

## PHONE CALLS TO AND FROM POTENTIAL EMPLOYERS

Your phone is your most important link with employers. When an employer reads your application and decides to interview you, they will probably give you a phone call.

If you have a smartphone, you will also probably use it to do online searches, check your email, and use social media. It will be your main job search tool.

There are several very important rules for using your phone during your job search:

1. Use only one phone number. Make sure it is on your resume, and on every job application you file. Then don't change your phone number, or decide to carry more than one cell phone, or make other changes that could cause confusion.
2. Don't let your phone service get cut off. An employer who tries to call you but finds that your phone isn't working will not try again. If you have trouble paying your phone bill on time, call your service provider and work out a payment arrangement that will keep your phone from going dead.
3. When you begin your job search, make sure your voice mail is set up and working properly. Record a new message for callers to hear if you are not available. It should not be casual or funny, and it should not contain music or other background noise. Instead, it should be professional — for example, "Hello, this is (first name and last name). I can't take your call right now, but please leave a message and I will call you back soon. Thank you."
4. You should also be professional when you answer the phone unless you are sure that the call is from a friend or family member — for example, "Hello, this is (first name and last name)."
5. Don't text employers unless you are returning texts you have received from them. Also, be careful of texts, pictures, and voice messages you send to others, or that you post online. You don't want a statement like "That guy who called me for an interview sounded like a jerk" to be floating around in cyberspace. (The same goes for any messages or pictures that you would not want your mother to see.)
6. Don't call employers to ask if they have job openings unless someone has told you about a possible opening AND you have already checked online to see if it has been posted. But if you have received a good tip and can't find the job posting online, it's okay to call the employer's Human Resources office or, for a small employer, the main phone number.

You might say something like: "Hello, my name is (first name and last name). I'm looking for a position as a \_\_\_\_\_, and I heard that there might be one available at (name of

employer). Could you please tell me who I should speak to about it?" If you have to leave a message, don't give the reason for your call. Just leave your name and phone number, and politely ask for a return call.

7. Don't call employers to ask about applications you have filed until at least two weeks after you have filed them. At that point, you might want to follow up to show how interested you are in the job. Try to be helpful — for example, "Hello, my name is (first name and last name). On (date of application) I applied for a position as a (job title). I just wanted to check with you to see if there is any further information you might need to evaluate my application."

The answer will usually be "no thanks," but that's okay. You can follow up again in a couple of weeks to see if the position has been filled, but don't call more often than once every 2-3 weeks. No one ever pestered or bullied their way into a job.

8. If a job posting says "no phone calls," then don't call unless the employer calls you first. Otherwise, the first message you will communicate to the employer is that you don't care much about the employer's rules.
9. When talking with an employer or leaving a message, speak clearly, and don't speak too fast. When giving your phone number, speak slowly enough to allow someone to write it down as you are speaking.
10. When leaving a message with a person or on voice mail, always give your phone number. Don't ever say, "You have (or he or she has) my number." If you find yourself playing phone tag with an employer — if you and the employer keep returning each other's calls but can't connect — end your message by saying, for example, "I'm sorry that we're having a hard time catching up with one another. I'm looking forward to talking with you. Please call me back at your earliest convenience. If you would like to schedule our conversation, please let me know of a day and time that works well for you, and I will call you then. Thank you."
11. Check your phone messages at least once each day, delete old messages to keep your voice mail from filling up, and return calls promptly. Remember that the person who called you may not be the same person who answers the phone. Always be professional when returning calls — for example, "Hello, my name is (first name and last name). I'm returning a call from (Mr. or Ms.) \_\_\_\_\_."
12. When an employer calls you to arrange an interview, it is a very important moment. If you are in a noisy place, go somewhere quiet. If you are driving, ask for a moment so you can pull over and talk more safely. In addition to any other information that you receive from the caller, be sure to get: 1) the name of the person who is calling you, 2) the name and

position of the person (or people) who will interview you, 3) the date, time, and place of the interview, and 4) a phone number to call if you have any trouble getting to the interview. Repeat the information back to the caller to make sure you heard it correctly. Write all of the information down immediately, and put it in a safe place. And always thank the caller.

But what if you don't have a phone? You need to get one.

If you can't afford a phone, please look into obtaining one through the federal Lifeline Program ([fcc.gov/consumers/guides/lifeline-support-affordable-communications](http://fcc.gov/consumers/guides/lifeline-support-affordable-communications)), or call the Universal Service Administrative Company at 888-641-8722. This program may help you to get a free cell phone, or a discount on either a cell phone or a traditional "wireline" phone service.

Finally, you can learn more about smartphones and other digital mobile devices at the Goodwill Community Foundation's Learn Free – Devices ([gcflernfree.org/topics/devices/](http://gcflernfree.org/topics/devices/)).

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