



Phone and Skype Interviews

Interviews are no longer restricted to taking place in person, as phone and Skype interviews have become more prevalent. In fact, with such a large number of applicants, many companies will utilize phone and Skype interviews to conduct their first round of interviews, inviting only their top candidates to an in-person interview. Phone and Skype interview etiquette is different than that of an in-person interview, however, by following these tips, you can still make a great impression!

Your Setting Changes...But Your Goal Doesn't!

Regardless of whether you are preparing for a first round phone interview or a third round in-person interview, your goal is the same: you are selling yourself to the employer and showing them why you would be an excellent fit for their company. Just as you would spend time preparing for an in-person interview, you should still prepare for a phone and Skype interview. For general help with interview preparation, visit our [website](#).

Phone Interviews

Phone interviews are generally reserved for an employer's first round of interviews. Don't mistake phone interviews to be more relaxed than Skype or in-person interviews. In fact, as an interviewee, you have to work even harder to demonstrate your confidence and personality to the employer, as they can't see your smile or shake your hand. To put your best *voice* forward, follow these steps.

1. Make sure to arrange the call for a time that's convenient for you.

If it is a scheduled phone interview, make sure to choose a time that allows you to be in a quiet place, where you can't be interrupted or overheard. However, some employers call at random, catching you at work, during class, or at some inconvenient time. If this happens, explain your situation, and ask whether or not the interviewer would be able to reschedule, ideally for later in the same day. Pay attention to the interviewer's response. If they seem hesitant to reschedule, proceed with the interview. Generally, phone interviews are no more than 15 minutes.

2. Ensure that there's no background noise.

If the interview is scheduled, make sure to situate yourself in a distraction-free environment, for both you and the employer. You only have approximately 15 minutes to give the employer the best impression of yourself, so you want to keep their full attention the entire time.

3. Turn off any phone settings, alarms, or other noises that could distract you and the employer.

Along with eliminating background noise, turn off anything on your phone that could interrupt the interview. A tone or vibration from an incoming text message or email can be heard by the employer, as can any alarms that may go off during the specified time.

4. Have a “cheat sheet” prepared, along with any documentation you may need already out and ready.

Print a copy of the job description, and highlight phrases that you would like to mention or allude to in your answers, as well as a copy of your resume. Similarly, you should also make a “cheat sheet” that includes any important points that you want to make during the interview, so that you don’t forget anything you wanted to say. However, don’t write in complete sentences, as this will prevent you from sounding too scripted.

5. Have answers prepared for basic interview questions.

Using the PARL method, come up with answers to basic interview questions, and write out your main points and ideas so that you don’t forget anything you wanted to say. However, even though you are on the phone and the employer can’t see any papers that you may have in front of you, don’t read your answers off of a script! You should bullet point major points you want to make for a specific question, but don’t pre-write your answer. Remember, the employer WILL be able to tell if you are reading from a script. Also, avoid one-word answers.

6. Focus on your language, voice, and be sure to smile!

Speak clearly, stay upbeat, and, even though it may seem silly, smile! Smiling while you’re on the phone will naturally lighten the tone of your voice and make you seem more engaged in the conversation. Make sure you are adding verbal cues where you would ordinarily provide visual ones: say “Yes” instead of nodding, etc. Keep your voice clear and easy to understand.

7. At the end of the call, ask about the next step, as well as contact information.

Even if the employer doesn’t mention anything about the next step in the interviewing process, ask! It will show that you are eager about the opportunity and serious about your application. Also, try to collect an email address that you can contact with questions. This will allow you to send a thank you note following the interview, as well as ask any questions you may have in the future.

8. Follow-up in the interview with a written thank you note, or email.

Along with thanking the employer for their time, reiterate some of your strengths that you mentioned in the interview. Following-up with employers is extremely important, so don’t forget this step!

Things to Avoid

- Avoid one-word answers.
- Don’t make too many jokes. They generally don’t translate over the phone, because they aren’t aided by facial expressions.
- Avoid questions about salary and hours. Phone interviews are usually first-round interviews, so these questions can be asked and answered at a later time.

For more information about phone interviews, visit these resources.

<http://www.moneycrashers.com/be-prepared-for-the-pre-screen-phone-interview/>

<http://www.quintcareers.com/phone-interview-etiquette/>

http://www.job-hunt.org/job_interviews/telephone-interviews.shtml

<http://career-advice.monster.com/job-interview/interview-preparation/mastering-the-phone-interview/article.aspx>

Skype Interviews

Skype interviews combine different aspects of both phone and in-person interviews, such that you are able to communicate with an employer face-to-face, but still have to control your surrounding environment. Skype interviews are utilized frequently by employers, as they save the company both time and money. As an interviewee, it is important to be able to communicate your skills and assets to a potential employer as easily through a computer screen as you can in-person. To put your best *face* forward, follow these steps.

