

Interview Basics

An interview is your opportunity to sell your skills to a potential employer. There are several steps to successfully completing an interview and subsequently receiving a job offer. The following are steps you want to take before the interview:

PREPARING FOR YOUR INTERVIEW

- ✦ When you are contacted to set up your interview appointment, it's a great time to ask a few questions about the position, such as "What are the top challenges of the position?" or "What is the recent history of this department in terms of growth and type of work?" The recruiter may ask you some screening questions at this time as well, so be prepared to explain how you meet the basic qualifications of the position.
 - ✦ Review the job description and identify the key skills required for the position. Consider how your strengths match the job requirements.
 - ✦ Prepare a few accomplishment stories you might use during the interview, based on the required skills you have just identified.
 - ✦ Do some research on the company and learn about their current business initiatives and direction.
 - ✦ Bring a notebook, extra copies of your resume, business cards if you have them, notes on your job history to fill out a job application, and a list of your references, including how they prefer to be contacted (phone and/or e-mail address), their title, name of their organization, and the time/place and kind of work you did with them.
 - ✦ Practice answering standard interview questions in front of a mirror, with an interview partner or a friend. The more practice you have, the more relaxed and confident you will feel.
 - ✦ Wear conservative, appropriate work clothes to an interview. Dress just above the position you are applying for.
 - ✦ When recruitment or HR calls with information or a request, respond quickly to show your interest and keep you in the running.
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INTERVIEW DAY

- ✦ Plan on arriving 10 minutes early for your interview. Anticipate problems with traffic congestion, directions, or parking and allow plenty of time.
- ✦ Introduce yourself with a firm handshake and an exchange of business cards, when appropriate. Try to remember the name and title of each person you are introduced to.
- ✦ A few minutes of "small talk" usually precedes the interview questions. Take this opportunity to relax, get comfortable, and settle into your discussion.
- ✦ Be honest and confident about your skills and accomplishments.
- ✦ Use your accomplishment stories to give specific examples that prove your competence in the different skill areas they care about most. This is your opportunity to speak their language. Maintain eye contact to see if your stories are on the right track—or have gone off the point.
- ✦ Don't be negative about your current or previous positions or managers, even if you feel differently. Instead, focus on why you are looking to build your experience through a new position.
- ✦ Be prepared for a salary question. Know your worth in the marketplace and be able to back up your request with specifics about how your qualifications meet the needs of the role.
- ✦ At the end of the interview, be prepared with two to three questions to show you were listening, are interested in the position, and care about being part of the organization. Take this opportunity to collect all the information you need to decide how to respond, if offered the position.

- ✚ At the end of the interview, find out what the next steps are in their interview process and if they have a timeframe for making a decision. Restate your interest in the position.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

- ✚ With the new information you have gained during the interview, think about the job and consider whether or not the position and the organization will be a good match for you.
 - ✚ Write a thank-you note or e-mail to all your interviewers. A follow-up letter can include your reaction to the interview, why you want the job, and what you could bring to the department and the team. It is also another opportunity to make a good impression.
 - ✚ If you are interested in accepting the position, alert your references that you have just had a successful interview and give them permission to speak about you if they are contacted. Send your references a copy of your resume and the job description. Communicate the key skill areas to your references that your interviewer was interested in.
 - ✚ Ask your references to call you after they are contacted. Debrief with them and identify any areas or concerns expressed by the interviewers. You may have an opportunity to follow up with your interviewers and address these issues before you are eliminated.
 - ✚ If your references are contacted, send them a thank-you note or e-mail letting them know that you appreciate their support and time.
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Commonly Asked Interview Questions

Q: Why did you choose to apply to our company?

Q: What do you know about the position to which you are applying?

Q: Describe the best and worst manager you have had and why.

Q: Give an example of a time you had to make a difficult decision.

Q: What did you enjoy least about your last job?

Q: Tell me about a time you were not pleased with your performance.

Q: How much do you know about our company, our product, our service?

Q: What do you look for in an employer?

Q: How would you handle it if a member of your team was not contributing to the workload?

Q: What do you know about the position to which you are applying?

Q: Describe a time when you were faced with a challenging situation and how you handled it.

Q: Give an example of a time you had to make a difficult decision.