ASK ELLEN – Advice for phone interviews?

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Q: Do you have any suggestions regarding telephone interviews? [My first one is coming up] and I'm a bit anxious.

A: Here are some tips for phone interviews:

- Make sure you are in a place where it will be quiet, where you will be comfortable, and where you won't be interrupted. Using a land line is better than using a cellphone; there is less chance of being disconnected.

- I'd wear a suit. That may seem a little strange as the person/people you are speaking to can't see you, but it can help you to be in a professional, interviewing state of mind.

- One advantage of a phone interview is you can have your resume and cover letter and the job description and any notes you may wish to have in front of you, for reference.

- Make sure you prepare for the phone interview as you would for face-to-face; know the position description well and be able to talk about how your experience and skills relate to its duties. Do your homework about the employer and the library so you can demonstrate in the interview that you are interested specifically in this job as opposed to just any job.

- Smile as you speak, whenever possible (you don't have to be smiling every second, of course). The listener(s) will be able to hear that you are smiling and that will help to make you seem friendly and approachable and at ease.

- Be sure to answer the questions you are asked and try to keep your answers on the brief side as you won't have any visual cues that you might be going on too long with a particular answer or if you've gotten off track. If you get a sense that the listeners are not satisfied with a certain answer, you can say something like, "Did that answer your question?" or "Did you want more details about that?"

- Remember to have questions about the position and its responsibilities, as you are likely to be asked "Do you have any questions for us?" near the end of the interview (you can also have these printed out in front of you). Don't ask about salary, benefits, vacation, perks, etc. yet; that's for later. Here are two questions you should ask: “Are there any other responsibilities of this job we have not already discussed?” and “What are the next steps in the hiring process?”

More advice for phone interviews:  http://www.askamanager.org/category/phone-interviews
Thank you and good luck!

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