Telephone Interviewing

What’s the point of a telephone interview?
The telephone interview’s purpose is two-fold and there are benefits for both you and the employer.

**Employer Goals**

- Gather enough information about you to determine whether or not you’re a good fit for the position and company before investing company time and resources into an in-person interview.

**Interviewee Goals**

- Persuade the employer to invite them to an in-person interview by elaborating on relevant experience.
- Gather information about the organization and position to determine if the position is a good fit and decide whether or not you want to move forward with the interview process.

How should I prepare for a telephone interview?

- When offered the interview, ask for the names of those people who are interviewing you in advance. Because you will not have the opportunity to exchange business cards, you’ll want to have their names and positions to help you prepare thoughtful questions for the end of the interview and to send thank you notes.
- Schedule the call for a convenient time; if the employer calls when you are not expecting it, it is ok to ask to call back in ten minutes and give yourself time to prepare.
- Make sure there are no distractions at the time of the interview!
  - Head to a quiet room away from television, family, roommates, co-workers, and general noise.
  - If you’re home or in your residence hall room, let those you live with know what time you have the interview and how long you think it will last so they know not to interrupt.
  - If you plan on using a cell phone, make sure you have full reception and that your phone is fully charged. You do not want your call to drop mid-interview and employers don’t like playing the “can you hear me now?” game.
- Have your “tools” by the phone:
  - Your resume, cover letter, the job description
  - Pen and paper to jot down notes
  - Company research.
  - List of your “selling points” - your best qualities, specific experience and skills related to the position
  - List of questions about the organization and position
o Glass of water
o Your calendar
o Turn off the “call waiting” function on your telephone

During the Interview:

• Try standing up when speaking- helps to project more enthusiasm and intensity in your voice, smile while you are talking- friendliness will come through.
• Speak slowly, clearly and directly into the telephone receiver. Use correct grammar and complete sentences.
• Make sure you sound interested, confident and capable.
• Always back up general statements with specific examples, STAR method (see career services Interviewing Guide).
• Ask the interviewer to repeat or clarify the question if you are unsure of what is being asked.
• Check in with the interviewers. Telephone interviews can sometimes be awkward and it is difficult to discern when to stop talking. Make your answers concise and clear and feel free to ask “Did I answer your question?” or “Do you want me to speak more on this?” upon you complete answer.
• Be enthusiastic and ask for the job. Restate your interest in the position and ask what the anticipated next steps in the process will be.
• Thank the interviewer for the opportunity to talk and for their time.

Commonly Asked Questions (prepare answers in advance):

• Tell me about yourself
• What experience do you have in... (job title)
• Describe your strengths/weaknesses
• Why do you want to work for (name of organization)
• Do you have any questions for us?

During interview do NOT:

• Chew gum, eat, smoke
• Use filler words- “like”, “um”
• Answer with simple “yes” or “no”- always back up with specific examples

After the Interview:

• Send a thank you note to everyone that you spoke with within twenty-four hours. If you want to elaborate on a question or don’t think you answered a question adequately, feel free to do so in the thank you note; just make sure it’s still short and concise.
• Send any additional information that was requested during the telephone interview, (i.e.: references, writing sample, etc.) immediately.
• Jot down notes on what you were asked to help you prepare for future interviews.

**Northeastern University Career Services Resources:**

• Attend an Advanced Interviewing Workshop
• Schedule an appointment with a counselor for a mock interview
• Practice interviewing on Interview Stream
• Read Interview Guide on Career Services website [http://www.northeastern.edu/careerservices/jobs-internships/interviewing/](http://www.northeastern.edu/careerservices/jobs-internships/interviewing/)