A telephone interview is one way for employers to identify and recruit candidates for employment:

- It is a screening interview designed to help employers decide whom to invite for a face-to-face interview.
- Sometimes a telephone interview may be the only interview for the position.
- Telephone interviews save the candidate and the company time and money.
- A telephone interview is a real interview and you must be prepared.

1. Tell your roommates, parents, or anyone else that might answer your phone, if you are not using a cell phone, that employers may be contacting you in the next few weeks or months:
   - Ask them to take detailed messages that include the following: caller’s name, company, time, date, and why they are calling.
   - Record a professional greeting on your voicemail (both with a cell or landline phone) to receive calls when you’re unavailable.
   - Do not answer the phone when you are sleeping or busy—let the call go to voicemail.

2. Be prepared for the unexpected phone interview. The following are three types of phone interviews:
   - You initiate a call to the hiring manager and he or she is interested in your background. The call from that point on is an interview.
   - A company calls you based upon previous contact. You will likely be unprepared for the call, but it’s still an interview.
   - You have a pre-set time with a company representative to interview on the phone.

Finally, if an interviewer does call and the time is truly inconvenient, ask if you could talk at another time and suggest some alternatives. (Phone Interview Success at www.collegegrad.com/intv/)

SCHEDULING A TELEPHONE INTERVIEW

If a pre-set time is being arranged with an employer for a telephone interview, ask these questions to be better prepared:

- Who will contact whom? Will you contact the company or vice versa?
- What time is the interview? Clarify the time zone if the company is out of state.
- What is the purpose of the interview? What types of questions may be asked?
- How long will the interview be?
- How many people will be involved with the interview? What are their names and positions?
- Who is the contact person in case you need to reach him or her before the interview?

GENERAL TIPS FOR BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER THE TELEPHONE INTERVIEW

BEFORE THE TELEPHONE INTERVIEW

- Research the employer and keep all of your research material and notes within easy reach of the phone.
- Remember to smile during the interview so you sound friendly and engaging.
- Prepare answers to some of the top interview questions and have the answers in bullet form. Visit ACAC to review the “Interview Questions” handout.
- Have a short list of accomplishments available to review. Plus, be ready to elaborate on résumé experiences.
• Place your résumé in front of you for easy reference but make sure not to shuffle papers during the interview.
• Have a notepad and pen handy to take notes.
• Make sure children and pets will not be a distraction during the interview.
• Turn radio, television, and cell phone off (if using landline).
• Warm up your voice while waiting for the call.
• Be ready for the call 10–15 minutes in advance.
• Use the restroom before the interview.
• Have questions prepared for the interviewer. This shows your interest in the employer.
• Plan a general closing. This ensures you cover everything you want the employer to know.
• Put your closing in bullet form so you do not read directly from the paper.
• Know your schedule because the interviewer may offer a face-to-face interview.

DURING THE TELEPHONE INTERVIEW

• Stand up—it gets your blood flowing, improves your posture, and improves your response time.
• Do not eat, drink (a glass of water to sip is okay), chew gum, or smoke.
• Smile when you are talking. This will project a positive image to the listener and will brighten the tone of your voice.
• Speak directly into the phone and take notes, as needed, throughout the interview.
• Speak slowly and enunciate clearly. Take time and collect your thoughts before answering questions.
• Avoid short, choppy, yes-or-no answers. Answer all parts of questions asked.
• Do not answer call waiting. If the interviewer hears the beep, simply tell them it should stop shortly.
• Use Mr. and Ms. and the person’s last name. Only use their first name if they ask you to do so and only use Mrs. if someone introduces themselves as Mrs.
• Do not interrupt the interviewer.
• Thank your interviewer(s) for their time and consideration.
• Ask what is the next step in the interview process if the interviewer does not inform you.

AFTER THE TELEPHONE INTERVIEW:

• Immediately after the interview write down the main questions and answers given.
• Send a thank-you letter to the employer reiterating your interest in the position.

PRACTICE

Some people have a difficult time talking on the phone, so you may want to practice. Have a friend, family member, or an ACAC staff member conduct a mock interview. You may want to record the interview to critique your interview qualities (enunciation, voice level, poise in responses, etc.). You’ll be able to hear your “ums,” “ahs,” “okay,” and “you know.” Practice reducing them in your everyday speech, which will carry over to your phone interview.

(Updated: 06/18/15)

If you need a quiet space for your interview, you can reserve an interview room in ACAC.