Interviews: Phone Interviewing

Employers use the telephone interview as a way of identifying and recruiting candidates for employment. Telephone interviews are often used to screen candidates in order to narrow the pool of applicants who will be invited for in-person interviews. They are also used as a way to minimize the expenses involved in interviewing out-of-town candidates.

While you're actively job searching, it's important to be prepared for a phone interview on a moment's notice. While the majority of telephone interviews are pre-arranged and scheduled, keep in mind that a recruiter or a networking contact might call at any time and ask if you have a few minutes to talk.

Be Prepared to Interview

Prepare for a phone interview just as you would for a regular interview. In addition, plan on being prepared for a phone conversation about your background and skills.

- Sit at a desk in a straight backed chair.
- Keep your resume in clear view so it's at your fingertips when you need to answer questions.
- Have a short list of your accomplishments available to review.
- Have a pen and paper handy for note taking.
- Turn call-waiting off so your call isn't interrupted.
- Clear the room of people and pets. Turn off the music and the TV. Close the door.
- Consider using a landline rather than your cell phone to avoid a dropped call or static on the line.
- Wear business attire, even though the interviewer cannot see you. It can help you feel and sound more professional.

Practice Interviewing

Talking on the phone isn't as easy as it seems.

- Have a friend or family member conduct a mock interview and record it so you can see how you sound over the phone.
- Practice reducing the "ums" and "uhhs" and "okayss" from your conversational speech.
- Rehearse answers to typical questions you'll be asked.
- Contact the Pomerantz Career Center about using InterviewStream for practice.

During the Phone Interview

- Don't chew gum, smoke, eat, or drink.
- Do keep a glass of water handy, in case you need to wet your mouth.
- Smile. Smiling will project a positive image to the listener and will change the tone of your voice.
- Listen to the questions carefully. If you are unsure of the question ask for it to be repeated or for clarification.
- Speak slowly and enunciate clearly.
- Use the person's title (Mr. or Ms. and their last name.) Only use a first name if they ask you to.
- Don't interrupt the interviewer.
- Take your time - it's perfectly acceptable to take a moment or two to collect your thoughts.
- Give focused answers.
- Remember your goal is to set up a face-to-face interview. After you thank the interviewer ask what the next step is in the selection process.