



# 12 Smart Phone Interview Success Tips

By Laura DeCarlo ([https://www.job-hunt.org/job\\_interviews/laura-decarlo.shtml](https://www.job-hunt.org/job_interviews/laura-decarlo.shtml))

The goal of a telephone interview is to secure an invitation to come to the employer's location for an in-person interview. You typically have just two assets for telephone interviews – your voice and your preparation!

## Job Interviews on the Telephone

Often you are given the opportunity to prepare for a telephone interview, but sometimes they come out of the blue when you answer your phone!

Since you may not know when to expect the telephone interview, it is critical that you do not wait to prepare for the interview until you have the interview scheduled. You have to accomplish your goal – selling yourself, your skills, your experience, and your value – with nothing but what comes out of your mouth. What can you do?

### 1. Do your research.

*If the interview is scheduled in advance*, know as much as you can about the employer and the opportunity *before* the interview, just as you would for an in-person interview:

- Re-read the job posting and make notes of where you meet or exceed the requirements (and where you don't).
- Review the organization's website (if any) to see what they do, where they are, and the latest news they may have posted.
- Look for a LinkedIn "Company Profile" to see what information they post, as well as other job openings they might have.
- Google the company and the product/service names. See [50 Google Searches to Avoid Bad Employers](#) for more ideas.
- Check a site like Glassdoor.com to see the job interview questions commonly asked by this employer as well as the salary ranges.
- Based on your research, have questions to ask if the opportunity arises or you risk looking uninterested *and unprepared* (not good!).

This research will help you to succeed in the face-to-face interview later, hopefully. It should also help you to determine if you really want to work for this employer.



## 2. Know whether you can take the call when it comes.

Hopefully, you'll be able to schedule the call for a time when you can focus completely. Be in a quiet place where you are comfortable and unlikely to be interrupted (or overheard if you are not at home).

**If you currently have a job, do NOT take this call in your workplace!** Your boss or a co-worker may interrupt and may also discover your job search. NOT GOOD! Go outside, assuming it's relatively quiet, or find someplace private and a good environment for a phone call.

Sometimes you can't schedule the call. So, if you are driving the kids to school or dripping outside the shower, ask if you could schedule a later time. Of course, you need to feel the interviewer out; if he or she hesitates to schedule another time, you might want to plunge forward and do the best you can, considering you might not be getting another opportunity to present yourself.

## 3. Have the documentation you need at your fingertips.

Having easy access to the company and job information will allow you to confidently respond to questions without fumbling regarding which job you are talking about. So, have a copy of *both* the job description and a copy of the resume or application you submitted in front of you *before* the interview starts.

## 4. Take notes.

If possible, take notes during and *immediately* after the call. Focus on giving good answers rather than writing copious notes, and you can write most of the notes after the call.

Note the date and time of the call and, if scheduled, whether they were on time. Then:

- *During the call*, write the name and job title of the person who called. If they don't volunteer it, ask, and confirm the correct spelling of their name.
- *During the call*, write down any commitments you make for after the call, like sending a sample of your work or following up with the answer to a question that you couldn't answer during the call. Do be careful not to put a current or former employer's confidential information at risk.
- *At the end of the call*, be sure make note of the answers to the questions in #11 below.
- Note anything about you that seemed particularly important to them, indicated by the interviewer asking you several follow-on questions about that topic.
- Note anything about you that seemed to disappoint them.

These notes will help you write your thank you note and also help you to prepare for the in-person interview.



## 5. Know your answers to the common questions.

Brief "yes" and "no" responses will not move a telephone interview forward but *will* end it quickly. So, start by practicing your [answers to the common interview questions](#) now so that you are ready when the unplanned telephone interview occurs.

Paint visual pictures with your words by telling stories that demonstrate results you achieved or contributed to. Answers that express the who, what, when, where, how, and why. Those answers will make you stand out.

The more you prepare now, the less you will ramble and leave out when the interview arrives.

[Related: [Pre-Interview Preparation](#) and [50 Questions to Ask in Your Job Interview](#).]

## 6. Smile & Stand Up while on the phone!

You will find that you sound more upbeat and engaged when you do this. Your smiles will be "heard" by the interviewer making for a positive impression.

### Speak confidently and clearly.

After assessing a baseline competence, phone interviewers are first and foremost judging your level of interest in the role itself. Nothing is worse than a monotone, dull conversation. So, try to speak clearly and with a level of enthusiasm about the opportunity.

"Variation in speech is important for points of emphasis, and you should apply the same principle to your phone interview," says Jordan Wan, founder of CloserIQ, a sales recruitment program in New York City. "Try adding inflection and emphasis when you're making your most crucial points."

***One thing that can greatly help your confidence is if you stand. "Even though it's over the phone, your body posture impacts your voice and audio tone,"*** says Georgene Huang, founder of Fairygodboss, a workplace improvement company for women based in New York City.

## 7. Focus on your language and voice.

You have only the power of your voice in a telephone call. Speak clearly, stay upbeat, and use positive language. Smiling (#6, above) will help.

*Don't trash anyone, not even the former boss who was such a jerk!*

Try to take cues from the interviewer (does he or she speak slowly and softly or fast and loud?) and modulate your own tone and word choice to make a positive impression.



The mirror (#6, above) will help in staying positive, but you must remember that the words you choose (your language) and the motivation you put forward (tone, modulation, enthusiasm) will help determine your outcome.

### **8. If you have a web portfolio or a complete LinkedIn profile, direct the interviewer to it, if possible.**

Imagine this: The interviewer asks you to describe a challenge you have faced. Ask if he or she has access to the Internet. If the answer is yes, suggest they visit your web portfolio or LinkedIn profile (URL's hopefully on your resume), and have them click on your project highlights page. There, the interviewer will see what you have made public, perhaps an outline of key projects and a terrific graph that expresses your results.

*Telephone interviews are truly one of the best reasons for creating a web portfolio or making sure that your LinkedIn profile is complete and shows your accomplishments.*

This enables the interviewer to see your value while you talk about it.

[Related: [LinkedIn for Job Search](#).]

### **9. Avoid selfish questions during the interview.**

Now is *not* the time to ask about benefits or salary. Initial interviews, until you have an offer, are about convincing the employer that you are an applicant they must consider hiring. You do not have any power until that time and asking these questions will just show that your emphasis is not on being a good fit but just on the benefit to you.

[Related: [45 Questions You Should NOT Ask in a Job Interview](#)]

### **10. Express your interest in the opportunity and the employer.**

As the call is ending, thank them for the opportunity to speak with them about the job, and express your interest in having an in-person job interview by saying something like this:

"I've enjoyed speaking with you today, and I would be very happy to discuss more about this opportunity in person.

Then, ask *them* if they have any more questions.

### **11. Don't hang up without asking for the next step *plus* this information.**

The interviewer is bringing the call to an end but there has been no talk of a next step. Speak up! Express your enthusiasm for moving forward and ask about the next step.



Ask if email is the best method for staying in touch (so you will be more sure that your thank you message gets through, if sent by email).

If an in-person interview is not scheduled at the end of the call, find out when you can follow up with the employer. Be sure to ask for contact information (name, phone number, job title, and email address) of the person who will be your contact.

[Related: [Gathering Information for the Follow-Up After the Job Interview.](#)]

## **12. Send your thank you, *immediately*.**

Sure, it was a telephone interview, but that is no reason for not taking the time to exercise simple but powerful courtesies. Write a thank you letter and email it as soon as you can after the interview. *Don't just say thank you!* Make a point of reiterating your strengths and value for the position.