

Preparing for the Interview

Sometimes the most important aspects of interviewing happen before you ever walk into the office.

Appearance: You will need to dress to impress, in a suit, and dress conservatively. Do not wear bold or brash ties, gaudy jewelry, or heavy cologne on your first interview. Typically, we recommend a dark colored suit and a light colored shirt. Make sure your shoes are polished. Always pay attention to hygiene before any interview and remember that small things will make the difference: make sure to brush your teeth, wear deodorant and if you are not far off from needing a haircut then please get one before the interview.

Your Resume: Read over a copy of your resume and make sure you remember what you have done. Be prepared to discuss your previous work experience, responsibilities, likes and dislikes, accomplishments, and reasons for leaving.

Things to Bring: Remember to take a copy of your resume, a pad of paper or portfolio, and a pen to take notes. You never know when your preparedness will impress the hiring manager.

Do Your Research: Make sure you know who the company is that you are interviewing with. Spend time on their website, and get to know their products. Read the bio of the hiring manager(s). Make sure you know where you are going and have good directions to their office printed off before you leave for your interview.

Prepare Questions: Once you do your research, make sure that you prepare two to three questions to ask when the interviewer asks “So, do you have any questions?” These questions should reflect the research you have done, and be formatted in such a way that you gain knowledge of the company while also displaying your interest in the job and your knowledge of the organization. Secondly, you can never go wrong by asking questions such as these:

- “Tell me about your Company Culture?”
- “What kind of management style does the company follow?”
- “How long have you been with the company?”
- **DON’T** Ask about Benefits/ Salary/ Vacation Time during the first interview. These questions do not adequately express your interest for the job, and more than likely will make you less appealing as a candidate. If you do have questions about these issues (especially in the first couple rounds of interviews) please don’t hesitate to ask your recruiter. We are equipped to answer these for you!

Phone Interviews:

- Prepare!!
- Standup, don’t sit down.
- Don’t multitask while being interviewed.
- Find a nice quiet place where there are no interruptions.
- Use a land line, or be sure your mobile phone is charged and in an area with no dead zones.

Day Of: Interviewing Tips

You need to be aware of something many do not give much thought to: **the “receptionist test.”** Make sure that you are very friendly and cordial to the receptionist. They always have a say in your overall interview and so it never hurts to have them on your side. In fact, if you are rude to the receptionist it is doubtful that you will be offered a position at all.

Although you will be having a “verbal” interview, a good portion of your interview will be non-verbal. The non-verbal part of your interview will take into account your professionalism, your appearance, your oral communication, personality and how extroverted you are.

Professionalism: It starts when they first meet you. Your first impression is an important impression to make. You will not want to show you are nervous or lack confidence. You will want to present yourself as a confident and professional person. You will need to maintain your poise, actively listen, and be positive.

Oral communication: They will want to see that you are a person that expresses yourself in a clear, concise, confident manner. Present your ideas in an organized manner. Never interrupt. Actively listen by asking clarifying questions when necessary. Respond appropriately to verbal and non-verbal cues.

Work Stability: They will want to see a pattern of job stability with previous employers. Ideally, that you have demonstrated a staying power with previous or current positions. The most optimal job change is when you have pursued your positions to the peak of the learning curve before you made a change. You will need to be able to explain any gaps in employment and any short-term positions you have had.

Achievement and Drive: They are going to want to see a record of past achievements and accomplishments. They are going to want to access your drive to succeed. Ideally, they are looking for overachievers. Strong academic performance is a plus, and so are leadership positions, extra-curricular activities and participation in competitive activities. You will want to show them that you are a confident self-starter that has a drive for success. Be prepared to share examples of your achievements and experiences.

Resilience: Resilience is a characteristic that every employer is looking for. They are going to want to know that you have what it takes to bounce back quickly from setbacks. A resilient person will react immediately to solve a problem, is very coachable and receptive to criticism, and will just slightly alter their approach when faced with setbacks. Be prepared to discuss some of the difficult obstacles you have faced professionally and how you overcame them. This is a golden opportunity to put some “spin” on your least productive endeavors!

Questions to Expect

Listed below is a list of questions we have gathered over the years. You will likely not be asked every question below but you should be prepared to answer every question below with a concise, well thought out, creative, and positive answer.

Q: Tell me about yourself.

Response: keep your answer in the professional realm only. Review your past positions, your education and any other strengths that pertain to the job.

Q: What do you know about our organization?

Response: This should reflect the information that you learned through your research prior to the interview.

Q: Why are you interested in this position?

Response: Relate how you feel your qualifications really match the requirements of the job. Also, express your desire to work for the company.

Q: What have been your most significant career accomplishments to date?

Response: Select some recent accomplishments that relate to this position and its requirements.

