

# Phone Interviews

How to create and implement neuro-inclusive Phone Interviews.



## About Phone Interviews

Phone Interviews serve as a flexible, alternative to in-person meetings, putting the focus on communication skills. They can be particularly useful for initial screenings or when logistical challenges come into play. They offer a streamlined and cost-effective solution to the recruitment process.

### Benefits

The benefits may include:

- A flexible and inclusive option for candidates unable to attend in-person meetings.
- Reduces intimidation, allowing candidates to focus on showcasing their skills and knowledge without the added pressure of non-verbal communication.
- Save time and resources for both employers and candidates.
- Assessing a candidates interpersonal and communication skills.
- Suitable for roles where verbal clarity and empathy are critical.



#### Ideal for:

IT support technicians, customer service representatives, and sales associates.

#### Applicable for:

Technology, retail, and hospitality industries.



## Considerations and solutions

There are considerations to address to ensure the assessment is neuro-inclusive. These include:

### Considerations

#### Reduced personal connection:

Without visual cues, it can be harder to establish rapport or assess non-verbal communication.

#### Limited assessment scope:

Can be challenging to assess technical or soft skills thoroughly.

#### Distractions:

Both candidates and interviewers may face distractions in their environments.

### Solutions



Focus on clear, structured questions and active listening to evaluate the candidate's responses.



Use scenario-based questions or verbal assessments tailored to the role's requirements.



Ask candidates to find a quiet, comfortable space and ensure interviewers maintain professionalism.

## Create and implement neuro-inclusive Phone Interviews

Phone Interviews can be a flexible and efficient way to assess candidates, particularly in the early stages of recruitment. By implementing neuro-inclusive practices, employers can create a fairer and more accessible experience for all candidates, including those who are neurodivergent.

### Pre-interview preparation

Neurodivergent individuals may face difficulties processing verbal information or navigating unstructured interactions over the phone. Unclear expectations can add to anxiety.

#### **Neuro-inclusive strategies**

##### **Neurodivergent awareness training**

Train interviewers to understand common neurodivergent characteristics and how they may present during Phone Interviews.

##### **Detailed interview information**

Share clear and detailed information about the interview process, including:

- The date, time, and expected duration
- The phone number or platform to be used
- An agenda outlining the topics to be covered and the format of the interview
- Contact details of a support person from the organisation to answer any questions.

##### **Accommodations and adjustments**

Encourage candidates to request any accommodations or adjustments that would support the interview, such as:

- What time of day the interview takes place
- Additional processing time
- Pauses between questions to allow for reflection
- Follow-up emails for complex or scenario-based questions.

##### **Provide questions in advance**

Sharing the questions or topics can help candidates prepare, especially for behavioural or technical questions. Allow the person to access notes during the interview.

An autistic adult shared,

“Knowing the questions beforehand lets me organise my thoughts and respond more clearly.”

## Create and implement neuro-inclusive Phone Interviews

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### Preparing the interview environment

The lack of visual cues in phone interviews can make it harder for candidates to interpret tone or pace, potentially leading to misunderstandings.

#### **Neuro-inclusive strategies**

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##### **Have structured conversations**

Use a clear structure for the interview, and allow for processing time, such as:

- Introductions
  - Explanation of the process
  - Questions grouped by topic
  - Opportunity for the candidate to ask questions at the end of each topic.
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##### **Create a comfortable experience**

Inform candidates that they can:

- Take or use notes or work samples during the interview
  - Ask for questions to be repeated or clarified.
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##### **Minimise background noise**

Ensure the interviewer conducts the interview in a quiet space to avoid distractions or confusion.

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## Create and implement neuro-inclusive Phone Interviews

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### During the interview

Phone Interviews rely heavily on verbal communication, which can present challenges for some candidates. To ensure understanding and support effective communication, it is important to plan for this beforehand. Candidates may find fast-paced questioning difficult to follow or struggle to articulate complex ideas without the benefit of visual aids.

