

Dealing with telephone interviews

Employers often use telephone interviews for recruitment, as a way of screening large numbers of applicants before selecting a smaller pool of candidates for face-to-face interviews.

6 a In pairs, discuss the following questions.

- 1 Would you prefer to have an interview face-to-face or on the telephone?
- 2 Why is it increasingly popular for initial interviews to be held over the phone?
- 3 What are the advantages of telephone interviews for the candidate?
- 4 When is the best time to arrange a telephone interview?
- 5 Why should you smile during a telephone interview?
- 6 What is the candidate's main aim in most telephone interviews?



- b** Read the following article and compare the advice with your answers in Exercise 6a.

Tackling telephone interviews

It is common practice these days for initial first interviews to be held over the phone.

The main reason for this is that it significantly reduces the cost for employers, who often use telephone interviews as a method of filtering candidates before moving on to face-to-face interviews. Telephone interviews also have benefits for the applicants as well. As well as the obvious financial saving, an applicant may feel more relaxed within their own environment surrounded by their CV and research materials to aid them. You also don't have to wear a suit!

It is essential that you organise a time for a telephone interview that is convenient for you. You should suggest a time when you are unlikely to be disturbed, when you are in a quiet environment and you are confident that you have prepared sufficiently to convince the interviewer you are the right person for the job, or at least a second interview.

During the interview you should:

- smile, as this will help you to relax and project a positive image to the interviewer and will alter the tone of your voice.
- speak slowly and clearly. It's perfectly acceptable to take your time when answering questions.
- give short, memorable answers.
- use the person's title (Mr or Ms and their last name). Only use a first name if you are invited to.
- keep a copy of your CV open next to you, so that it's at your fingertips when you need it.
- have a pen and paper next to you so that you can make notes if you need to.

Remember that your goal is to try and set up a face-to-face interview. At the end of the interview ask if it would be possible to meet in person.

- c** Alex Mencken has recently applied for a number of administrative assistant jobs with theatres. A potential employer calls him for a telephone interview. However, as Alex has applied to many theatres he cannot remember the specific details about the theatre when he receives the unexpected call. In pairs, discuss what you would do in Alex's situation.

- d** ▶ 5.12 Listen to the telephone conversation between Alex and John Bradshaw from King's Theatre. What do you think of the way Alex dealt with the conversation? Do you think he handled the conversation well?

- e** ▶ 5.12 Listen again and complete the conversation.

John: Hello. Can I speak to Alex Mencken please?

Alex: This is Alex. (1) _____?

John: Hello, Alex. My name is John Bradshaw and I'm calling from King's Theatre regarding your recent application for a position with us. Is this a good time for you?

Alex: Oh, (2) _____. Unfortunately I have about ten minutes before I have to leave. Is that enough time, or can you call back later this afternoon?

John: That would be fine. (3) _____? I'm free after 2pm.

Alex: How about 2.30?

John: Perfect. I'll call you at 2.30.

Alex: Great. (4) _____.

John: Yes. So do I. Speak to you later. Goodbye.

Alex: Bye.

f ▶ 5.13 At 2.30pm Alex is sitting comfortably, he has thoroughly researched the position at King's Theatre and he has a copy of his CV in front of him. When John Bradshaw calls for the interview, Alex is feeling well-prepared. Listen to an extract from the interview and answer the following questions.

- 1 What responsibilities does John mention?
- 2 Would the successful applicant receive help to do this job?
- 3 Why does Alex have problems hearing John?
- 4 How does King's Theatre support new talent?

g ▶ 5.13 Listen again and tick (✓) the phrases you hear.

- 1 I'm sorry, could you say that again? ✓
- 2 I didn't quite catch what you said.
- 3 I'm having trouble hearing you. Can you hear me clearly?
- 4 Could you explain what you mean by ...?
- 5 So, if I understand you correctly ...
- 6 Do you mean ...?
- 7 Could you elaborate a little on ...?
- 8 Could you tell me what that would involve?

h Decide whether the phrases (1–8) in Exercise 6g ask for repetition (R), clarification (C) or more information (I).

1 R 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 —

i ▶ 5.14 Complete the following extracts from telephone interviews using the phrases in Exercise 6g. Listen and check your answers.

- 1 **Candidate:** *Could you explain what you mean by piece rates?*
Interviewer: *Piecework is a form of performance-related pay, where you would be paid a fixed piece rate for each unit you produce.*
- 2 **Candidate:** *I'm sorry, could you say that again, as _____?*
Interviewer: *Yes of course. My name is Mr Johnson and I'm calling to discuss your application for an internship here at Ariel Publishers.*
- 3 **Candidate:** *_____ that when the company is busy I would be required to work overtime?*
Interviewer: *Yes. But of course overtime rates are higher than normal pay.*
- 4 **Candidate:** *_____*
Interviewer: *Yes, I can hear you perfectly this end, although if you can't hear me well, perhaps I'll try and call you back on a landline.*
- 5 **Candidate:** *Your advertisement mentions administrative work. _____*
Interviewer: *Well, basically it means keeping our records up-to-date and sending a weekly email to our clients.*
- 6 **Candidate:** *_____, what you're saying is the job may involve some overtime?*
Interviewer: *Yes, but you would be paid extra for this.*

j In pairs, practise the dialogues in Exercise 6i.

k In pairs, role play a telephone interview. Sit back-to-back.

Student A, you are the interviewer. Interview the candidate for a job you know well. Use the following phrases.

Let me start by outlining the main aspects of the position and then we'll see how closely your skills and experience match the job. OK?

One of the main responsibilities of the post holder is to ...

Another part of the job is ...

The role would also require ...

What experience do you have in the area of ...?

Tell me about a time when you had to ...

How do your skills and experience match the requirements for this position?

Student B, you are the candidate. Answer the questions honestly. Use the following clarification phrases.

I'm sorry, could you say that again?

I didn't quite catch what you said.

Could you explain what you mean by ...?

So, if I understand you correctly ...?

Could you elaborate a little on ...?

Could you tell me what that would involve?

After the interview, give feedback to each other. Swap roles and practise again.

l In pairs, tell your partner about a job you would like to be interviewed for. Look through units 4 and 5 and choose five questions to ask your partner, based on the job they have chosen. Then take turns to ask and answer your questions. Try to use the techniques from these units to make your answers as impressive as possible.