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17 Tips to Ace Your Next Phone Interview

By [Andrew G. Rosen](#)

It's easy to understate the importance of a phone interview, dismissing it as merely the first step in the long [job-search process](#). In reality, a seemingly cursory phone interview is actually the most important step, because without success, the next steps never happen.

Follow these phone interview tips and make it your business to secure a face-to-face meeting:

1. Print it out. Have a physical copy of your resume and the job description in front of you during the call. Type up a bulleted list of items you want to cover during the conversation. As each one gets satisfied, cross it off the list. Printouts are necessary in case your Internet access fails.

2. Have Web access. It's always best to give your full concentration to the interview, listening and answering questions diligently. However, also take advantage of the fact that the interviewer can't see you. Open up the company's website in your browser and have another window open to the search engine of your choice. But be sure to never let the interviewer hear you typing. Invest in a quiet keyboard or practice the art of silent typing.

3. Disable extra phone features. Whether it's call waiting or an answering machine for an additional phone line, turn off all your phone accessories. These noises can be a distraction and embarrassment, sabotaging your chances of moving the interview process forward. Most phone companies let you disable and re-activate these features on a self-service basis.

4. Use a landline. Don't allow outside noises or a choppy cell signal keep you from an awesome opportunity. Making the call from a landline leaves less room for misinterpretation and cuts the odds of disconnection to a minimum. Also be sure to use a high-quality phone. Every phone makes your voice sound different; too much treble and you might sound weak, too much bass and you could sound self-important. Find the phone that suits your voice best.

5. Make the call from home. It's important to make the call in an environment with minimal noise and where you can speak at a reasonable volume. The more controlled the space you're calling from, the less room for distractions and other unanticipated events.

6. Give yourself time. Many job seekers make the mistake of trying to fit a phone interview during their lunch hour at work. But what if the interviewer is running a few minutes late? Also, the longer the call, the better you're doing! Make the call at a time where you have a minimum of 30 minutes free. Most phone interviews last only a few minutes, but if you end up hitting it off with the interviewer, the last thing you want to do is have to cut them off. Even if you're interviewing for a [low-stress job](#), rushing will increase stress, so give yourself plenty of time.

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7. No pets allowed. If you conduct the phone interview from home, do it in a pet-free room. Make sure your cat, dog or bird is occupied and safe in another room, so barking and meowing is out of earshot. As cuddly as they might be, don't give a pet the opportunity to be a distraction during this important phone call. I've trained my cute [Shiba Inu](#) to be accustomed to being locked out of my home office. The first time I closed the door on him during a work call, he cried like a baby, but he got used to it.

8. Answer the phone with your name. To avoid an awkward start to the call, take charge by answering the phone by stating your name. This lets the person on the other line know exactly who you are and saves them the trouble of asking for you. It also helps to have a "pleasantry in your pocket" ready to go. Know exactly how you will greet the caller and start the conversation.

9. Smile. Smiling when you speak brings energy and excitement to your voice. When speaking on the phone, your voice actually loses about half of its energy during transmission. Make sure your enthusiasm gets across by overcompensating. Since no one can see you, pretend you're on a soap opera and overact.

10. Watch your body language. Everyone has different phone habits. Some people pace (guilty!) and others sit still as a statue. Find middle ground and pay attention to your interview [body language](#). Hold your body in an upright position and don't be afraid to use your hands to be expressive. If you are the type of person who is on the move when on the phone, give yourself an enclosed area that is large enough so you avoid wondering from room to room.

11. Mute. If you need to take a sip of water or handle a situation outside of the interview, the mute button can be your best friend. On most phones, the person on the other line will never know you hit the button. However, it's always a good idea to test "mute" before the call to see if the person on the other line gets an indication that it's been activated.

12. Be honest. If a major distraction occurs during the phone interview, mention it. Your honesty will likely be appreciated; after all, the person on the other line is human too and has likely encountered a similar situation. The worst thing you can do is attempt to cover up something that takes you out of the moment, because it could make you look like you weren't paying attention.

13. Be ready. Prepare all of the materials you will need for the interview and be at the location of the call at least five minutes early. The interviewer can call early; in fact, some hiring agents use this as a tactic to test candidates.

14. Convince me. You must convince the interviewer that having you come into the office for a meeting will not waste their time. Make sure that your answers during the call reiterate your experience, interest in the position, and desire to continue the conversation in person.

15. Say thanks... fast. Unlike a face-to-face interview, there's no commute afterwards. Send a thank-you note an hour or two after the phone interview. This helps you close the loop and reiterate your interest in wanting to meet the interviewer in person. The goal of a phone interview is to get a face-to-face meeting; don't be bashful about making this request. If you can't send the email right away, make several notes about the call while they're fresh in your mind. These will come in handy when you send the thank-you note later in the day.

16. Don't talk about money. Career coaches always say to hold off on [discussing salary](#) until the end of the process. But in reality, the interviewer knows you might attempt to do this and may try to force the issue. After all, determining an employee's desired salary is part of the filtering process, which is why they are conducting a phone interview in the first place. Try to keep your answer vague by telling the employer that you need a better understanding of the total compensation package until you can state your desired salary. Phrases like, "I'm negotiable," "I'd rather discuss compensation in person," or "I currently make X but am looking to make Y" can often get the interviewer to move on.

17. Always be prepared. If you're firing off resumes like cruise missiles, it is possible you'll receive an unexpected interview call. If you receive a call out of the blue, don't be afraid to tell them you need to call back. This will give you time to research the organization, research the person, and make sure you're at a suitable location for the call.

While keeping all of these tips in mind, don't lose sight of your phone interview mission: to earn an in-person meeting, convince them to love you, and get an amazing job offer.

Andrew G. Rosen is the founder and editor of [Jobacle.com](#), a career advice blog. He is also the author of [How to Quit Your Job](#) and an established [freelance blogger](#) who is available for hire. Follow him on Twitter ([@jobacle](#)) or connect on [LinkedIn](#).