

Using the

Telephone

to get a job



Having good telephone skills is an advantage when seeking a job. A quick look at job advertisements shows that many organisations require an initial telephone call when inquiring about a job vacancy. During phone conversations, some employers decide whether you are to be invited for a personal interview. Consequently, it may well be that the impression you make in the initial telephone contact could determine whether or not you are interviewed.

If you are contacting a firm to make a general inquiry about employment possibilities, then you can choose how to make the first contact. Whether it is best to telephone, write, email, or go in person may depend on the particular organisation, the type of job and your personal preference.

Here are some tips to assist you in preparing for and making a phone call about a possible job.

Before phoning the employer

- (a) Read the advertisement thoroughly. It is important that you know exactly what you are applying for.
- (b) Find out about the organisation advertising the job if you are not already familiar with it.
- (c) Establish the location of the job. There is no point in applying for a position if transport to and from the workplace is too difficult.
- (d) Note the times stated in the advertisement for telephone inquiries. Be prepared to ring right on time and be persistent if the number is engaged.
- (e) Prepare the following information in advance, and have it in front of you when you phone:
 - (i) the telephone number of the employer in large block letters
 - (ii) the name of the contact person in large block letters
 - (iii) the title of the advertised job
 - (iv) the following information about yourself:
 - educational standard
 - subjects studied at school, with current results and particularly any

subjects mentioned in the advertisement

- skills relevant to the job or employer
 - availability for interview (an applicant must be prepared to fit in with the employer's needs)
- (v) any questions you need to ask.
 - (f) Decide in advance what you are going to say when the number is answered. The wording of the advertisement may determine your opening. For example, consider appropriate responses to advertisements worded in the following ways:
 - (i) Phone 4612 3456
 - (ii) Phone Mr Smith on 4612 3456
 - (iii) Phone the Personnel Officer on 4612 3456
 - (iv) Phone Mr Smith, 4612 3456, for further information
 - (v) Phone Mr Smith, 4612 3456, to arrange an appointment.
 - (g) Have with you paper and a pen that works.

Making telephone contact

- (a) Whether you phone from home or school:
 - Avoid background noises - radio, small children, etc.
 - Have the prepared material and a pen and paper handy.
 - Sit at a table or bench so that you can write comfortably.
 - Be sure to have sufficient credit on your mobile if using a mobile.
- (b) Dialling the number:
 - Have the number in front of you and dial carefully.
 - Have the advertisement, your information sheet and a pen and paper handy.
 - If you have the address of the company, it is also a good idea to have a street map so that you are a little familiar with the location.
 - Be prepared to keep dialling if the number is busy.

(c) When someone answers:

- Introduce yourself and say why you are phoning.
- You may need to specify where the job was advertised.
- If you don't know to whom you are going to speak, listen to the name given by the receptionist. If necessary, ask the receptionist to repeat their name. Write it down.
- If no job has been advertised and you are making a general inquiry, it is good to have a contact name (e.g. a personnel officer) and to ask to speak to that particular person.

(d) When speaking to the appropriate person:

- Introduce yourself and spell your name, if necessary
- Come to the point quickly i.e. you are phoning to arrange an interview as advised in the advertisement or you are enquiring about the possibility of employment
- Answer questions readily
- Have a brief skills statement ready i.e. a short, specific explanation of how you can meet the employer's needs
- Speak clearly
- Be polite
- Sound interested in the job. Don't be afraid to ask questions
- Try to sound confident (even if you don't feel confident!)

(e) If an interview is offered:

- Note the time and date
- Be clear about whom you are to see and write the name down
- Write the name and address of the employer - you may need to know what floor the office is on
- Repeat the information to the person on the phone to ensure that you have copied the details accurately
- If unsure about how to get to the interview, ask about the nearest public transport
- Thank the person who has granted you the interview.

(f) If a job is offered, write down:

- where to report
- when to report
- whom to contact
- what are suitable clothes for the job?

Repeat the details to the person on the phone to ensure you have copied the details accurately.

(g) If no job is offered:

- Politely thank the person for their time.
- You could inquire whether your name could be considered for any other positions that might come up.
- You could also inquire what you need to do to improve your job application skills.

To improve your telephone skills

Perhaps you could get together with someone to role-play an employer while you play the part of the job applicant over the telephone. Role-play two situations - one where you are making a call concerning a particular job that has been advertised, and one in which you are making a general inquiry about the possibility of getting work.

Also role-play different situations such as the following:

- the person on the other end is the receptionist and you wish to speak to the person responsible for interviewing and hiring employees
- you are disconnected while on the telephone
- it's difficult to hear because of the background noise.

If you record the role-play, you will better understand how you can improve.

If you are very shy about using the telephone, practise first and then make the effort to get some experience in real life situations. In this way you will be able to talk more naturally and with greater confidence.

The *myfuture* website at www.myfuture.edu.au has a section on using the telephone in your job search. Once on the website, go to 'The Facts', 'Articles', 'Get that job', and then 'Job search tools and techniques'.