Why do employers use phone interviews?

Phone interviews are cost effective and take less time than a live interview. In addition, they provide convenience to the interviewee. Some employers use phone interviews in the screening process before bringing the “finalist candidates” on-site. Unscheduled phone interviews let the prospective employer know how well the candidate can think on their feet. Phone interviews are used to confirm resume information, ask basic questions, and inquire about reasons for leaving the previous employer. Overall, the employer is trying to gauge whether you, the position, and the organization are a good fit.

Before the Interview:

- Confirm all details (date, time, and who you will be talking to). Be sure you know whether the interviewer is calling your or if you need to make the call.
- Keep a log of everywhere you apply to so that you can aptly answer if you are called unexpectedly.
- Practice going through a phone interview.
- Record a professional message for your answering machine or voice mail.
- Dress the part for the interview. Experts say if you’re dressed in a professional manner, you’ll speak the same way.
- Use a landline when possible. You don’t want to have to worry about a dropped call.
- Choose a quiet, comfortable, and private space for the interview. Be sure to communicate with others that you wish to not be disturbed. Turn off all distractions before beginning the interview.
  - If you need to reserve a quiet space on campus, plan ahead and check availability at the Center for Career and Professional Development, the Academic Success Center, or the library.
- Have all your tools organized in front of you:
  - Resume, transcript, and position description
  - A “cheat sheet” with a brief list of your qualifications, strengths, and skills relevant to the job you’re interviewing for
  - Pen and paper to jot the interviewer(s) name(s) down immediately and to take notes
  - Company research (with relevant information highlighted)
  - Questions to ask about the company and position
  - A loosely written outline of points to make or items to cover as you talk about the position
  - A glass of water
During the Interview:

- Use the interviewer’s formal title during the conversation (Mr. or Ms. and their last name). Only use a first name if they ask you to.

- If you are able, stand up to talk. Your position affects the quality of your voice. If you are sitting down or relaxing, you don’t project the same readiness and intensity as when you stand up.

- Speak slowly and enunciate clearly.

- Be enthusiastic by showing interest in the position and organization.

- Take notes (important dates, times, duties, trainings, etc.).

- Talk only when necessary. Since you lack the visual cues of body language to assess whether you’ve said enough, mark the end of your response with a question such as, “Would you like more details of my experience as an intern with XYZ Company?”

- Listen to the interviewer and don’t interrupt. If you have something you want to say, jot it down and mention it when it’s your turn to talk.

- Ask pertinent and targeted questions about the job and company. Show them you’ve researched the company and you want to know more.

- Keep your answers focused on experiences from your internship, class work, professional association, or other degree-related experiences. Do not use personal or friend/family-related examples or those from religious organizations.

- If you need a few seconds to gather your thoughts, don’t worry, but don’t leave too much dead air. If you need the interviewer to repeat the question, just ask.

- Let the interviewer end the interview. Make sure to ask what the next step in the process will be. Also ask for the interviewer’s email address. Then you should thank them for their time and reiterate your interest in the position. It is important to show your appreciation regardless of how the interview was conducted.

- Do not:
  - Ask the interviewer if he/she can call you back later
  - Ramble on so the interviewer can’t interject or ask more questions
  - Put an interviewer on hold to take a call waiting
  - Eat, drink, or chew gum
  - Type on your computer

After the Interview:

- Within 48 hours after the interview, send out an email thanking the interviewer for their time.

- Unless otherwise specified, connect with the interviewer after approximately two weeks to check on the status of the job selection process.