



## TIPS FOR PHONE INTERVIEWS

### **Do your research.**

Take time to familiarize yourself with the company – check out their website, “Google” them for news headlines, take a look at their LinkedIn page, and skim through the company’s recent blog and social media posts. Try to get a general sense of the organization. If you can seamlessly incorporate a current press release or LinkedIn post into the conversation, you’ll likely get bonus points for doing your homework.

### **Connect with your interviewer on LinkedIn.**

Once you are told who your interviewers will be, add them on LinkedIn. What school did they go to? What were their past jobs? Do you share similar interests? You might find a great point of connection by visiting their LinkedIn profiles. If you choose to include information you found online in your responses, mention that you discovered these details through LinkedIn. Most interviewers appreciate that you took the time to learn more about them.

### **Practice, practice, practice.**

Treat the phone interview with the same level of preparation you would give an in-person interview. Practice answering questions out loud. Common questions might be, “Tell me about yourself,” or “What are your strengths?” or “Why are you interested in this position?” Also, practice keeping your responses brief. Phone interviews are often shorter than in-person interviews, which means you have less time to make a good impression. Avoid long-winded answers that could lose your audience.

### **Get dressed up.**

Dressing professionally for a phone interview might sound silly, but the right clothing will put you in the right mindset. You’re more likely to feel and sound professional if you look the part.

### **Prepare for logistical issues.**

Find a quiet room where you can close the door, concentrate, and minimize distractions. It is important to limit background noise (e.g., pets, people, music, television, etc.) during your interview. In addition, cell phone connections can be unreliable, so try to use a landline. If you must use your cell, make sure it is fully charged and find a location with good reception. Confirm the date and time of the phone interview with the employer the day before, and keep the interviewer’s phone number accessible in case you get disconnected. Finally, be at the location of the call and ready to pick up the phone at least 5 minutes early. Some interviewers like to call several minutes before the scheduled interview time to test candidates’ preparedness.

### **Give yourself time.**

Make sure you have at least 30 minutes free for your interview. If you end up hitting it off with the employer, you don’t want to have to cut them off because you are running late for work, class, etc.

### **Answer the phone with authority.**

Take charge by answering the phone by stating your name. This lets the interviewer know exactly who you are and saves them the trouble of asking.

### **Smile throughout the interview.**

Even if the interviewer can’t see it, your voice will sound more enthusiastic if you keep a smile on your face. The tone of your voice is critical during a phone interview. Don’t make the mistake of sounding overly serious, uninterested, or

bored, all of which can make it difficult for the interviewer to connect with you. Personality often wins over hiring managers, so don't forget to smile!

**Keep it conversational.**

Interviewers want to find employees they will enjoy working with. Try using a friendly, conversational style instead of sounding too rehearsed or formal.

**Demonstrate how you are qualified.**

Prepare at least five stories that highlight skills, accomplishments, character traits, or passions related to the job. Interviewers remember stories, and you want to be memorable. When appropriate, weave these stories into your responses. Refer to the required skills in the position description to help you identify which stories you should share. Make sure you include a beginning (e.g., the context or background), middle (e.g., what you did to solve a problem), and an end (e.g., the results or outcome). Keep each story under a minute.

**Take advantage of the fact that the interviewer can't see you.**

Phone interviews are like open-book tests. You can have notes, such as your resume and job description, right in front of you. However, avoid writing out your answers. You don't want to sound too stiff or rehearsed. Instead, use bulleted talking points to jog your memory. Lastly, make sure to minimize the sound of rustling papers in the background. Try taping a copy of your notes to your computer for easy reference. Physical copies are necessary in case the internet fails.

**Ask questions.**

Express genuine interest and excitement about the opportunity by preparing 2-3 thoughtful questions to ask at the conclusion of the interview. Examples include, "What do you enjoy most about working here?" or "Can you tell me about the team I'll be working with?" or "What will be the biggest challenge of this role in the next 6 months?"

**Avoid salary discussions.**

It's best to wait to talk about salary until you have a job offer. If an employer forces the conversation, try to keep your answers vague by telling him/her that you need a better understanding of the total compensation package before you can state your desired salary. Saying, "I'd rather discuss compensation in person" can get the interviewer to move on.

**Find out the next step.**

Before ending the interview, always ask, "What is the next step in the hiring process?" Not only is this valuable information to have, it also reinforces your interest in the job.

**Follow up.**

Within 24 hours, send a brief email thanking the interviewer for the opportunity and summarizing what you spoke about. If you want the job, restate your interest. The goal of the phone interview is to get a face-to-face interview, so don't be shy about making this request.

**What about Skype interviews?**

Many of the aforementioned rules apply, with a few additions. Make sure to do a practice Skype interview with a friend so you can test the technology, such as the sound level. Also, you'll need to get used to looking at the camera instead of the computer screen. And don't forget to prepare your surroundings. The interviewer will be able to see whatever is behind you, so choose a location that is tidy/not distracting.

**Have questions? Interested in scheduling a practice interview?**

Contact The Career Development Center at 805-437-3270, [career.services@csuci.edu](mailto:career.services@csuci.edu), or visit us in Bell Tower 1548.

We look forward to working with you!