

The Phone Interview Cheatsheet



Print and place this cheat sheet in front of you to cruise through telephone interviews.

Such interviews are often trial runs to shortlisting and face-to-face interviews. They are quite convenient for both the interviewer and the candidate as time and distance are no longer issues.

Both voice and video interviews bring a unique set of challenges. But with the right preparation, you can make the best of them and even take surprise calls in your stride.

Advantages of a Phone Interview

- You can participate from the comfort of your home or from anywhere else in the world.
- You can schedule the interview in advance and this flexibility can win you extra points.
- You can give more descriptive answers.
- You can cover up gaps in your resume by explaining the reasons behind them.
- You can showcase your verbal communication skills if body language is an issue.
- You can have relevant facts and figures handy and refer to them while giving the interview.

Pre-Interview Prep: Do Your Research

- Record a professional voicemail message as soon as you submit your resumes as calls can come at the worst possible times.
- Make a list of your strengths and weaknesses.
- Review the job advertisement and match your skills to the requirements asked for.
- Research key facts about the company and the projects they are involved in. For e.g., place in the industry, future outlook, news/press, product, culture.
- List examples and projects you can use to demonstrate how you fit the profile.
- Print and organize this information alphabetically for each position you have applied for.
- Prepare answers to common questions the interviewer may ask.
- Write your elevator pitch: what you have done in the past, what you are doing now, and what you would like to be doing in the future.
- Keep your CV and an alphabetized dossier of companies you have applied to next to your phone or computer.
- Learn more about your interviewer so you can put a face and personality behind the voice.

- Prepare your answers to commonly asked interview questions and visualize your response in detail. (Refer to the last section of this PDF for a few interview questions you can expect.)

Pre-Interview Prep: Set Your Environment

- Find a quiet room that allows you to give an interview without any disturbances.
- Optimize the room temperature and light so you can be comfortable during the interview.
- Find a comfortable chair and desk to use.
- Inform your family ahead of time about the interview to ensure no one interrupts you.
- Drink plenty of water and keep more close by.
- Switch off all push notifications on your phone.
- Charge your phone and keep your charger handy.
- Use a good set of noise-cancelling headphones.
- Have a pen and paper available to take notes and a calendar to schedule any follow-up interviews.
- Dress professionally for the interview.
- Visualize any obstacles or interruptions (for e.g., call drops) and your ideal response to manage them.
- Rehearse a simulated interview with someone and practice answers.

The Interview

- Mind your posture and avoid slouching.
- Do not eat, drink, or smoke during the interview.
- Beware of sounding overfamiliar. Refer to the other person by their surname unless told to do otherwise.
- Do not interrupt the interviewer.
- Let the interviewer do most of the talking.
- When it is your turn, be brief and factual.
- Avoid "Yes" and "No" answers. Elaborate on your skill sets and experiences.
- Do not hem and haw while answering as it indicates indecisiveness.
- Sound enthusiastic with your answers.
- Pause, think, and give your answers clearly.
- Avoid clichéd responses.
- Be honest about any unexpected distractions.
- Take quick notes or record the conversation so you can refer to it later for the face-to-face interview, if there's one.
- Once the interview concludes, ask what the next step will be in the process.

- Seek permission to follow up for information or queries.
- Ensure that you have the right contact details and the correct spelling and pronunciation of the interviewer's name.

The Follow-Up

- Ask when and how you can follow up.
- When you don't hear back, it's ideal to send an email a week after the phone interview.
- Send a thank-you email.

Common Questions to Prep For

- Can you tell me a little about yourself?
- Can you walk me through your life?
- Why do you want this job?
- Why do you want to work at this company?
- What do you know about our company/and the position you are applying for?
- Why did you leave (or are leaving) your last position?
- Tell us about your current job role.
- Are you willing to relocate or travel?
- What applicable experiences or skills do you have?
- Why do you think you are the best person for the job?
- Why is there a work gap in your resume? (If there is...)
- What is your greatest weakness?
- What are some of your greatest strengths?
- What are your career goals?
- Tell me about a successful project you have completed.
- How do you handle difficult situations? Give us an example.
- What are your salary expectations?
- When can you start with us?
- Do you have any questions for us?