



Virtual Platforms and Phone Interviews

Be Prepared for a Call Anytime

Not all phone interviews are scheduled ahead of time. At any moment an employer could come across your résumé and decide to call you about your application. Employers are increasingly using phone and virtual platform interviews as an initial screening tool.

For that reason, be sure to keep track of the résumés you send out. Record the company name, position title, contact name, and the date when you applied. Add notes on each company's mission, history, locations, and services. Having this information at your fingertips assures you will not be caught by surprise when the phone rings.

If you are in a place where you cannot take a call (in class, driving, out with friends) let it go to voice mail. Make sure you have a professional sounding voice mail message. Remember, this is your first impression! It's better to return the call when you are in a quiet place than risk being unable to hear or sounding distracted. Return all calls as soon as possible; if you end up playing "phone tag," be persistent.

One of the advantages of a phone or virtual interview is that you can refer to notes during your conversation. Make a "cheat sheet" of the key points you want to convey—your strengths, evidence of your passion for the position and the field, keywords to help you respond to typical interview questions, and a few questions that you can ask the interviewer.

Practice, Practice, Practice

Just like with a traditional job interview, you should try to anticipate questions the interviewer might ask. If you practice your answers ahead of time, you will sound much more confident during the interview.

Typical interview questions include:

- Tell me about yourself.
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- Where do you see yourself in 1/5/10 years?
- What is your leadership style? Give an example of a situation in which you took on a leadership role.
- Describe a situation where you had to work with others to solve a problem.
- Give an example of a stressful situation you have encountered on the job. How did you handle it?
- Talk about an accomplishment you are proud of.
- Do you have any questions for me?

Use the STAR Approach

Employers want to know not only what you've done but in what context. Be prepared to back up your skills with specific scenarios and details about your performance. Use the **STAR** approach to help you respond to behavioral interview questions: explain the **Situation** or **Task** you were faced with; describe what **Action** you took, and end with the positive **Response** or **Result** of your actions.

Before a Virtual Platform Interview

First, ensure that your profile represents you in a professional manner. Your profile picture is your potential employer's first impression of you; make sure that it is suitable for the workplace. Remember to select an appropriate username as well.

On the day of the interview, dress in the same manner you would dress for an in-person interview. Get in front of your computer 15-20 minutes before your interview so that you can test your video and sound. Turn on the video and look around you. Be sure that you are in front of a simple, neutral background.

Your diction, tone of voice, and body language are as crucial here as during an in-person interview. Eye contact is also important, so be sure to look into the camera instead of at your screen. Throughout the interview, ask yourself: are you slouching? Do you have energy or are you acting bored and uninterested?

For Phone Interviews

Dress up for your phone interview. Research shows that you come across as more polished and professional if you are dressed professionally. It's OK to stand or walk during a phone interview; it may help you sound energized and enthusiastic. Try to smile frequently as it will make your voice sound friendly. Avoid chewing gum or eating while on the phone, but it's fine to sip water periodically if that helps you speak more clearly.

More Tips

- Be in a quiet place with a good connection.
- Speak slowly.
- Be careful not to come across as overly confident. No matter how much you've accomplished to this point, you are still new to the field. The last thing you want is to display a sense of entitlement or arrogance.
- Give concise answers. Talk long enough to answer the question but don't feel you need to fill every silence. An interview should be a dialogue rather than a monologue.
- If you need a minute to prepare an answer, it's appropriate to say, "Let me take a minute to think about that." This avoids "dead air."
- Sometimes a phone or virtual interview is a conference call with a committee of people. In this case, try to get the names of everyone on the call for your subsequent thank-you letters.
- Your goal is to secure an in-person interview with a hiring manager. If the interviewer doesn't mention what will happen next, you should bring it up. For example, you can say, "Thank you very much for taking the time to call me. I'd like to have the opportunity to meet in person. When will you be scheduling the next round of interviews?"
- Thank the interviewer.
- Send a thank-you note by email or regular mail within 24 hours.

Most important, schedule a mock interview with Career Development to practice your responses and get helpful feedback!

Questions? Contact Career Development at cservices@clarku.edu or 508-793-7258.