

Telephone Interviews

The key to performing well in any interview, whether it is face to face or over the phone, is to prepare well. The difference with telephone interviews is that you may not get much warning. So just in case make sure that you do the preparation well in advance and keep any information to hand in an accessible place – preferably next to the phone.

Before the interview – preparing yourself

- Research the organisation that you are applying to and record your findings in a way that will be useful to you during the interview – this could be a mind map or it may be company literature that you highlight or mark to identify the relevant information.
- Be clear about what they are looking for – a copy of the job description and person specification will be useful.
- Think about how you might answer specific questions. See our interview guide for more information or come along to one of our workshops. You could also book a mock interview with one of our advisers.
- Prepare examples of how you meet their requirements – this could be situations where you have demonstrated a specific skill or evidence of your significant achievements.
- Know what you have told them already and be prepared to discuss this and elaborate on your answers. Have a copy of your completed application to hand.
- Prepare a list of questions that you might like to ask the interviewer.

Before the interview – preparing your environment

- If at all possible try to give a telephone number which is only answered by you, preferably a landline. If you are taking the call on your mobile, make sure that your phone is fully charged and that you have a good signal.
- Try to take the call in a room where you will not be disturbed. If necessary put a 'do not disturb' note on the door.
- Avoid taking a telephone interview outside of your comfort zone. You should always try to have control over where you take the call to ensure that you will not be interrupted or distracted, or where ambient noise could interfere with your conversation.
- If you are contacted unexpectedly asking you to interview and it is not convenient or you are not prepared, then it is OK to ask for an alternative date. Make sure that you let them know that you are still keen and interested.
- If you have been notified in advance, make a note of your interviewer's name.
- Just in case you miss the call, make sure that your answer phone / voicemail message sounds professional.
- If you miss their call, phone back as soon as possible. Be prepared to undertake the interview immediately or offer alternative dates if that is not convenient for them.

- If you need to leave a message ensure that you give your name, the title of vacancy applied for, your apologies and your telephone number. Make sure that you let them know that you are still interested.

In addition you should have to hand:

- A notepad and pen to make important notes during or after the interview.
- A copy of your completed application form or CV and any notes that you have made.
- Your diary. If your diary is on your phone you may wish to keep a paper copy so that you can check your availability for the next stage of the assessment process without compromising the call.
- A glass of water in case your mouth dries up.

The interview

- You might find it helps to dress as if you are attending a face to face interview. You are more likely to sound professional if you feel professional. Wearing your interview suit may help get you into the right mind-set.
- Answer the phone professionally. Something like “Good morning, Joanna Bloggs speaking” will set the right tone and the caller will know they are through to the right person.
- Smile. Your interviewer may not be able to see it but psychologically it will make you feel more positive and enthusiastic and this will come across in your voice.
- It may help if you stand up as it may make you feel more in control. However, take care not to walk around as this may affect your voice and it will take you away from your carefully prepared notes.
- Listen carefully to what your interviewer has to say. Make a note of your interviewer’s name. If you do not understand a question, ask for it to be repeated or rephrased.
- Throughout the interview, try to convey your enthusiasm for the role. Remember, the interviewer cannot see you so you have to find other ways to ensure that they are in no doubt about your interest.
- Remember to speak clearly. You cannot rely on facial expressions or hand gestures to clarify what you are saying so make sure you give full answers which convey exactly what you mean.
- At the end of the interview you are likely to be asked if you have any questions. Refer to your list of prepared questions but use only those that have not been covered during the interview.
- Finally, thank your interviewer for their time and for the opportunity to interview for the job. Reaffirm your interest in the role and ask what you can expect to happen next and when. Aim to end the interview on a positive note.
- Ideally, as you would following any interview, send an email to say thank you and restate your interest.