#### **Neuro-inclusive strategies**

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##### **Set a supportive tone**

Begin with a friendly introduction and outline the structure of the interview.

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##### **Interview questions**

###### **Focus on specific objectives**

Use structured interviews to align discussions with key role qualifications.

###### **Direct and clear questions**

Avoid abstract or ambiguous queries, opting for straightforward questions.

**For example, ask, "What professional skills do you excel at in the workplace?"**

###### **Concrete vs. open-ended questions**

**For example, ask, "In your last job, how did you handle challenging customers?" rather than vague ones like, "Tell me about yourself."**

###### **Avoid ambiguity and hypotheticals**

Focus on past experiences rather than speculative scenarios.

**For example, ask "Can you describe a time when you had to meet a tight deadline? How did you manage it, and what was the result?"**

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##### **Direct and clear information**

###### **Use straight-forward language**

Be mindful of literal interpretations; avoid idiomatic language and jargon.

###### **Avoid double-barrelled questions**

When multiple questions with different responses are asked at the same time it can be confusing.

###### **Use specific prompts to guide detailed responses**

**For example, "What steps did you take to mediate the situation?"**

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##### **Allow processing time**

Pause after each question to give candidates time to think and respond.

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##### **Encourage candidates to ask for clarification**

Let candidates know it's okay to ask for questions to be repeated or clarified.

**For example, "If you need me to rephrase or clarify a question, just let me know!"**

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##### **Interview checklist**

Use a checklist to focus on performance-relevant criteria and qualifications rather than social or behavioural characteristics. Use a scoring system to evaluate responses objectively.

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### After the interview

The post-interview period can be challenging for anyone due to uncertainties about outcomes. For neurodivergent individuals, this phase can be particularly difficult, as expectations about what happens next may not be intuitively understood. Employers can support neurodivergent candidates by being explicit and direct about the next steps. Providing clear information about timelines, outcomes, and expectations can alleviate anxiety, while transparent communication and constructive feedback can foster growth and a positive candidate experience.

#### **Neuro-inclusive strategies**

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##### **Clear timeframes**

Share explicit timelines for when candidates can expect to hear back, including if unsuccessful candidates will be contacted. Share information on the next steps in the recruitment process.

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##### **Constructive feedback**

Provide detailed, actionable feedback on their performance, focusing on specific strengths and areas for improvement

A candidate shared,

“General feedback like ‘You did well’ doesn’t help me understand what I can improve for the future.”

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##### **Process evaluation**

Regularly collect feedback from candidates on their experience to refine and improve the process.

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## Example of a neuro-inclusive Phone Interview

### Scenario

A company is recruiting for a remote IT support role, which requires strong communication skills, technical problem-solving abilities, and a customer-focused approach. The company opts for a phone interview as an efficient way to assess candidates. To ensure the process is neuro-inclusive, they implement the following strategies.



Providing detailed information can help ease stress.

### Actions taken

- ✓ The candidates are provided with a clear agenda and sample technical questions in advance.
- ✓ The time of the day that the interview takes place is negotiated with the candidate.
- ✓ During the interview, the interviewer asks straightforward, scenario-based questions, such as: **“How would you guide a customer through troubleshooting a slow computer?”**
- ✓ The interviewer allows pauses between questions for the candidate to process their thoughts and respond.
- ✓ The candidate is encouraged to refer to notes they prepared beforehand and to ask for clarification if needed.



### Outcome

Candidates confidently demonstrate their technical knowledge and communication skills, while the structured and supportive approach ensures a fair assessment of their suitability for the role.

By integrating these neuro-inclusive strategies, Phone Interviews can provide a flexible and accessible platform that allows all candidates to showcase their skills and potential in a fair and supportive environment.

### Learn more and access resources

To learn more about Neuro-inclusive Recruiting and how to create and maintain neuro-inclusive workplaces, scan the QR code or visit [neuroinclusiverecruiting.org.au](https://neuroinclusiverecruiting.org.au).

