

A guide to

INTERVIEWING

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A job interview is your chance to meet your potential employer and demonstrate that you're the best person for the job. The employer will evaluate your skills, experience, and personality to determine if they meet the needs of the organization. It's exciting to be asked to interview, but it can also be stressful. A little bit of preparation and practice will help you do your best and decide if the organization is a good fit for you.

Before the Interview

Research

- Research the organization using their website, Google, and LinkedIn. This is the most important step. The more you know about the organization's goals, accomplishments, and needs, the more informed you can be when speaking about your potential role in the organization.
- Research the field and industry you would be working in. Make note of any important terms or jargon that might come up in the interview.
- Look up the employees at the organization, especially the people who may be interviewing you, on LinkedIn and Google.

Practice

- Do a mock interview with a friend, mentor, or Career Center advisor to practice answering potential questions.
- Practice your responses to questions out loud and take note of when you stumble over words, can't remember something, or feel awkward saying something.
- Prepare your five best stories about relevant experiences to have in your back pocket.
 - Stories can include experiences from class projects, former jobs, volunteer work, performing, private teaching, etc.
 - Make sure to incorporate skills and experiences that are relevant to the position.
 - Think about stories that address challenging situations and describe how you handled a problem and learned from it.

Prepare

- Have extra copies of your résumé, cover letter, and work samples on hand just in case you are asked for them.
- Draft potential questions to ask the interviewer about the organization. This will show that you've done your research and are actively interested in the position. Questions may include:
 - What does a typical day in this position look like?
 - What are the most important skills or traits for someone in this position?
 - What are the greatest challenges of this position?
 - Why are you looking to fill this position?
 - What are the short- and long-term goals for this position?
 - What did you like most about the previous people who've held this position?
 - What would you like done differently by the next person who fills this position?
 - How would you describe your style as a supervisor?
 - What training, if any, would be given to me in this role?
 - What are your goals or visions for the department/organization in the future?
 - What accounts for success within the company, and how is performance measured?
 - What are the prospects for advancement in this position?
 - What are the next steps in the hiring process?
 - Is there anything else you want me to expand upon?

Example Interview Questions

There's no way to predict what you'll be asked during an interview, but there are many common questions you can be ready to answer should they come up. Be prepared with your five stories and be ready to talk about any relevant technical skills, as these might be great answers to potential interview questions.

You may also be asked behavioral interview questions, where an employer asks you to describe a time you did something. Make sure to use actual examples; don't use a hypothetical situation. You can use the STAR method:

- **Situation:** Describe the context (the setting, who was involved), what the situation was, and why this is an example of what they asked for, e.g., what was the tight deadline? What was stressful about this situation?
- **Task:** What is the task you needed to complete? What were the goals?
- **Action:** What did you actually do to address the situation? Note: if multiple people were involved, be sure to describe *your* role in the team.
- **Result:** What happened? How did your actions affect the situation? What did you learn from it? This is easy to forget, but very important.

Common/Traditional Interview Questions

- Tell me about yourself. (*This is your opportunity to tell the employer about your qualifications for this position. Talk about skills, strengths, and experiences, both educational- and employment-related.*)
- What do you consider to be your major strengths?
- What do you consider to be your major weaknesses? (*Be honest, but try to downplay weaknesses by framing your response as something you're working on or would like to improve.*)
- Why do you want this job?
- What do you bring to this position?
- Why do you want to work for this company?
- What are your short-term goals?
- Where do you see yourself in five years?
- What did you like most about your last job?
- What did you like least about your last job? (*This is another opportunity to put a positive spin on an otherwise negative question. Focus on a specific task or process you disliked rather than getting into organizational politics.*)
- How would your professor/friends/coworkers/boss describe you?
- In what ways have your educational experiences prepared you for a career?
- How would you describe your ideal job?
- Did you take part in any school activities or community service?
- What motivates you to do a good job?
- How do you manage multiple tasks/projects at once? Please give an example.
- How do you deal with stress and/or deadlines? Please give an example.
- What experience do you have with problem solving? Please give an example.
- Did you ever have a disagreement with a boss, coworker, or company policy? How did you handle it?
- Do you prefer to work independently or with a team? (*Employers will want you to be able to do both.*)
- Tell me about one of your greatest accomplishments.
- Why should I hire you? (*What can you do for the company that someone else can't?*)
- Tell me something about yourself that is not on your resume.

