connection with one or more people on your computer screen.

Be sure to download Skype and get familiar and comfortable using the software. Send your Skype name (make sure it's professional!) and information to the interviewer/potential employer so that you can connect with one another in advance of the interview. Before the start of the interview, it is very important to make sure the technology is running smoothly. Test the internet connection and consider using an ethernet port instead of going wireless for a more stable connection. Run some audio and visual tests to make sure your microphone is working and that you appear clearly on the screen with a face-on view of your head, shoulders and hands (as opposed to the camera being angled upward toward your face). Make sure your background is a neutral and professional setting, and that the lighting is even and flattering to you so that the interviewer(s) can see you well.

Dress professionally and be aware of your non-verbals, such as setting up straight, leaning in and conveying energy and enthusiasm through your responses. Be sure to look directly at the webcam instead of the screen. By doing so, it will appear to the interviewer(s) that you are looking straight on at him/her.

Reference: Levin-Epstein, Amy. **Ace Your Skype Job Interview: 14 Smart Tips**. CBS News.  
[http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-505125\\_162-47541444/ace-your-skype-job-interview-14-smart-tips/](http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-505125_162-47541444/ace-your-skype-job-interview-14-smart-tips/)