

How to Nail the Phone Interview

by [Vault Careers](#) | July 27, 2015

Increasingly, companies are conducting first-round interviews over the phone. This helps recruiting and hiring managers zero in on top candidates more efficiently.

For many candidates, however, a phone interview can be a frightening prospect. Most people communicate better in person—where nonverbal cues like gestures and smiles can make up for otherwise awkward moments.

But the reality is that phone interviews aren't going anywhere for now—so what can you do to present yourself in the best light possible when your interviewer can't see you?

Prepare for a phone interview in the same way you would for an in-person interview.

Just because you can conduct the interview in your pajamas doesn't mean you shouldn't spend sufficient time preparing. Read over your resume, making sure that you are comfortable talking about each position, activity or award. Reread your cover letter to remind yourself of the qualities you highlighted in your application. Review the job description or posting that you responded to, and jot down some notes about what skills and experiences make you qualified to handle each responsibility listed. Finally, re-familiarize yourself with the company website, making sure you can speak confidently about what exactly the organization does.

Find a quiet spot and reliable phone connection.

It is always preferable to conduct a phone interview on a landline, but if that's not possible, make sure you are in an area where you have good cell phone reception. Go to a quiet indoor space where you can focus without distractions. You could even sit inside your car if that's the calmest space you can find!

Take advantage of what they can't see.

One of the major benefits of a phone interview is that you can keep as many reference materials as you would like right in front of you throughout the conversation. Before the call, print out copies of your resume, cover letter, the job description and any questions or notes you have prepared. You can also pull up the company website on your computer, but whatever you do, don't type while you are on the call! The sound is obvious and unprofessional.

Smile!

It may sound silly, but research indicates that the expression on your face can greatly influence the tone of your voice. If you are frowning or worried-looking during the call, you will come across sounding tense. Try to keep your face relaxed, and even smile!

Take a breath.

When asked an open-ended question—such as, ‘tell me about yourself’—you may be tempted to blather on and on. Since you won’t be able to respond to nonverbal cues, remember to briefly pause at regular intervals in order to give the interviewer the chance to ask follow-up questions.

Thank the interviewer.

Again, treat this call as you would an in-person interview. At the end of the call, thank the interviewer for his or her time. Follow up with a thank you note (email is fine).