Behavioral Interview Questions

- Describe a time when you were asked to do something you had never done before or do something that was a departure from the old way of doing things. How did you react? What did you learn?
- Recall a time when you were assigned a task outside of your job description. How did you handle the situation? What was the outcome?
- Tell me about the biggest change you have had to deal with. How did you adapt to that change?
- Tell me about a time when you had to adjust to a colleague's work style in order to complete a project.
- What are three things that are most important to you in a job?
- Tell me about a time you were satisfied, energized, and productive at work. What were you doing?
- What is the most interesting thing about you that's not on your resume?
- What's the biggest misconception your coworkers have about you? Why do they think that?
- What would make you choose our company over others?
- Tell me about a time when you were communicating with someone and they didn't understand you. What did you do?
- Tell me about one of your favorite experiences working with a team and your contribution.
- Share an experience where a project dramatically shifted directions last minute. What did you do?
- Tell me about the last time something significant didn't go according to plan at work. What was your role? What was the outcome?
- Describe a situation where you persuaded someone to see things your way. What steps did you take?
- Tell me about a time when you led others by example. What did you do and how did others react?
- Tell me about the toughest decision you have had to make in the last six months.
- Have you ever had to "sell" an idea to your coworkers? How did you do it? What were the results?
- Describe a time when you volunteered to expand your knowledge at work without being asked.
- When was the last occasion you asked for direct feedback from a supervisor? Why?
- Recall a time when a problem arose and your manager was unavailable. How did you handle it?
- How do you determine what amount of time is reasonable for a task?
- Tell me about a project you planned. How did you organize and schedule the tasks?
- Give an example of a time when you delegated an important task successfully.
- Tell me about a time you had to juggle several projects at once. How did you organize your time?

Advanced Interview Questions (Typically reserved for higher-level positions or second-round interviews)

- What are the limitations of your current job, and what do you seek in a new position?
- Discuss a time when your integrity was challenged. How did you handle it?
- Describe an experience when you were faced with problems or stresses that tested your coping skills.
- Give an example of a time when you had to get something accomplished while working with a difficult colleague.
- How do you measure your own success?
- What aspects of your work earn respect from your coworkers and your supervisor?
- What type of people do you work with most effectively?
- Tell us about a work situation that irritated you and what you decided to do about it.
- How would you describe your management style?
- When was the last time your work was criticized? How did you deal with it?
- If you could change one work decision you made during the past two years, what would it be?
- As you review your past work history, what key lesson would you bring to a new position?
- Tell me about a time that your work was innovative.
- What work accomplishment is your greatest source of pride?
- Is there anything you're aware of that would prevent you from performing optimally in this position?

Interview Day Tips

Getting to the Interview

- Plan to arrive early, about 10-15 minutes before your scheduled interview time.
 - If you arrive *very* early, take a walk around the block, find a nearby coffee shop, or stall nearby. Don't go into the office until 10–15 minutes before the scheduled time.
- Know where to go. Look up directions online in advance, or even practice getting to the location before interview day to avoid stress later on.

Presenting Yourself

- Dress professionally. It's generally better to overdress than to underdress.
 - Make sure your clothes are clean and without wrinkles or stains.
 - Try and figure out what people typically wear to work at the organization and dress it up a couple of notches.
- Be friendly to everyone you meet, not just the people who will be interviewing you. Others at the organization may also be given the opportunity to give feedback on you.

