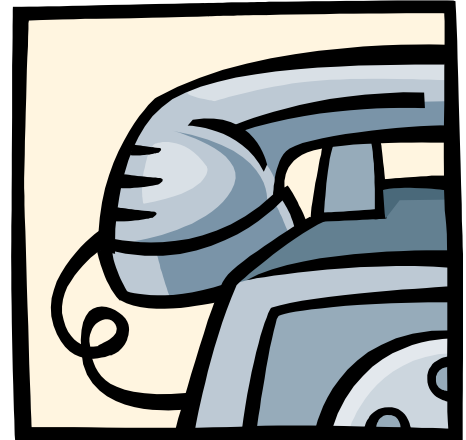


Telephone Skills

Employers are increasingly using the telephone as a means to screen applicants. It is cost effective and saves them the time it would take to bring an applicant on-site. As a job seeker, the telephone can be one of your most effective tools for getting straight to the hiring authority in order to obtain more interviews. Also, it allows you to make a positive first impression with an employer, demonstrating your **professionalism** and **interpersonal skills**.



Many people are “*phone phobic*,” and avoid using this valuable technique because of the fear of rejection. Keep in mind, most employers are happy to help you and to be seen as knowledgeable in their fields. The worst thing that will happen is that someone won’t bring you in for an interview. But remember, many job seekers get more interviews by using the phone than by any other method.



Develop a List of Contact. Start with people you know: relatives, friends, professional contacts, people who provide you services, such as doctors, bankers, etc. (For more ideas, see the handout on “Networking”). The phone book can be one of your most valuable resources for securing leads, and the *Yellow Pages* can allow you to target specific industries. This is assuming that you have a pretty clear idea of what you want to do. If not, make an appointment to see the Director of Career Services.

Create a Phone Script. Keep this handy by your phone, (along with your resume and a date book to make appointments). The following is based on the assumption that you’re going to contact someone who doesn’t know you and who may or may not have a job opening.

1. The Introduction

Easy one-just add your name to the blank space on the Phone Script Worksheet.

2. The Position

Begin your statement with “I am interested in a position as...” and write in your job objective. Don’t say you are “looking for a job” as you will often be interrupted and told there are no openings. Your objective is to talk to people who have the ability to hire a person with your skills-even if they don’t have a job opening now.

3. The Hook

Include length of experience, training, education, special skills related to the job, and accomplishments. Make sure that sentences in your phone script sound natural when spoken. Be sure to read your script out loud to see how it sounds. Also, read it to others and continue to refine it until it sounds right.

4. The Cincher

Take your key adaptive skills and make these traits into a sentence. For example, “I’m reliable, hard working and learn quickly.”

5. The Goal

The goal of the phone script is to get an interview. “When may I come in to talk with you more about my qualifications?” is better than, “May I have an interview?” which elicits only a “yes” or “no” response. Be ready with some dates and times.

TIPS FOR COMPLETING YOUR PHONE SCRIPT

- Write exactly what you will say on the phone. Avoid the temptation to “wing it.”
- Keep your phone script short-just present the information an employer would want to know about you, then ask for the interview.
- Write your script the way you talk-make sure it sounds natural when you practice it out loud.
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TIPS FOR MAKING COLD CONTACTS- CALLING SOMEONE YOU DON'T KNOW

Get to the hiring authority who is most likely to supervise someone with your skills. Unless you want to work in the personnel department, don’t start there. In a smaller business ask to speak with the manager or “person in charge.” In a larger one, ask for the name of the person who is in charge of a particular department. Get the correct spelling and write it down immediately.

Get past the secretary (gatekeeper). In some cases, secretaries or receptionists will try to screen out your call. Treat secretaries and receptionists well and they’ll put in a good word with their bosses. Here are two things you can do to avoid getting screened out in these situations:

1. Call back: If you get screened out on your first try, call back a day later and ask for the manager’s name. Say you are getting ready to send some correspondence to your contact. This is true since you will be sending them something soon (your resume). If you can’t get through, say thank you and call

back in a day or so. Then ask for the manager by name and you will often get right through.

2. Call when the secretary is out: Try when the secretary is out to lunch. Other good times are just before and after normal work hours.

TIPS FOR MAKING WARM CONTACTS-CALLING SOMEONE YOU KNOW

These will be your easiest calls to make.

1. Chat informally, give the reason for your call, and then follow your script.

Your call may sound something like this:

*“The reason I called is to let you know I am looking for a position as...and I thought you might be able to help. Let me tell you a few things about myself. “
(continue with the rest of your phone script).*

2. When calling referrals, begin by saying who referred you:

“Hello, Mr. Ryan, Joan Busby suggested I give you a call.”

If the receptionist asks why you are calling, say:

“A friend of Mr. Rhodes’ suggested I give him a call.”



GETTING THE INTERVIEW!

The primary goal of a phone contact is to get an interview. This is important to remember at all times when making phone calls. To succeed, you must be ready to get past the first, and even second rejection. Here are some suggestions:

Ask three times for the interview

To increase your chances of getting an interview, you need to practice **asking** for the interview. This often required you to overcome initial rejections, but you must learn how to handle this by asking again. For example:

PERSISTENCE PAYS

Ask once: You: *When I may come in for an interview?*

Employer: I don't have any positions right now.

Ask again: You: *That's OK, I'd still like to come in to talk to you about the possibility of future openings.*

Employer: *I really don't plan on hiring within the next six months or so.*

Be prepared to ask again:

You: *Then I'd like to come in and learn more about what you do. I'm sure you know a lot about the industry, and I'm looking for ideas on getting into your field and moving up.*

If after talking to the employer you decide not to request a meeting or the employer does not grant your request:

1. Get a referral: Ask for names of other people who might be able to help you. When you call them, remember to tell them you referred you to them.
2. Ask to call back: If your contact is busy when you call, ask if you can call back. Get a specific time and day to do this. The employer will likely be impressed when you do follow-up.
3. Ask if it's OK to call back from time to time: Try every two to three weeks. Maybe your contact will hear of an opening or have some other information for you. Always follow-up with your contacts by immediately sending thank you notes and by calling periodically to inform them of your progress, especially those who are particularly helpful to you. If a contact referred you to someone else, let them know how the meeting went, or tell them how you followed up on a suggestion that was given to you.

PHONE SCRIPT WORKSHEET

1. Introduction

Hello, my name is _____

2. The Position

I am interested in a position as _____

3. The Hook

4. The Clincher

5. The Goal

When can I come in for an interview? _____

Material adapted from *The Very Quick Job Search* by J. Michael Farr