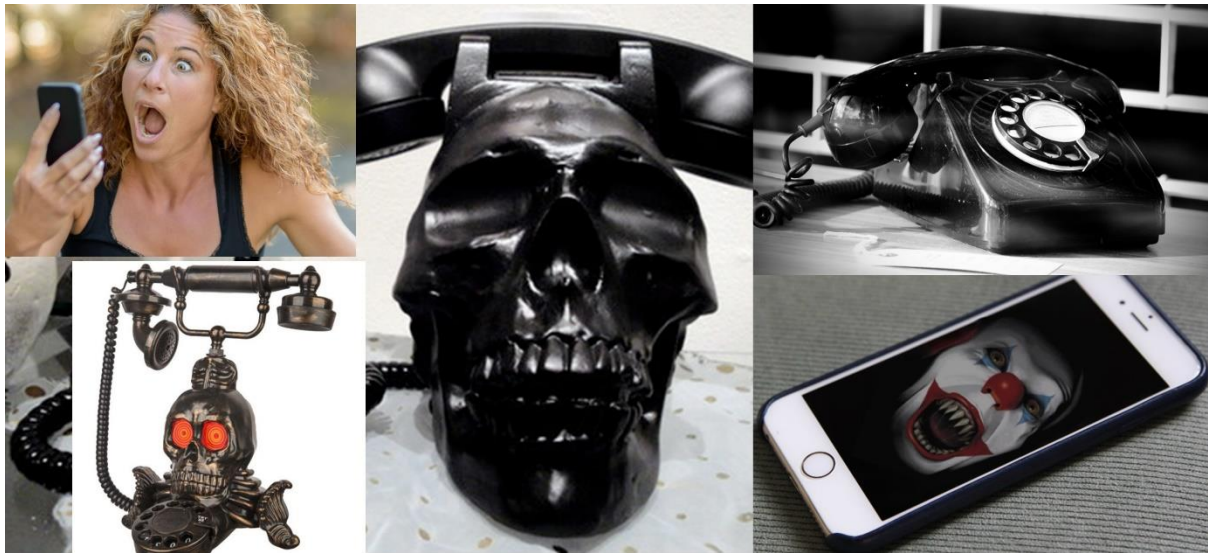


## Scared of Phone Interviews?

*Shôn Ellerton, May 18, 2019*

*Many of us are far more at ease when meeting up face-to-face at a job interview rather than through a phone. If you are not comfortable with phone interviews, you are not the only one.*



You successfully submitted your job application. You wait until something happens. With luck, you might be invited to an interview. But wait, it's a *phone* interview!

If you're like me, I absolutely despise phone interviews. I'm highly visually-oriented and not being able to see the person I'm talking to, I am unable to read the signals displayed by the interviewer's facial expressions making it far more difficult to engage in a meaningful and fluid conversation.

So if you're stuck in the situation on what to do if you're offered a phone interview, this is what I do.

### Is the phone interview essential?

In many cases, someone from the company's HR department will give you a quick call to ask you some basic questions about the role you applied for. These should be *very* basic questions. For example, whether you're still interested in the role, are you allowed to work in the country, are you willing to travel, and

possibly basic remuneration requirements. This preliminary phone call should only be around 5 to 10 minutes.

If the company you applied for is still interested in you, they might send you an email or call you on the phone offering an interview in person, a video interview or a phone interview. If you are not comfortable with phone interviews and offered one instead of having one in person, simply state that you would prefer having a face-to-face interview.

If it is not practical to have a face-to-face interview because it would involve you having to travel to another city or country, then ask for a video interview instead. It is not as effective as a real face-to-face, but it is certainly better than a faceless phone interview. In most cases, a real face-to-face interview will be granted if feasible; however, if the company you applied for does not want to conduct a face-to-face *and* there is no real reason for doing so, simply decline the interview explaining why.

I've sat on the other side of the fence when I had to interview several candidates. In no way would I ever *offer* a phone interview unless the candidate was too far away to come into the office or was incapacitated for some particular reason. These days, if that happened, one should make every allowance to organise a video conference instead.

One thing to keep in mind that phone and video interviews are usually far less scary and formidable if they are used as follow-ups or second interviews with those you have *already* met face-to-face.

### If a phone or video interview is your only option

If it is simply practical to have a face-to-face interview, then you should opt, at least, for a video interview. However, this may not always be available. I once had a video interview lined up only to find out that the person who interviewed me did not know how to make it work. Therefore, we resorted to using the dreaded phone.

If you are still employed and your office sports a number of secluded meeting rooms, I strongly suggest having your interview conducted there rather than an informal setting like your home. If you are really comfortable in undertaking a phone interview from home, that's great, but for many, it is often more difficult due to potential domestic distractions. I often wonder how many phone interviews take place whilst sitting on the 'great white throne'!

If you are not working, then try to arrange a time where any domestic distractions are at a minimum. If you have an office or study in the house, use this space along

with your speaker phone, rather than holding the phone to your ear. As odd as it might sound, how you dress for a phone interview can make a difference; although, for some, it may not make a blind bit of difference. Conducting a phone interview dressed in pajamas or in swim shorts having just been in the pool may feel slightly odd for some.

One advantage of having a phone interview is that you can have as many notes that you need laid out in front of you. You can pre-empt many of the questions that an interviewer is likely to ask by jotting them down on some bits of paper in front of you before the phone interview commences. There are many conversation threads on the Internet as to what kind of questions are likely to be asked. So be prepared.

If you have a phone interview, never babble on more than you have to. This often happens because you are unable to gauge the facial reactions from your interviewer. It is all too easy to elicit far too much irrelevant information and continue to dribble on unnecessarily. During periods of questions and answers on the phone interview, I pretend to have a conversation using a CB radio. You state your answer and act like you're saying 'over' after each phrase. This forces the interviewer to press on with the interview in a timely fashion.

Lastly, don't be too emotional about the role. This can often be the death knell of many a phone interview. There will always be other opportunities.

Happy interviewing!