## Telephone Interviews

Three basics types of phone interview:

1. **Information Gathering Interviews**
   - To assess your interest in the company, typically if referred through a personal contact, referral, or someone you met at a career fair
   - Should be treated as seriously as in-depth interviews

2. **Screening Call**
   - Used as an initial screening mechanism in order to narrow the pool of applicants to be invited for in-person interviews
   - Screening interviews are quick—usually 30 minutes—and usually are conducted by someone from Human Resources

3. **In-Depth Telephone Interview**
   - Telephone is used to minimize expenses for travel
   - Depending on the organization, you may be interviewed by a hiring committee, where you will broadcast over a speakerphone

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### Pros and cons:

**Pros:**
- You can have your preparation materials in front of you as the interview is taking place
  - Resume, a “cheat sheet” of compelling story topics that you would like to introduce, a “cheat sheet” about the employer
- Should sound well-organized and thoughtful, but not rehearsed
  - It is very easy to tell if you are reading

**Cons:**
- More difficult to gain rapport with the interviewer when you cannot see their reactions and cues
- Conversely, the interviewer cannot see your enthusiastic expressions or professional appearance
- All weight is placed on your phone manners, clarity of speech, tone and content of your answers

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### Be prepared:

- Prepare for a phone interview just as you would for a regular interview.
- Do your homework on the company.
- Compile a list of your strengths and weaknesses
- Select a quiet, private room with a phone in good working condition.
- Clear the room of distractions. Turn off the stereo, TV and any additional land or mobile phones. Turn off call-waiting on the phone you will be using.
- Prepare comfort items, such as tissues and a glass of water.

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Since you are unlikely to win the job from a telephone interview, your goal is to secure an in-person interview with the person who has the authority to hire. Approach the call with that attitude.
• Have a short list of questions about the job and the organization
• Have a pen and paper handy for note taking, as well as your calendar and a calculator.

**During the phone interview:**

• Do not smoke, chew gum, eat or drink
• Smiling will project a positive image to the listener and will change the tone of your voice
• Speak slowly, directly into the phone, and enunciate clearly
• Use the person’s title (Dr., Mr. or Ms.) and their last name. Only use a first name if they ask you to. Write down the full names and titles of each call participant
• Take your time—it’s perfectly acceptable to take a moment or two to collect your thoughts. Use the technique of repeating or re-phrasing questions
• Support your statements with detailed examples of accomplishments when possible
• Avoid fillers like “ah, er, and hum.” This habit is especially noticeable on the telephone
• Take notes when appropriate. Don’t type on a computer, as it can be heard and sounds like you’re not paying attention
• If you think of a question or comment while the interviewer is speaking, write it down
• During the interview, if the interviewer inadvertently answers a question from your prepared list, cross it off. If you forget and ask, it will seem as if you were not listening
• Compensation issues come at the end of the interviewing cycle, never at the telephone stage

**Before you hang up:**

• Let the employer end the interview
• Thank the interviewer for the opportunity
• Get the correct spelling of your interviewer’s name and contact information for follow-up
• Before ending the call, be sure to know the next step in the process, and offer to provide any additional information needed
• Remember you need a strong and confident closing. Reiterate how you can make a contribution.
• Don’t hang up until the interviewer has hung up

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**If you perform well on the telephone, you’ll probably be invited to interview with a hiring manager on site.**

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**The unexpected call:**

• More than one student has mistaken an initial call from an employer for a telemarketer and lived to regret it later
• It is 9:15 a.m.; you’re in bed and the telephone rings. The best strategy for handling the unexpected call is to determine whether it is a call or an interview.
  o If it is an interview, decide quickly if this is a good time to talk. If not, simply ask if you can arrange a mutually convenient time to conduct the interview.
• Apply your best interviewing skills

**After the interview:**

• Take notes about what you were asked and how you answered.
• Follow up promptly (within 24 hours) with a thank you note, which reiterates your interest in the job.