Telephone Interviews

Employers use telephone interviews as a time-effective way of identifying and recruiting candidates for employment. They are often used to screen candidates in order to narrow the pool of applicants who will be invited for site-visit interviews. There are two types of telephone interviews:

Information Gathering

An employer may call in order to assess your interest in the company, ask a few preliminary questions, or to schedule a formal interview. While you are actively job searching, it is important to be prepared for a telephone interview on a moment's notice. You never know when a recruiter or a networking contact might call and ask if you have a few minutes to talk.

When you are there to take the call: The phone rings and you are there to answer! The recruiter may ask if it is a good time to talk. If you are busy or uncomfortable, you can say that you are having a class (or meeting or another commitment) and then schedule a convenient time for them to call you or for you to call them. Ask for their name and phone number. This way, you can research the employer, feel composed and settled, and have a quiet place to talk and think.

When You Miss the Call: If the recruiter leaves a message for you, RETURN THE CALL AS SOON AS YOU CAN! As you are returning the call, keep in mind that the recruiter may have called 10 other people that day about the same job. When you return the call, give your full name and indicate that you are returning the recruiter's call for XXXXX position. If the message was left for you during business hours, but you did not get the message until you returned home at 7:30p.m., then call and leave a voice message that same evening. Be sure to speak slowly and clearly. Leave your full name, the position you are interested in, and contact information.

Tips:

- It's a good idea to keep a jobs log handy. This way if you are contacted by a recruiter, you have an idea of which job they are calling about. Do not ask the interviewer what job they are calling about because this will make you look disorganized.
- Be aware of potential time zone difference when scheduling interviews.
- Be sure your outgoing voicemail message is professional and clear.

In-Depth

Depending on the type of organization with which you are interviewing, you may be interviewed by a hiring committee, and be broadcasted over a speakerphone. Increasingly companies are using video calls (Skype) for this type of long-distance interview.

Tips for the interview:

- Location Matters – Try to conduct the interview on a land line. If you must interview on a cell phone, find a location that gets great cell service and that will be quiet at the time of the call. You may reserve one of the CDO interview rooms, if available, for a quiet interview space.
- Limit the paperwork – Have your resume in front of you, but don’t shuffle through papers as you answer questions. Your answers should come naturally.
- Keep answers concise – Applicants have a tendency to ramble in phone interviews because they have no visual cues that the listener gets their point. Be succinct.
- Smile – Although you can't be seen, smiles can be “heard”. It’s important to come across as pleasant.
- Keep a glass of water handy in case your mouth gets dry.
- Use the person’s title (Ms. or Mr.) and their last name. Use a first name only if they ask you to.
- Do not interrupt the interviewer.

Before you hang up:

- Thank the interviewer for the opportunity.
- Get contact information for follow-up questions.
- Ask about the hiring timeline, “When are you looking to have a decision made?”

After the interview:

Follow up with a thank-you note that reiterates your interest in the position. Email is usually acceptable but an actual thank-you note or letter is appreciated.

If you need a quiet space on campus for the interview:

The Career Development Office has two dedicated interview rooms. If you would like to use one of these spaces for your telephone interview, please email Hannah Pickar at hannah.pickar@pomona.edu. Include your name, email address, the date of the interview, start time, and end time. We would appreciate receiving your request at least two business days before your interview so we can coordinate your needs with our on-campus interviews. We know that’s not always possible, so feel free to stop by the CDO or call (909-621-8144) if you have a last-minute request.