

Pioneer's Guide to Telephone Interviews

More and more employers are deciding to interview people over the telephone, especially if the prospective employee lives in another part of the country.

Telephone interviews have pros and cons. The disadvantage is that you have to sell yourself using only words and the tone of your voice. But if you prepare properly for the interview you have the advantage of being able to have notes in front of you, and the comfort of familiar surroundings.

Tips

- Plan ahead, be prepared for the interview by having your CV, notes and questions at hand, and practice making short, interesting answers to possible questions.
- Don't drink, smoke or eat during the interview. Give the interviewer your undivided attention.
- Dress appropriately: sit up straight or even stand up. Sound strange? Your mental set is important. You are more likely to conduct yourself in a businesslike manner if you act like you are at an interview, than lying on your bed in your pyjamas.
- Answer questions in short answers. Short sentences are more easily understood over the telephone than long speeches. They also give more opportunity for interchange between you and the interviewer, which helps both of you to maintain interest.
- Don't answer a question that you haven't fully understood – ask them to repeat the question. This will ensure you haven't misheard the question and give you time to prepare an answer and prevent long silences on the phone. Dead space is much more noticeable on the phone than at an in-person interview. Don't do this too often though, as the interviewer will quickly become tired of repeating him/herself.
- Silence is not a bad sign. Don't stumble over yourself trying to end a silence at the other end of the phone.
- Answer questions courteously. A note of irritation or frustration in your voice is much more noticeable over the phone, and can't be offset by positive body language. Try to sound relaxed and confident.
- Form a mental image of a bright, friendly person on the other end of the phone and let your voice show enthusiasm.
- Have paper handy in case you want to take notes.
- Have some good questions to ask.
- Be prepared for an interview lasting from 15-30 minutes.