

# Phone Interviews: Tips to Get Called Back



*By Caroline Levchuck*

Some people think phone interviews are easier than in-person ones. Often, those people are wrong.

In person, it's easy to tell if an interviewer is tuning you out if you notice them staring off into space or sending messages on their BlackBerry. On the phone, you (and the interviewer) are missing out on important visual cues. You can't read the interviewer's body language.

So, how can a job seeker really dial into an interviewer's demeanor to tell if she's bored, distracted or overwhelmed?

## **Find a Happy Place**

In the absence of sight, hearing becomes sharper. And interviewers can easily hear distraction over the phone.

Once you've scheduled a phone interview, locate a calm, quiet place where you can focus. Make sure you're not near a computer, TV or anything that will draw your attention away from the interview. Tell anyone who has access to the space that you are not to be disturbed unless catastrophe strikes.

Next, have a pen and paper handy to take notes during your interview. You should also have a copy of your resume so that when the interviewer refers to your experience, you can both literally be on the same page.

Finally, consider your attire, particularly if you're interviewing from your home. It's your prerogative to wear sweats, but may we suggest something closer to business attire? You'll feel more professional -- and, thus, you'll sound more professional.

## **Speak Easy**

As soon as you answer the phone, you're on!

You want to start your phone interview off right. And, because the interviewer can't see you, she's listening even more carefully.

Make a conscious effort to sound upbeat and enthusiastic.

Smile. Interviewers can hear you smile -- and smiling can put you in a better state of mind. (Don't believe it? Try smiling when you're in a bad mood.)

If you feel your confidence wane, stand up. Standing can make your voice sound more powerful.

And always remember to breathe. It will help you stay calm and sound more relaxed.

### **Sounds of Silence**

A phone interview isn't just about speaking. It's about listening.

To listen carefully, try closing your eyes when the interviewer is speaking so you can focus on what is being said.

This technique can also help you read the interviewer's mood. Is he interested and enthusiastic, or bored and distracted? Is the interview conversational? Are questions and answers flowing easily?

Listen hard after your responses. Did your response prompt additional questions or make the interviewer hesitate?

If the interviewer seems distracted, use one of the powerful questions you were saving for the "Do you have any questions?" section of the interview. A well-chosen question can re-engage him and put the interview back on track.

### **Practice Makes Perfect**

The best way to prepare for a phone interview: Practice.

Have a friend play the role of interviewer on the phone.

Provide her with some practice questions to ask. Give her a copy of your resume and have her come up with her own questions too.

Test different techniques while you're talking to her. Close your eyes while listening, stand while talking, smile while speaking. With her feedback, decide what works best.

You should also consider taping the conversation and listening to yourself afterward. You may be very surprised by what you hear. Finally, ask yourself, "Would I hire this person?"

If the answer isn't a resounding "yes," get back on the phone and get better prepared.