

Job seeker's toolkit

> Phoning a potential employer

When you are looking for work, you may need to call the employer as a first contact or for a phone interview.

There are a number of things you can do to make it a successful experience.

This guide provides you with an outline of some key steps to consider.

Before making the call:

- > Be clear in your mind about the purpose of the phone call.
- > Find out as much as you can about the business you are calling, and the particular job you are applying for so that you have an understanding of what they do and the type of people they employ.
- > Develop a plan on what you are going to say, including introducing yourself, explaining what you are calling about and stating your skills and experience. Practise to help you sound natural, friendly, confident and professional.
- > You may like to decide whether or not you will disclose your disability to the employer.
- > Have a pen and paper ready, as well as your resume close by, so that you can refer to it when answering questions.
- > Call the employer from a quiet place where you will not be interrupted.
- > Make some notes to help you answer any questions that might be asked and to prompt you about information you need to give. It is important to note your skills and the personal qualities that would make you the best person for the job. Some of the questions you may be asked include:
 - > What skills and experience will you bring to the organisation?
 - > Do you have any recent work experience in a similar role?
 - > What are your educational qualifications?

During the interview

- > At the start of the call, be sure to say clearly both your name and the name of the person you need to speak to (if they have not answered the phone). If you do not know the name of a particular person, ask to speak to the manager or the person responsible for staffing or recruitment (depending on the type of organisation). If you are calling about an advertised position, be sure to clearly state the position you are applying for and where you found out about the job (e.g. 'I would like to apply for the part time administration position advertised today in The Australian').

- > You may reach an answering machine. Before the call, it is helpful to think about what you will say if this happens and have a short message ready with your reason for calling and the number you will leave if you want them to call you back.
- > Once you are speaking to the right person, be clear about what you have to say. If you feel that they are not understanding you or not responding in the way you expect, try to explain the information or question a bit differently.
- > If you have previously mentioned your disability to an employer, have some prepared answers to any questions the employer might ask. Are you aware of what employers can ask you about your disability?
- > Will you need any adjustments or modifications if you are asked to attend an interview?
- > If they are too busy to take your call, ask if there is a better time to phone and whether they prefer you to email or write to them (if you have not already).
- > If things get tricky and you begin to feel agitated during the call, take some deep breaths and if necessary, be quiet for a moment to gather your thoughts. If the understanding does not improve, it is good to say things like, *"I'm sorry that you don't seem to understand me"*.
- > If the situation still does not improve, it is all right to say, *"This phone call is not working very well, I'm going to hang up now and call back when I have had some time to think. Thank you for listening to me."*
- > When ending the call, thank the person very much for their time and summarise any action you are going to take. For example, *"Thank you very much Mr Jones, and I will see you at your office at 10am on Monday with my resume."*
- > At the end of any phone call, it is important to thank the person for their time.

After the phone call:

- > When you get off the phone, make notes about the conversation, especially the date and time of things you need to do, while they are still fresh in your mind.
- > Follow through with any actions you said you would do.
- > Think about the call and write down any notes that may help you in the future, such as new questions that you want to be prepared for next time.