



How to Nail a Phone Interview

Whether you're applying for your first job, making your next career move, or even if you're a seasoned contractor, a job interview can be a daunting prospect. Yet, love them or hate them, interviews are an essential part of the recruitment process.

Your interview might be face-to-face, using Skype or a video call, or perhaps via a regular phone call. Technology has diversified the job interview, and all of these interview styles have their benefits and challenges.

While face-to-face interviews can be nerve-racking, it's essential to present well. You need to stay calm and answer each question confidently while building rapport. To some candidates, these skills come naturally; to others, they're rather more mysterious. However, even experienced interviewees usually have some form of hesitation when it comes to interviewing in-person – the key is learning to manage those nerves.

While you might think them intimidating, face-to-face interviews also come with a significant benefit – the opportunity to read the body language of your interviewer. Are they nodding along with you? Do they have their arms crossed? Pay attention and you can gauge if your answers are heading in the right direction (and change tack if need be). Even something as simple as a handshake upon meeting can set the tone for the entire process.

Skype interviews also have their hurdles. You're at risk of the dreaded "poor connection" or "couldn't connect" messages, so it's crucial to make sure all parties have a strong Internet signal. Be prepared for delays and lags, speak clearly and be concise with your answers.

Phone interviews are a different beast yet again. Although they might seem like the most informal and relaxed interview type, looks (or the lack thereof) can be deceiving. In my experience, phone interviews present some of the biggest challenges for candidates and, more often than not, candidates are under-prepared.

So how do you nail a phone interview? Avoid these common problems.

- 1. Phone Battery** – It might seem obvious, but the number of times people forget to charge their phone battery is quite remarkable, especially if your interview is late in the day. You do not want to be halfway through an answer when the line goes dead.

2. **Bad Reception** – A phone interview is not the time to play reception roulette. Figure out where you'll be when it's interview time and be aware of that area's reception hotspots and blackspots. Plan ahead and be somewhere with a clear connection so the conversation can flow.
3. **The Right Environment** – Find a quiet location free from distractions. Whether you're at home or at work, find a place that allows you to give the interview your full attention.
4. **Clear and Concise** – In a face-to-face interview, body language helps you gauge when your interviewer is satisfied with your answer and ready to move on. Over the phone, you're flying blind. This means it's even more important to structure your answers clearly. Use the STAR technique – Situation, Task, Actions, Result – to help ensure you answer your interviewer's questions completely. Check out our [detailed guide](http://rowben.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/An-Interview-Guide-1.pdf) and hone your STAR skills.
[\[http://rowben.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/An-Interview-Guide-1.pdf\]](http://rowben.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/An-Interview-Guide-1.pdf)
5. **Patience** – Wait for the interviewer to finishing asking their question before you begin to answer. Jump in too quickly and you risk interrupting your interviewer or mishearing what you've been asked.
6. **Preparation** – You actually do have one big advantage in a phone interview – the ability to have notes on hand. Don't read directly from them, but some simple dot points can act as a useful prompt and help you be prepared for any tough questions.
7. **Tone, Pitch and Pace** – Your voice is your key tool during a phone interview, so use it to your advantage. Use tone to convey enthusiasm when you're talking about an exciting project that you worked on. Try to control nerves, as they play a huge role in how we speak during an interview. Slow the pace down and don't rush your answers.
8. **Try to avoid fillers** – Most of us rely on fillers to give us time to think about what we're going to say next. You'll be forgiven for dropping the occasional um in between sentences, but three or four in a row can make it sound like you don't know your stuff. Be aware of your own verbal ticks, such as "like" or "you know" – while you might not notice how many times you use certain phrases, an interviewer is listening to every word you say and they definitely will.
9. **Dress Code** – This one might seem strange. Why do I need to dress up when no one can see me? If you're conducting the phone interview from home, wear what you normally would for an interview. While your at-home sweatsuit might be incredibly comfortable, wearing it risks making you overly-relaxed and under-prepared. Dressing professionally can help get you into the right mindset.
10. **Ask Questions** – Make sure you ask questions during or at the end of the phone interview (or indeed any type of interview). Interviews are often seen as one-sided, but while your interviewer is trying to determine if you'll be the right fit for the role, you also need to figure out if this is the right opportunity for you. Ask questions about the role or the organisation's culture. How will this role progress over the next year, or the next three years? What are the challenges you see me facing in this position? An interview is as much about whether you want the job as it is about whether the interviewer wants you for the job.

So, get to it – charge your phone, suit up, find a top spot with notes in tow and speak clearly. When it comes to phone interviews, that's what will set you apart.