Q: Describe a situation in which your work was criticized.

Response: Focus on how you solved the situation, and let the interviewer know how you became a better person because of it.

Q: Tell me about your recent work experience, what were your responsibilities?

Q: What did you like most about your job?

Q: What did you like least about your last position?

Q: Give me some examples of how you have been an overachiever.

Q: Why are you leaving your present company?

Q: How would your co-workers describe you?

Q: Tell me about a time that you overcame significant obstacles.

Q: What do you think about your boss?

Q: What are the biggest challenges you face and how do you overcome them?

Q: What are your goals in your career?

Q: Where do you see yourself in two years?

Q: Why should we hire you?

Do's and Don'ts of Interviewing

Do...

- Arrive 10 minutes early. Late attendance is never excusable.
- Clarify questions. Be sure you answered the questions the employer really asked.
- Conduct yourself professionally. Be aware of what your body language is saying. Smile, make eye contact, don't slouch, and maintain your composure.
- Anticipate difficult questions, and prepare in advance so you can turn apparent weaknesses into strengths.
- Dress appropriately. Make your first impression a professional one. Dress to impress.
- Ask questions throughout the interview. An interview should be a mutual exchange of information, not a one-sided conversation.
- Listen. This is probably the most important skill of all. By concentrating not only on the employer's words, but also on the tone of his or her voice and body language, you will be able to pick up on the employer's style. Once you understand how a hiring authority thinks, pattern your answers accordingly. You will be able to relate better to him or her.

Don't...

- Ask questions regarding Benefits, Salary, or Time off. These are questions that are better addressed with your recruiter.
- Answer vague questions. Rather than answering questions you think you hear, get the employer to be more specific and then respond.
- Interrupt the employer. If you don't have time to listen, then neither does the employer.
- Smoke, chew gum, or place anything on the employer's desk.
- Be overly familiar, even if the employer is.
- Wear heavy perfume or cologne.
- Ramble. Long answers can make you sound apologetic or indecisive. On the other hand, don't answer questions with a simple "yes" or "no." Explain yourself in detail whenever possible.
- Lie. Answer questions as truthfully as possible.
- Make derogatory remarks about your present or former employers or companies.

Closing the Interview

Do not leave the interview without asking to continue to the next level and knowing what the interviewers plans are (their next step)!

Too many people second-guess themselves after an interview. By closing strongly and asking the right questions, you can eliminate the post-interview doubts that tend to plague most interviewees. It is part of what the manager is looking for. They want you to try to close them on the interview. Do not be overly aggressive in this but definitely make the step to take the process to the next step.

“After hearing more about your company, the position and the responsibilities at hand, I am certain that I possess the qualities that you are looking for. Based on our conversation and my qualifications, are there any issues or concerns that you have that would lead you to believe otherwise?”

OR

“This position sounds like something that I would be very interesting in pursuing. What is the next step?”

A few things to remember during the closing process:

- Express thanks for the interviewer’s time and consideration.
- Ask for the interviewer’s business card so you can write a thank you letter as soon as possible.

Following Up

When you leave the employer’s location, immediately write down key issues uncovered in the interview. Think of the qualifications the employer is seeking, and match your strengths to them. **Then, call your recruiter!** Follow-up at this stage is critical.

Writing thank you letters: Within 24 hours after your interview send the manager a thank you letter. A written letter is fine but a nice email is equally acceptable. An example thank you letter is included below.

Tips for sending your follow-up letter:

- Send out your thank you letters no later than 24 hours after your interview has ended.
- Always keep your audience in mind. Address the issues and the concerns that were mentioned during the interview.
- Use the thank you letter as a follow-up “sales” letter, in which you restate your reasons for wanting the position and remind the interviewer why you’re qualified.
- Mention anything of importance that your interviewer might have neglected to ask in person.
- If you’re only writing a few sentences, send a handwritten note. Otherwise, send a typed, formatted letter (see sample letter below).
- Thank everyone who contributed to your job search.
- If you decide after the interview that you don’t want the job after all, write a respectful note withdrawing your application.
- Choose your words carefully when using email. Email creates an instant written record, so don’t let the speed and the ease of sending it blind you to the fact that you will be judged on what you’ve said and how you’ve said it.

Sample Thank You Letter:

DATE

Mr. James Smith
Branch Manager
Professional Perspectives
111 Employment Way
Any town, CO 80000

Mr. Smith,

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the _____ position with you this morning. Our conversation gave me a better understanding of both Professional Perspectives and the requirements of the position.

I am confident that I will be successful and firmly believe that I will make a valuable asset to your team.

I look forward to hearing back from you in the near future to discuss the next step in the interview process.

I can be reached at...

Sincerely,

(you!)