

Acing The Phone Interview: When The Phone Rings

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Treat every interview as prime time for your career prospects, even when no one can see you.

If you are facing a phone screen early in the interview process, be sure to treat it as seriously as an in-person interview, because you probably won't get a face-to-face meeting if you don't impress on the phone interview.

In my years as a recruiting manager, human-resources business partner and HR director for Fortune 100 companies, I've spoken on the phone with myriad candidates and witnessed many promising candidates flame out at this stage of the selection process.

Being prepared for a phone interview means more than just preparing the materials you'll need to reference. You also need to get into character and deliver those materials convincingly. Part Two of "Acing the Phone Interview" will guide you to prepare yourself physically and mentally for this crucial step.

1. Choose a time

Set up a specific time for the phone interview. Often times, an interviewer will call you and say, "Is this a good time for you?" This approach doesn't allow you any time to get prepared for the phone [interview](#). Given that timing is of the essence, in some cases your reply should be, "Can we schedule a time either later today or tomorrow to discuss this particular position?" If you sense that there is no time to waste or the interviewer won't bother calling back, ask if he can wait for a couple of minutes. This will give you an opportunity to pull together your prep materials and catch your breath before proceeding with the phone interview.

2. Go someplace without distractions and dress nicely.

First of all, think about your wardrobe and the room in which you conduct the call. We're inclined to behave the way we're dressed. It's a question of cultural conditioning: When dressed in evening wear, for example, we're inclined to carry ourselves with more formality than we do in sweats.

A [job](#) interview is no different, even when that interview takes place over the phone. The HR representative calling you may not be able to see you, but the time you take to act the part – even in the privacy of your own home – will improve your chances of advancing to the next round.

If you have the opportunity to schedule the interview, please get out of your pajamas, dress as if you are actually going to work for the day, grab a cup of coffee and eliminate *all* distractions. If this means you have to secure a private room at your local library, do it! There is nothing more frustrating than conducting a phone interview with dogs barking, individuals yelling in the background or babies crying. Bottom line: It might be best to remove yourself from your home. If you have a home office, please tell your family how important your phone call is; you will be locked away in your office for at least an hour and cannot be disturbed for any reason.

3. Three adjectives

1. What is your level of self-awareness?
2. How are your interpersonal skills?

Commit to memory three adjectives that describe you and three adjectives that others might use to describe you. It seems a bit prehistoric, I know, but it's still a question many interviewers ask.

This question addresses two critical areas:

Do you ever think about how you are being perceived by others or are aware of how they perceive you?

You can really **impress the interviewer** if you can respond with some results from an actual psychological-assessment tool such as MBTI, Forte or Strength Finders.

It demonstrates a certain level of sophistication and also tells the interviewer that your adjectives aren't solely based on your opinion alone. This way it shows that you actually care about how you can interact better with others.

Prepare your documents, your time and space and your adjectives, and you will be armed to impress the HR representative in the phone interview and move on to meet the hiring managers for whom you want to work.

Read part one of [Acing the Phone Interview – Preparing is the Key](#).