

## Phone Interview Guide

There are occasions when an interview happens over the phone. Many companies use a phone screen with a recruiter as the initial step in the hiring process. This is a critically important part of your job search. The recruiter will ask you about your background, skills and experience to see if it's well-aligned with the open position. They may also be screening to see if you would be a good culture fit for the company. If all goes well, the recruiter will move you onto the next stage. But if they come away with a poor or incomplete impression of you, things are unlikely to progress.

The next stage of the interview process is also typically conducted over the phone. In this phase, you will likely speak with the hiring manager or another individual on the team that's hiring. This interview is usually more in-depth than the phone screen as the interviewer has a deeper knowledge of the open role and what qualifications would make someone successful in it.

Both of these interviews usually last around 30 minutes. Consider phone interview your opportunity to sum up what's most attractive to you about the job and the company, as well as the skills and qualifications you bring to the table.

### Phone interview tips

Phone interviews are just as important as in-person or virtual interviews, so adequately preparing for them can influence your success. If your interviewer chooses to do an initial phone interview, being successful in this first round can ensure you move onto the next. Here are tips to consider when preparing for a phone interview:

- 1. Confirm the scheduled time**

Before the day of your interview, confirm the date and time so you're sure to pick up when the call comes in. Writing down the scheduled time, adding it to your calendar or setting it as a reminder on your phone are great ways to make sure you are ready for the scheduled interview. Your punctuality can help make a good impression on your prospective employer.

- 2. Reschedule, if necessary**

If you're unable to meet at the suggested time, consider suggesting other times that are more convenient for you. Offer your interviewer a few days and times that work well for you, and then discuss a time you both find accommodating.

- 3. Research the company**

Review the company's website, social media and recent activity to learn more about its values, goals and company culture. Knowing the company, you're interviewing with provides you with good insight to use during the interview. Make a note of certain details about the company, and mention them should the opportunity arise. For example, if the company recently made an acquisition, you can mention this when the interviewer asks you what you know about the company.

- 4. Know who will be calling you**

In many cases, you'll be interviewing with a recruiter, hiring manager, or your direct supervisor. Do an online search to determine your interviewer's role at the company. If you're interviewing with a recruiter, you'll get more general questions regarding your experience. An interview with

your direct supervisor, however, means you'll get in-depth questions related to your industry and role.

**5. Look over the job description**

Understanding what the employer is looking for in an employee and what your responsibilities will be can help you tailor your answers to various interview questions. If they're looking for an employee with certain design software skills who has experience creating graphics for B2B companies, you'll want to mention this during your interview.

**6. Be an active listener**

Be attentive, ask insightful questions and engage with the recruiter. This will show that you're taking the interview seriously and that you genuinely care about what they have to say. Practicing with friends or family could be beneficial. Make sure you're listening to every word, and follow-up with questions that show you were actively listening to what they were saying.

**7. Be professional**

It's important to be respectful and kind throughout your interview. This professional tone can leave a good impression on your interview, and they'll remember that as they consider their hiring decision. Depending on who you're interviewing with, if you're hired, they'll also be your future colleague, so it's important to be professional and eloquent in your tone and answers.

**8. Smile**

Even though you'll be speaking over the phone, smiling during your interview can promote a positive tone in your voice. Though your interviewer won't be able to see your smile, they'll be able to hear it.

**9. Consider your salary expectations**

It is common for employers to ask about your salary expectations early in the interview process. Research the average salary in your industry when considering what you would like to get paid, but be reasonable. It's wise to offer them a salary range within \$5,000. For example, "I'm hoping to make between \$60,000 and \$65,000." Further, you may ask what is included in the package of the offer.

**10. Charge your phone**

If you're using your cell phone for the interview, make sure it is fully charged and in working condition the day of your interview. It's also a good idea to do a test call. Have someone call you to make sure your line is clear, your voice is articulate, and that your phone call accepts calls. Be ready 10-15 minutes before the actual interview time.

**11. Have your resume and portfolio ready**

It's possible the interviewer will want to ask you questions related to your resume or portfolio. Make sure you have all the necessary documents for reference.

**12. Prepare your notes**

If there are certain things you want to mention during your interviews, such as your specific job duties at a previous employer or your qualifications and how they meet the job description, make a note of it as you reference your resume and portfolio.

**13. Consider possible interview questions**

Many interview questions fall into the same categories: adaptability, leadership, collaboration, culture fit, prioritization and development. Determining the questions, they might ask can help you gain confidence since you'll know what to expect.

**14. Prepare your answers to common interview questions**

Reflect on your experiences and think about examples that you might want to share of your past that demonstrates how you behave in a professional setting.

**15. Speak clearly**

Carefully articulate your words and take your time as you answer each question. Interviewers may be better able to understand you and observe your communication skills.

**16. Be conversational**

Maintain a friendly yet professional tone rather than sounding rehearsed. Practice your answers to common interview questions with friends and family or record yourself speaking. During your interview, be polite and prepare to engage in small talk to warm up.

**17. Take notes**

Taking notes throughout the interview can help you remember important matters the interviewer discussed. Have a pen and paper or use your computer for note-taking.

**18. Find a quiet environment**

Find a quiet space where you'll be able to hear the interviewer loud and clear. Career Services has an interview room that is available for student use. It is appropriate for phone or virtual interviews. This space can be reserved by emailing [careerservices@smumn.edu](mailto:careerservices@smumn.edu) or Shelly Schell at [sshell@smumn.edu](mailto:sshell@smumn.edu).

**19. Set a professional voicemail**

In the event you can't answer the phone when they initially call, leave a good impression by having a professional and friendly voicemail. For example, "Hi, you've reached \_\_\_\_\_. I'm sorry I missed your call. Please leave a detailed message and a call back number, and I'll get back to you as soon as possible, Thank you."

**20. Prepare the questions you want to ask**

Interviewers want to know you're interested in the position you're applying for. Display your interest by asking insightful questions at the end of the interview.