

Interview Preparation

Student Employment Services
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BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

Different employers interview in different ways. You may interview face-to-face with one person or several people (alone or in a group), over the phone or via Webcam (video online interviews). A first interview with a human resources representative is often used to pre-screen candidates to determine if they are qualified for the position. A second interview often takes place with a hiring manager and sometimes coworkers or supervisors for the position. Once an employer has reviewed your resume and cover letter and decided to ask you for an interview, you'll want to be sure to prepare for the meeting. In fact, **many of the steps you can take to improve your interview skills should be done before you meet with the employer** in person. **Familiarity with the information will help you feel more prepared when answering questions because you will be able to make better connections between your skills and the needs of the company.**

How to Prepare for the Interview

Research the company on-line

- Industry, products, client base and major competitors
- Company, mission, values and goals.
- Analyze the job description to look for tips/clues about the questions you might be asked.

Know your Resume!

- Be prepared to discuss every detail
- If your resume is in front of you, do not read verbatim – be able to speak to skills/experiences related to the job

Drive to the interview site at least one day before for a trial run

- Be familiar with location, parking and building entrances
- Time yourself to account for unexpected delays

Practice Makes Perfect

- Practice interview questions with a friend or family member
- If no one is available, practice in front of a mirror

Practice Common Interview Questions

You can't know exactly what will be asked in an interview, but you can look at questions that are often asked. There are no specific answers for questions since they will be based on your personal experiences as they relate to each specific job. But, thinking through (and writing out) answers beforehand can help improve your confidence. Common interview questions include:

1. What is your background? Tell me a little about yourself.
2. Why do you want to work for this company?
3. Why do you feel you are the best candidate for this position?
4. Where do you see yourself in 5/10 years?
5. What is your idea of a good manager/supervisor?
6. Tell me about a time you took on a task that was not assigned to you?
7. What did you enjoy most/least about your most recent job?
8. Give me an example of a time you had a conflict and how it was handled.
9. Tell me about an accomplishment you are proud of.
10. What would a former co-worker say is your greatest weakness?
11. What would a former supervisor say is your greatest strength?
12. How does your work experience relate to this position?
13. Do you have any questions?

When practicing your answers, make certain your responses have strong, relevant examples. A simple yes or no answer is never good, so continue by describing situations and the outcomes based on your experiences. And, practicing answers will help you create a toolkit of examples to pull from during your interview in case there is a question you weren't expecting.

PLAN YOUR INTERVIEW ATTIRE

Even if you feel prepared to effectively answer any question, you still need to make a good visual impression when you go to an interview. While you don't want to be underdressed, it is possible to be overdressed as well. A good rule of thumb to use when choosing your outfit is to dress a level above the day-to-day attire of the position you are interested in. The following guidelines should be considered when selecting an outfit for an interview:

- Make sure the clothes you want to wear are set out the night before you interview. That way you won't have to rush to find them, clean, or iron them.
- Women should select professional suits, skirts, dress slacks/blouses or dresses.
- Men should select professional dress shirt, ties, dress pants, sport coats, or suits.
- Dark colors and/or neutral colors are most appropriate.
- Both men and women should avoid perfume/cologne.
- Light make up and simply jewelry



THE DAY OF THE INTERVIEW

Although you will have done a lot of important preparation before the actual interview, there are still formalities to keep in mind throughout the meeting.

Arriving for the Interview

- Plan more time for travel than you think you may need in case there are any unexpected traffic delays.
- Arrive 10 – 15 minutes early. Showing up too early or too late can cause issues with the employer's schedule.
- **Go to the interview alone!** Do not show up with any friends or relatives.
- **Turn off your cell phone or leave it in the car.**
- Be kind and friendly to the receptionist and any other employee you may speak to since they may be asked for feedback.
- Carry a small pad of paper/portfolio and pen for note taking
- Have additional copies of your resume, references, and cover letter available.
- No chewing gum – mints are acceptable

During the Interview

- Be confident and enthusiastic!
- Offer a firm hand shake with each interviewer and make eye contact.
- Use open and professional body language. Maintain eye contact and listen actively.
- Sit up straight – lean forward occasionally and no slouching!
- Know that employers should not ask you about race, color, religion, national origin, age, gender, familial status, sexual orientation, disability status, or veteran status. If you are asked about these, you may disclose information if you choose to, but you can also politely decline to respond. Consider if you'd like to work for someone who asks this information.
- **Have questions prepared that you want to ask.** The interview is just as much for you as it is for the employer.
 - What is the on-boarding and training program provided for new hires?
 - What are the major projects the person in the position will be working on in the first six months?
 - What is the reporting structure for this position?
 - What are the next steps in the process?
 - I don't have additional questions right now, and I'd like you to know that I think this position is a good fit for my skills and my desire to work for XYZ Company. Is there anything else you'd like me to know today that I have not asked about?
- Let the interviewer know you are very interested in the position
- Ask about next steps and follow up so you have a timeline in mind for when you might hear from them.
- Shake hands and thank the employers in the room for their time and ask for business cards so that you have contact information for follow up.

After the Interview

- Send a thank you notes to all interviewers within 24 hours expressing appreciation and enthusiasm. Re-emphasize your interest, skill set and fit for the position and comment on something you learned about the organization.
- If the company does not hire you, be positive and thank them! If you are offered a position, CONGRATULATIONS!!

Questions?

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