

# TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS

*ABELSON LEGAL SEARCH*

This is a newer form of interviewing that seems to be more popular in times of economic constraints when firms, companies and candidates are less quick to invest money in a “look/see” interview. Although almost all the advice above is applicable to appropriate telephone interviewing techniques, there are a few other things to consider.

If at all possible, arrange to have the interview when the candidate is at home. It is inappropriate and potentially very risky to try to conduct a meaningful interview when absolute privacy cannot be guaranteed. If you are the candidate, try to select a time when you are at your best, considering whether you are a morning or an evening person. If you have pets, children, spouse, etc., send them away for the time of the interview. Do NOT accept a promise they will be quiet. Even the most well-meaning spouse is prone to stage whisper, “Don’t forget to tell them about the time you won the XYZ case.” And, if you are the candidate be sure to dress well, not formally, but well enough that a “leisure” mentality does not slip into your voice. Of course, the TV, music, dishwasher, dryer, etc. are turned off.

Remember to keep a smile in your voice and to keep your energy up, especially in a lengthy interview. It is very easy to fall into a monotone or to let yourself become distracted on the telephone. Make sure you take the call where there will be few visual distractions. Many people do not realize it is hard work to stay focused and attentive on the telephone, but there are tricks to putting your interest into your voice. If you have been told you are not brilliant on the telephone, work with your recruiter or a good friend to develop some techniques. This is an area where a speech techniques professional may be able to be of some help. If you begin with a poor connection, suggest re-placing the call.

One of the few “plusses” about this type of interview is the fact that the parties on both sides can have notes directly in front of themselves. Put things where you can read them easily without the sound of rustling papers. If you have notes in your computer, make sure you do not become distracted by “playing” with your computer, or changing things as you speak.

It probably is even more important to keep your answers concise without being curt, as telephone conversations may appear to be longer than the same words spoken face-to-face. If you rely on facial gestures or even hand or body gestures to convey your message, you must work on a way to assure that same information is included in your voice.

If you have never had a telephone interview, role play with your recruiter or a friend. Test where you want to sit, which telephone is most comfortable for you, what helps you to focus. Whether you are interviewer or interviewee, DO NOT use a speaker phone. It is extremely disrespectful of the other party, as the quality is never the same as a regular telephone. If more than two people are involved in the interview process, schedule a conference call.