

INTERVIEWING TIPS

1. CONDUCT RESEARCH

Success in a job interview starts with a solid foundation of knowledge on the job-seeker's part. You should understand the employer, the requirements of the job, and the background of the person (or people) interviewing you. The more research you conduct, the more you'll understand the employer, and the better you'll be able to answer interview questions (as well as ask insightful questions — see #8). Information sources include the organization's Website and other published materials, search engines, research tools, and your network of contacts.

2. REVIEW COMMON INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND PREPARE RESPONSES

Another key to interview success is preparing responses to expected interview questions. First, inquire as to the type of interview to expect (which you can do by asking your contact person at the organization). Your goal is composing detailed yet concise responses, focusing on specific examples and accomplishments. A good tool for remembering your responses is to put them into story form that you can tell in the interview. No need to memorize responses (in fact, it's best not to), but at least develop talking points.

3. DRESS FOR SUCCESS

Plan out a wardrobe that fits the organization and its culture, striving for the most professional appearance you can accomplish. Remember that it's always better to be overdressed than under — and to wear clothing that fits, is clean, and wrinkle free. Keep accessories and jewelry to a minimum. Try not to smoke or eat right before the interview. Brush your teeth or use mouthwash. Skip perfume, cologne, or any other strong fragrances.

4. ARRIVE ON TIME FOR THE INTERVIEW — AND BE PREPARED

There is no excuse for ever arriving late for an interview (other than some sort of disaster). Strive to arrive about 15 minutes before your scheduled interview to complete additional paperwork and allow yourself time to get settled. Arriving a bit early is also a chance to observe the dynamics of the workplace. The day before the interview, pack up extra copies of your resume and reference list. If you have a portfolio or samples of your work, bring those along too. Finally, remember to pack several pens and a pad of paper for taking notes. Finally, as you get to the location, shut off your cell phone.

5. MAKE GOOD FIRST IMPRESSIONS WITH EVERYONE YOU ENCOUNTER

A cardinal rule of interviewing: be polite and offer warm greetings to everyone you meet — from parking attendant or receptionist to the hiring manager. Employers often are curious how job applicants treat staff members. Your job offer could easily be derailed if you're rude or arrogant to any of the staff. When it's time for the interview, keep in mind that first impressions (the ones interviewers make in the first few seconds of greeting you) can make or break an interview. Make a strong first impression by dressing well (see #3), arriving early (see #4), and when greeting your interviewer, stand, smile, make eye contact, and offer a firm (neither limp and nor bone-crushing) handshake. Remember that having a positive attitude and expressing enthusiasm for the job and employer are vital in the initial stages of the interview; studies show that hiring managers make critical decisions about job applicants in the first 20 minutes of the interview.

6. BE AUTHENTIC, UPBEAT, FOCUSED, CONFIDENT, CANDID, AND CONCISE

Once the interview starts, the key to success is the quality and delivery of your responses. Your goal should always be authenticity, responding truthfully to interview questions. At the same time, your goal is to get to the next step, so you'll want to provide focused responses that showcase your skills, experience, and fit — with the job and the employer. Provide solid examples of solutions and accomplishments, but keep your responses short and to the point. By preparing responses to common interview questions (see #2), you'll ideally avoid long, rambling responses that bore interviewers. Always attempt to keep your interview responses short and to the point. Finally,

no matter how much an interviewer might bait you, never badmouth a previous employer, boss, or co-worker. The interview is about you, and making your case that you are the ideal candidate for the job.

7. REMEMBER BODY LANGUAGE – AVOID BAD HABITS

While the content of your interview responses is paramount, poor body language can be a distraction at best, or a reason not to hire you at worst. Effective forms of body language: smiling, eye contact, solid posture, active listening, nodding. Detrimental forms of body language: slouching, looking off in the distance, playing with pen, fidgeting in chair, brushing back hair, touching face, chewing gum, mumbling.

8. ASK INSIGHTFUL QUESTIONS

Studies continually show that employers make a judgment about an applicant's interest in the job by whether or not the interviewee asks questions. Thus, even if the hiring manager was thorough in his or her discussions about the job opening and what is expected, you must ask a few questions. The smart job-seeker prepares questions to ask days before the interview, adding any additional queries that might arise from the interview.

9. SELL YOURSELF THROUGHOUT AND THEN CLOSE THE DEAL

An adage in interviewing says the most qualified applicant is not always the one who is hired, which means the hired candidate is often the job-seeker who does the best job in responding to interview questions and showcasing his or her fit with the job, department, and organization. Some associate the job interview as being similar to a sales call. You are the salesperson, and the product you are selling to the employer is your ability to fill the organization's needs, solve its problems, and propel its success. Finally, as the interview winds down, ask about the next steps in the process and the timetable the employer expects to use to make a decision about the position.

10. THANK INTERVIEWER(S) IN PERSON, BY EMAIL, AND POSTAL MAIL

As you have already seen from previous tips, common courtesy and politeness go far in interviewing; thus, the importance of thanking each person who interviews you should come as no surprise. Start the process while at the interview, thanking each person who interviewed you. Writing thank-you emails and notes shortly after the interview will not get you the job offer, but doing so will certainly give you an edge over any of the other finalists who did not bother to send thank-you's.

FINAL THOUGHTS ON JOB INTERVIEW SUCCESS

- **Succeeding in job interviews takes research, practice, and persistence.**
- The more effort you put into your interview preparation, the more success you'll see in obtaining job offers.
- Try to **decrease nervousness** by practicing (mock interviews or practice in mirror), using breathing techniques, keeping things in perspective (interviewers are often nervous too), and using positive thinking strategies.
- **Be yourself**- remember that the interviewer wants to get to know something about you, not hear a memorized speech.
- **Do not mention salary** or ask questions about salary until a firm job offer has been extended to you.
- In addition to the quality of your answers, the interviewer is also looking for professionalism, enthusiasm, self-confidence, motivation, integrity, listening skills, communication skills, maturity, social skills, among other traits.
- **Have a conversation.** The best interviews are a give and take. The ability to have a fluid conversation conveys preparation, intelligence, people skills, active listening and a commitment to your career. Come prepared to discuss the company, the role, your background, current trends in the industry, the reason for the opening and any recent events that may impact the company or industry. Companies want to hire engaged employees who have taken the time to learn about themselves and the roles for which they are applying.
- Interview selection is more about how the interviewer feels about you than about how well you can do the job. That is not to say that you don't need to be qualified – you do need to be in the ballpark. However, many highly qualified people get rejected because they do not clearly convey how they are an ideal (and likeable) match for the role. While it is important to display your qualifications, it is even more important to **create the right impression.**