

Phone Interviews

Overall Preparation

1. Research the company, their mission and any new initiatives/programs they are implementing or marketing. Be prepared to share how you relate to their mission; what about their company in particular resonates with you and why do you want to work there.
2. Use LinkedIn to research the interviewers and employees. Learn more about the company culture and the background of people who work there; whether you use this information directly or not it will allow you to have a stronger foundation and more confidence.
3. Know the job description thoroughly. Take each duty and each qualification in the job description sentence by sentence and write what skills you have for each statement (whether through experience, education, volunteer work or transferrable skills).
4. Practice your interview responses with a career professional or colleague prior to the interview.

Phone Interview Preparation

The phone interview is used to pre-screen candidates before bringing them in for an in-person interview. This interview can vary greatly from the time spent to how many people may be on the phone. You will need to fully prepare for the phone interview as if it were an in-person interview.

Make sure to plan ahead: use a quiet location for the call where you will have no interruptions and no background noise. If you can use a land-line, do so, you want to make sure your call will not be dropped. Try to call a friend beforehand to test for sound quality. Do not use a speaker phone; it dilutes your sound, and will pick up background noise. Avoid using the keyboard during a phone interview; it can be heard.

Most importantly, know the company, their mission, any new initiatives and why you are interested in working specifically for them. Know your résumé, and how your skills and background specifically relate to the position. Use the interview questions below to prepare.

You can have notes in front of you, but do not look down when speaking. Your voice will carry downward. A smile can be heard on the phone, so do smile. Listen to cues from the interviewer; what is their demeanor, are you listening carefully to their questions, are you creating a conversation with them.

Questions you may be asked:

Don't be vague, make sure your responses include concrete examples. Be prepared, listen to the questions, and work on creating a conversation with the interviewer.

1. Tell me something about yourself? (Use this to highlight something not on the resume; give a 3-sentence bio, and always keep in mind how it relates to the job).
2. What interests you about our company/why do you want to work here? (Use your research; include information that is not in the job description).
3. What interests you about this position? (Share how the company, the job and your background fit).

Continued on Next Page

Interview Questions Continued

4. What skills do you have for this position? (Be specific, relate your past jobs/skills, etc. to what they need).
5. How does your experience relate to this position? (Have examples ready to show how you did similar work or used similar skills from past jobs/education/volunteer experience).
6. What was the reason for leaving your last position(s)? (Keep it all positive, never bad-mouth past employers).
7. What analytical skills do you have? (Give specific examples of how you approached and solved a problem).
8. Describe a crisis situation/challenge that you've faced and how you handled it? (Use an example from an actual situation that happened, and how you were able to turn the situation around).
9. How do you prioritize your time and activities? (Be prepared with examples).
10. What are your short-term career goals? (This is usually within the next 2-years).
11. What are your long-term career goals? (This is usually between 5-10 years).
12. What do you consider your greatest strengths? (Make it relevant; it can be interpersonal and/or technical as long as it is relevant to the position).
13. In what areas do you need to improve/greatest weakness? (Talk about your ability to self-assess, state areas that need improvement and how you deal with them. Do not use standard answers like “work too hard”, etc.).
14. What is one of your proudest achievements or accomplishments? (Make it relevant, show leadership).
15. Why should we hire you? (Summarize your skills and experience in relation to the job; add something that you may not have had a chance to say or expand upon during the interview).
16. Do you have any questions? (See next section).

It's Your Turn To Ask Questions

WHEN THE INTERVIEWER ASKS "DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS?" DO NOT ASK ABOUT SALARY OR BENEFITS UNTIL YOU ARE OFFERED A JOB OR THE INTERVIEWER BRINGS IT UP!

It is important to ask questions at the end of an interview. Every question you ask should demonstrate your interest in the position and confirm your knowledge of the organization. It's important to address your questions based on your research, what you have read, and what was brought up during the interview. Do make sure the questions you ask were not already covered. If you come prepared with a list of questions, make sure to check they were not addressed. The key to a successful interview is good communication and rapport with the interviewer.

It is the employer's responsibility to close the interview by telling you what to expect next. The employer will usually let you know what the next steps are in the process. If the employer has not conveyed the next steps and the interview is about to end, use the opportunity to ask about what the next steps are in the hiring process, and when you might expect to hear from them.