1. Review the above phone interview tips!

In a sense, phone interviews and Skype interviews are extremely similar. In both cases, you must carefully control your environment, and eliminate any possible background noise and distractions, including closing all other programs that may be open on your computer. You may use a “cheat sheet,” however, it must be out-of-sight to the employer, and you should be very familiar and comfortable with the information, such that you only have to glance at it as a backup measure. Again, it is very important to focus on your voice. You want to look *and* sound confident!

2. Prepare your surroundings.

Like phone interviews, make sure you are in a distraction-free environment, where you and the employer won't be distracted by background noise. However, unlike a phone interview, employers can see what's behind you during Skype interviews. Make sure your “background” is neutral and simple, making you the focal point of the screen. Similarly, clear off and clean the surrounding area, as this is a way to indirectly demonstrate your organizational skills, as well as ridding the area of distractions. Make sure the camera is set up so that you will be at eye level. You can add a stack of books under your computer until you reach the best height. Lastly, test your setup exactly one day before your interview, when natural lighting will be approximately the same. This way, you can setup additional lighting, out-of-view of the camera, so that the area is evenly lit and flattering.

3. Work out technical difficulties before the interview.

Eliminate any technical difficulties that may occur *before* the interview. First, make sure you have a strong and consistent Internet connection. For the best connection, use an Ethernet cable, as they are much more stable than a wireless connection. If you are using headphones, plug them directly into the computer, rather than relying on a wireless Bluetooth connection. Make sure to adjust the volume and microphone settings of both your computer and Skype beforehand. Even if you take these precautionary measures, there is still a chance that a technical difficulty may occur. If a small glitch occurs and makes you unable to hear a question, it is acceptable to say “excuse me?” and ask for the question to be repeated. However, if a glitch continuously occurs, it is okay to suggest stopping the call and redialing. Make sure that you remain calm and collected, and don't allow computer issues to cause you unnecessary stress for the remainder of your interview.

4. Make sure your Skype profile is appropriate and professional.

For a Skype interview, the employer's first impression of you is from your Skype username and profile picture. If you don't want to change your username, but its level of professionalism is questionable, make another account. They're free! Remember, if you have to think about whether or not something is appropriate, it is probably not appropriate. When choosing a username, it is always safe to use your first and last name. If this is already taken, add your target industry. For example, an acceptable Skype username would be “alberteinstein_theoreticalphysics” or “stephenking_writer.”

5. Dress for success!

Even though the camera will only show your upper body, dress in business professional attire from head to toe. You might be tempted to dress in business professional attire on top, but casually on bottom. However, by dressing in 100% business attire, you will be prepared if something happens that requires you to stand up, as well as feeling more confident and in an “interview state-of-mind.” Avoid stripes or busy patterns, such as hounds tooth, as these will be distracting to the employer. Instead, opt for dark colors with jewel-toned accents.

6. Look at the camera, not the screen.

Just like an in-person interview, eye contact is very important. However, during a Skype interview, it is more difficult to keep. Make sure to look at the camera, not at the screen. Even though it is much more natural to look at the employer, it will appear to them that you are not making eye contact. At the beginning of an interview, it is fine to take a moment to look at the screen and make sure you are situated correctly, but look into the camera for the rest of the interview.

7. Focus on your body language.

During Skype interviews, there are a few things you should focus on to make sure you look confident and collected to the employer. A large majority of their opinion of you will come from non-verbal cues, so make sure that the upper half of your body is showing.

- Put your hands where they can see them, and try your best to avoid fidgeting.
- Don't sit too close to the camera.
- Sit up straight, and relax your shoulders to avoid stiffness.
- Lean in, so that employers can clearly read your facial expressions.

8. Practice, practice, practice!

Set up your camera exactly how you plan to set it up during the interview, and practice beforehand with a friend. Skype interviews may feel uncomfortable and awkward at first, and it is important to be comfortable with them before your actual interview. Make sure you know where to position your notes, how to maintain eye contact, and what to do with your hands. It is recommended to record your practice interview, so that you can see how you come across on the screen. You can make any changes beforehand, so that you feel confident and prepared when it's time for the actual call.

For more information about Skype interviews, visit these resources.

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/tech/personal/2013/08/01/13-tips-for-a-great-skype-interview/2608915/>

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/learnvest/2013/04/09/7-tips-to-nail-a-skype-interview/>

<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/ace-your-skype-job-interview-14-smart-tips/>

<http://money.usnews.com/money/blogs/outside-voices-careers/2012/08/29/10-tips-to-avoid-bombing-your-skype-interview>