

# Telephone interview Guide

## TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS

Telephone interviews are becoming an increasingly popular screening method used by Recruitment Agencies and Employers as an early stage selection process. Previously a great CV would earn you a face to face interview but now you also need to impress on the phone to be granted a face to face meeting with the client.

So, why are telephone interviews becoming increasingly popular? The reasons are numerous & can include:

- Telephone being an essential part of the position so is a vital part of the selection process
- Sheer volume of candidates and a quicker & fairer way to narrow a shortlist
- Number of positions a company is looking to and therefore a quicker way to screen a large shortlist
- To shorten the recruitment process and replace a 2 stage face to face interview with a phone and face to face interview.

No matter what the reason – telephone interviews are here to stay so it's essential to understand how to prepare for them; what to expect and what you can do to make sure you come across as well as possible.

This guide will run through essential tips and advice on:

- How to prepare for a telephone interview
- How to set-up Your Environment
- You
- What to expect
- Questions you may get asked
- Questions you should ask

## PREPARATION

Preparation is the key to any successful interview. If you are confident in yourself, the company and have an idea of what to expect then you are more likely to be in the best frame of mind to focus on the questions and provide knockout answers.

### So, what to prepare?

The limiting factor of a telephone interviews is that you can't assess body language. Body language not only helps build rapport but employers use it as a way to assess your reaction to tougher questions. For this reason most telephone interview questions will be none competency based and will mainly explore your CV and experience in relation to the role requirements.

### Your CV and the Job description

As a result, your preparation should focus on your CV and the job description. Be confident talking about every little detail on your CV and make sure you are able to expand on all points mentioned. You need to thoroughly read the job description and be comfortable with the requirements of the role and have examples of where you have performed similar duties or have transferable skills.

### The Company

As ever it's essential that you have thoroughly researched the company – this should include their history and heritage, products and/or services, USP (unique selling points), management structure, significant timelines and any news articles. If you have the time, dig a little deeper and use search engines, blogs, news streams to uncover further information that isn't on their website which shows a higher level of research. Don't think because it's a short interview that you don't need to prepare properly – this is where a lot of interviewee's fall down. You need to impress a client at every step through the recruitment process and demonstrating that you have done your research say's a lot about you, your commitment and desire. Employers look to recruitment individuals who not only "can" but also "wants" to do the job so

demonstrating that you have done research on the organisation can put you at a significant advantage over your competition.

Google the interviewer and management team as this helps to understanding their backgrounds – LinkedIn can be useful for this.

In general, telephone interviews are shorter than face to face interviews because they are only a screening stage. Because you have a much shorter amount of time the “first impression” factor can become more important. This is why it is so critical to be on your A-game for telephone interviews. If you are well prepared and have answers to every part of your CV; their role and the organisation then you’ll be feeling full of confidence. If you feel confident; you’ll more than likely sound confident and that’s that creates the perfect first impression.

Don’t forget to build rapport – this can be difficult on the phone as you can’t judge the other person’s reaction to your questions or answers but try to liven up your voice and what you say (without being too jokey).

### **YOUR ENVIRONMENT**

This is a very significant factor in telephone interviews and one that is often over looked. You should consider the following:

A room or environment that you are comfortable in and know you won’t be disturbed

Ideally a landline or if you are using a portable make sure it’s a good quality one. If you need to use a mobile make sure you get a good signal and you have plenty of battery power.

Try to avoid squashing in the interview at work or in your car over lunch or at the end of the day. However, if there is no other options then make sure you can find a quite room, space in a car-park where you can focus on the call and not have to worry about being over-heard or distractions.

### **Notes**

Do all you can to avoid having notes around! If you have prepared properly you shouldn’t need your CV, job description or notes about the company to hand. If you have to read your notes then it will come across in your delivery – worse still if you are shuffling pieces of paper around you will sound flustered, unprepared and unorganised. If you must have them around as a “security blanket” make sure they are all on separate pieces of paper clearly laid out in order so you can refer to them quickly without too much disruption but we strongly recommend doing without and put your energy and effort into your preparation.

