



How to prepare for a phone interview

Do you find that you land a fair amount of phone interviews but rarely get past the initial screening? Maybe the HR professional only had 20 minutes to talk, leaving you with little to no time to make a personal connection. Perhaps the interviewer asked you a lot of questions you had no clue she would ask. Or, you wanted to learn a lot about the position, but the recruiter could only repeat the job description to you, leaving you frustrated and confused about the interview's purpose.

Struggles like these are very common, even if you're an experienced professional. In fact, one of the most common questions we receive is, *"How do I get ready for a phone interview?"*

Here are 14 quick, simple pointers to help you ace your next phone interview:

1. Know the recruiter's perspective

- To become a strong candidate and memorable interviewee in the eyes of the folks evaluating you, it's critical you understand their mindset and the purpose of these calls. Here are a few items you should know:
 - Many corporate recruiters have intense workloads and are trying to fill many positions at the same time. I know recruiters who have had workloads of 75 job openings!
 - In addition, while a recruiter is interviewing you over the phone, he is likely distracted by incoming instant messages, cubicle guests, emails, meeting notices, and myriad other interruptions.
 - Because a recruiter has such a high volume of work, it's reasonable to expect her to know a little bit about all of the jobs on her desk. It would be almost impossible for her to be an expert on every job she's trying to fill.
 - If you're lucky, the recruiter will have spent 5 minutes looking at your resume. There's not enough time in his day to carefully read every line you've written.
- With this information in mind, try to be friendly, demonstrate sincere interest, and express appreciation for their time while knowing the recruiter may not know the ins-and-outs of the job you are talking about.

2. Research!

- This is an obvious tip, but so many candidates do not take the time to conduct research on the job, the company, and the personnel interviewing them. You should at least spend a half hour studying for this interview. You'll be thankful you did, as many recruiters will ask questions such as, "What do you know about our company?"



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3. Be as available as possible

- Yes, your time is important, but do everything in your power to open your schedule to the company who wants to interview you. By making yourself available and being gracious with your time, you'll have the advantage of being one of the first in line to interview for the position while simultaneously demonstrating serious interest in the job opportunity.

4. Put your resume and job description in front of you

- Take advantage of the fact that no one can see you during a phone interview by laying out supporting materials that will help you make your case. Place a copy of your most recent resume and a job description in front of you. It's also good to have a pen and paper to take notes and reference questions you want to ask during the call.

5. Stand up and take deep breaths

- This may sound silly, but you should stand up, at least while you answer the phone. Taking this action will reflect in the form of a fuller, more confident tone of voice. Take deep breaths, especially if you're nervous, so you don't risk hyperventilating!

6. Dress nicely

- Look good, feel good! Even though you may be alone in your home, a sharp outfit will put you in a positive frame of mind. No need to wear a three-piece suit, however, unless that's your thing.

7. Smile when you answer the phone

- Even if you're not in a good mood, smile when you answer the phone. Your mind tends to follow cues it receives from the body. You want to project cheer, optimism, and confidence on a phone call. These traits will project during a phone interview and make you memorable.

8. Make sure you have good cell phone reception

- Nothing is more frustrating than bad reception that completely disrupts a call's momentum. The last thing you want to do is annoy the person assessing you.

9. Prepare questions

- Write at least 3 questions you can ask at the end of the interview, if time allows. If the recruiter can't answer a specific question, express your appreciation and indicate you'll save that question for when you meet with the hiring team.



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10. Prepare for behavioral interview (STAR format) questions

- Take the time to list at least 10 examples of memorable events over the last few years of your career. If you're a new college grad, think about your internships or extracurricular activities. Potential ideas include major projects completed, people you've won over, difficult situations you've endured, and failures you've learned from. The idea is these examples will be fresh in your mind and you won't be caught flat-footed trying to think of examples while you're likely a little nervous!

11. Be personable

- While this tip seems glaringly obvious, it's important to note that many folks become inward-facing when they are nervous. So, if you're hyped up for a phone call, you're going to focus a lot more on anxiously monitoring your own behavior and you'll miss out on a great opportunity to establish rapport with your interviewer. If you are prepared for the interview, allow yourself to feel confident and focus on making a personal connection with your future colleague.

12. Read the room

- A couple minutes into the call, you should be able to get a feel for the tone and tenor of your talk. Sometimes, recruiters read from a script. Others are more free-form and want to see how you react while talking to a real person. Pick up on those cues, adjust your style accordingly, and watch your stock rise.

13. Match your skills to their pain

- During an interview, candidates often fall into the trap of simply playing defense, meaning you answer the question and wait for the next one. Ideally, however, you'll gather critical information about why the job is open and what is keeping the hiring manager up at night. If you can match your skills and experiences to those pains, you'll greatly increase your chances of a second-round interview.

14. Send thank you notes

- Any recruiter or manager will tell you: very few candidates bother to send a follow-up note of thanks. By simply sending a quick email, you'll stand out from the sea of candidates while reaffirming your interest.

If you would like to learn more about how to increase your chances of landing your dream job or hiring game-changing talent into your organization, contact us at clarkharvey@arrowheadtalentsolutions.com or 330.316.0867.



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