

Preparing For a Job Interview

The interview is the final phase most people encounter before getting a job. Being chosen for an interview means someone is interested in your skills, knowledge, and experience. Other factors including your availability to start, willingness to travel, and physical conditioning may also be considered, depending on the position. However, even a well qualified applicant can be passed over if they do not perform well in the interview. They want to see if your talents meet their needs for the job and how well you will fit in with others in that department.

The interview is when the employer and you learn about each other. The employer wants to know how well your strengths, enthusiasm, education, and work experience are matched to the requirements of the position. During this time, you want ask questions to decide whether the company and the position are a good fit for you. The five phases below will guide and prepare you for a successful interview.

1. BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

- A) Do your homework! Learn as much as you can about the company before the interview. Do some research: talk to people who work there, look on the Internet, and speak with their consumers. Find out what services/products the company provides, how long they have been in business, whether the company is growing or changing, the company's reputation, etc. An interviewer will be impressed that you have made an effort to learn about the company.
- B) Know where you are going. Store their address in your smartphone and map the directions.
- C) Arrive 15 minutes early. Park away from the entrance and spend time reviewing your notes.
- D) Turn OFF your cell phone or leave it in the car.
- E) Be prepared and act professional. Bring a pen, three extra copies of your resume, your portfolio (if appropriate), and a notepad with questions you prepared for the interview.
- F) You are a Success – dress like it! Hair should be styled appropriately. Keep perfume, cologne and aftershave to a minimum. Women: dress, skirt (not too short), or dress pants with a nice blouse or blazer. No gaudy nail polish, excessive jewelry or make-up. Men: pants (not jeans), collared shirt, and tie. A suit is not always necessary. Avoid bright/loud clothes! Be conservative!

2. BEGIN YOUR INTERVIEW

- A) Introduce yourself to the secretary/receptionist and inform them that you have an interview: mention whom the interview is with and the appointment time.
- B) When you meet the interviewer, look straight into his/her eyes, shake hands firmly, introduce yourself, smile, be confident and wait until you are offered a seat.
- C) Be confident in your communication, sit up, and smile. Ask if they would like a copy of your resume.

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3. DURING YOUR INTERVIEW

- A) Always face the interviewer with good posture and body language. Resist playing with your hair, pen, being distracted, etc.
- B) Maintain your enthusiasm but keep your answers short and concise.
- C) Do not interrupt the interviewer. Write down questions then refer to them when it is appropriate. Granted, this is a conversation; if something said is not clear, ask that they provide more detail.
- D) Know your resume or portfolio well and be prepared to answer questions, provide details, and expand on your qualifications.
- E) Don't be a know-it-all! Be agreeable, yet resist saying "I know" and "I already do that."
- F) Be honest with all answers. Small lies are easy to spot and likely to get your candidacy rejected.
- G) Respond with complete answers. Never answer with just "yes" or "no", add supporting information to complete the sentence.
- H) Pay close attention to what the interviewer is saying.
- I) Organize your thoughts before speaking. Feel free to think for a moment about a difficult question, then smile and respond.
- J) DON'T: Emphasize your weaknesses. Don't draw attention to negative attributes such as poor attendance, grades, being fired, etc. DON'T criticize former employers, co-workers, or school personnel. DON'T discuss personal issues, good or bad, which are irrelevant. DON'T ASK about salary or benefits unless the interviewer brings it up first.

4. END OF YOUR INTERVIEW

- A) If you have not already, ask the job-related questions you prepared and the ones that came to mind during the interview.
- B) You may be offered the job immediately. In that case, you should ask about specific salary, benefits, and work hours. You do not have to give them an immediate answer. Ask for a day to think about it.
- C) If you are told you will be contacted, ask about how long it will be. Offer to call in a few days to find out the decision. This shows your continued interest.
- D) Thank the person for the interview and their time. Shake hands firmly on the way out.

5. THE FOLLOW-UP

- A) Send the interviewer a thank-you letter soon after the interview.
- B) Call the company about a week after the interview to find out if they have made a decision. If they have not, find out when they expect to have a decision.

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7 Questions Often Asked by Employers During the Interview

1. Tell me about yourself / Describe yourself
2. What are your greatest strengths? / Weaknesses?
3. Why do you want to work here? / What do you know about us?
4. Why should I hire you?
5. What are your long-term career goals?
6. Describe your most rewarding high school experience
7. How well do you work under pressure?

7 Questions Often Asked by Applicants During the Interview

1. What kind of orientation and training is available for this position?
2. What are the best qualities a person should have to excel in this position?
3. How do you evaluate or determine success for this position?
4. How long was the last person in this position and why did he/she leave?
5. Is there an opportunity for a promotion in the future?
6. Generally, what percentage of time will be devoted to each of my responsibilities?
7. What is the management style of this company?