### **YOU**

**Your cloths** – make sure you dress well! Be in something that you feel confident but relaxed in. Doesn’t matter whether it’s your best business suit or clubbing gear; if you think you look sharp; you’ll sound more confident. If you are still in your pj’s or scruff’s and totally relaxed then this will be reflected in your speech.

**Stand-up** – this helps to life the voice, especially if you are monotone Standing helps to add the inflections and pitch into your voice and tone; something that for a telephone interview is vital

**Smile** – again this can help lifts the tone of voice. Smiling can make you feel jollier and this can always help - but be careful not to turn into the stand-up comedian. Everybody loves a joker but you wouldn’t always hire one.

Look into a mirror is a techniques used in telesales and can really help – if you look good and feel good, looking into a mirror will only re-enforce those thoughts and will help you keep the confidence.

## WHAT TO EXPECT

Although its impossible to predict what you are going to be asked, if the interview is with a client and has been arranged by a Recruitment Organisation then they should be able to provide information on the style of the interviewer and what they are likely to ask. If its something that has been arranged direct with a company then there is nothing wrong with emailing and ask what they will go through. You won't get a list of questions but they should give you an idea of what they'll cover.

In general, telephone interviews are more informal than face to face interviews but this isn't always be the case. Prepare for a full-on formal interview and you can't go wrong. Try to build rapport or break the ice as early as possible. Being well prepared on the company or interviewer can really help here.

The style of the interview can often be determined by who is on the call. If the telephone interview is with HR then it may be slightly more formal and quite short. HR will probably be doing a first stage screening process for the actual hiring manager and in this case they will probably look to ask questions based around the job description and your performance. If it's a sales or target driven job make sure you are well prepared to answer questions on your performance and sales figures as this may play a major part in the questions.

If the interview is with the actual Hiring Manager then the call may be slightly more informal and a more open discussion based about what you know.

The length of the interview can also vary quite considerable and can often range from 10-15mins to 1hr or more. Generally they are 30mins or less and are just a confirmation of whether you have the right skills for the position and can demonstrate an ability to communicate and desire to want the job. However, for more senior level positions telephone interviews can be quite long and will often involve two or more people.

Always be prepared for questions about why you have moved on from previous positions. There is nothing wrong with moves but you need to back this up with clear and confident answers about why positions ended or you moved on. NEVER bad-mouth a previous manager or employer – be truthful in your reasoning but take feeling/emotions out of your answers.

## QUESTIONS YOU MAY GET ASKED

As most telephone interviews are used as a quick "get to know you" call or to screen against a specific job description then they don't tend to be competency based. You can generally expect questions about:

- You and your background
- Current job & responsibilities
- Performance (particularly for sales)
- Motivation for applying and looking to move from your current position
- Confirmation you understand what the role entails, location, salary details etc..
- What you know about the company

## WHAT QUESTIONS SHOULD I ASK

I would recommend asking any questions you may have on the role and/or expectations.

The face to face interview is a better place to ask questions about the company, culture etc..

Don't forget to say that you really want the position and are exciting about the opportunity. Interview nerves can sometimes prevent your enthusiasm coming across in your voice so it's always best to close the interviewer by letting them know you are interested to proceed and asking them about the next stage, timescales.

**NEXT.....**

Hopefully you this will help you get through to the next stage.

BUT, don't be lulled into a false sense of security; a successful telephone interview is entirely different from a face to face and just because you got on well with the interviewer on the phone doesn't mean the face to face interview will go the same way. A good telephone interview is a great ice breaker but there are likely to be other interviewers at the face to face stage so it's an entirely different situation. Use the rapport developed on the phone to help break the ice at f2f interview but still expect a formal selection process and often new people to develop rapport with.