At the Interview

- Shake hands firmly, smile, and be enthusiastic.
- Don't be afraid to sell your strengths - in a job interview, some bragging is expected.
- Be patient. You may end up repeating yourself or bringing up information you already presented in your application, but answer every question as if you were stating the information for the first time.
- Market your "soft skills" such as problem solving, teamwork, leadership, communication, and adaptability.
 - Offer examples of how you have handled relevant situations with some of these soft skills rather than simply listing your technical skills.
- Demonstrate your knowledge of the organization and be prepared to ask a few questions about the position to signal your interest.
 - It can be helpful to have a few questions on hand that you plan to ask, but it is also important to be able to improvise. For example, you will want to avoid asking questions you have prepared if the interviewer has already covered that information.
 - Don't feel glued to your script - it's good to ask questions that arise naturally from the flow of conversation.
- Be mindful of your body language. Keep a strong and relaxed posture and engage in active listening.
- When asked about your goals, include how the organization fits into the picture.
- Avoid making negative statements about previous employers, and avoid filler words such as "um", "like", and "you know".
- At the end of the interview, make sure to thank the interviewer(s) for their time and ask for a business card so you can follow up later.
 - You can also ask about their hiring timeline so you have a better idea of when to follow up.

Following Up

- Send a "thank you" message to the people who interviewed you within 24 hours of the interview. Reiterate your excitement about the position and why you make a good fit for the organization.
- If the employer has asked for references or follow-up materials, send them within 24 hours.
- If you do not hear back within a few weeks, you can politely and briefly follow up with the interviewer. Remain positive and reiterate your interest and enthusiasm.

Phone and Virtual Interview Tips

It is becoming more and more common for employers to hold interviews remotely, either by phone or by video chat. Remote interviews are often easier to plan than an in-person interview, both for the applicant and the employer, but that doesn't mean they should be taken any less seriously. Make sure to spend just as much time preparing for a remote interview as you would for an in-person interview, and take note of the unique challenges that may arise in these types of interview settings.

For Telephone Interviews

- Take the call in a quiet spot that is free from interruptions. Make sure you have a reliable phone signal.
- Keep your résumé and cover letter, along with any other application materials, in front of you for your reference.
- Speak clearly, deliberately, and enthusiastically. Your voice is the employer's first impression of you.
- Navigate conversational rhythm thoughtfully. It may be more difficult to gauge this over the phone, so wait for the interviewer to finish a thought and pause before you speak.
 - Likewise, plan to finish your thought and pause to indicate their turn to speak.
- Consider dressing as if you were going to an in-person interview to get into a professional mindset.
- Make sure you're ready before the designated time so you can answer the phone right away.

For Video Interviews

- Dress as you would for an in-person interview.
- Make sure you are in a space with reliable internet access and no distractions.
- Be aware of what is on display in the background and adjust if necessary. You may also choose to use a virtual background.
- Make eye contact as much as possible, even through the computer video camera.
- Speak clearly, deliberately, and enthusiastically.
- Wait for the interviewer to finish a thought and pause before speaking to avoid talking over the interviewer.
- Avoid typing during the conversation unless necessary.
 - If you need to type something, let the interviewer know why you are typing before doing so to make sure they know you're still paying attention.
- If you have notes or documents open for reference, make sure not to share them if you share your screen.
- Make sure you're ready in advance, waiting by the computer, and ready to answer/log on right away.
- Test the technology by trying the camera and microphone in advance with a friend. Do you look professional? Can they hear you clearly?

If You're Offered the Job

Once you've been offered a position, the next step is to determine whether you'll accept the employer's offer, decline it, or make a counteroffer, also known as negotiation. Keep in mind that the employer has a budget that may or may not lend itself to flexibility, but you won't know if you don't ask. Once you've accepted the position, it will likely be some time before you can make any significant changes.

Before you Accept

- Don't be the first one to mention money - let the employer present you with the offer.
- Make sure the full details of the offer are clear, including salary and benefits (insurance, paid time off, retirement, etc.)
- Ask politely to receive the job offer in writing if it is not automatically provided to you. This will ensure there are no points of miscommunication down the line.
- Make sure you don't feel pressured to accept an offer immediately. Give yourself time and space to fully consider your options.
- Consult people you trust, especially those who know the industry or field.

Negotiating Your Offer

- Keep any offer negotiations friendly and professional, and base negotiations on your skills, experience, and the quality work you will bring to the table.
- Research your field to compare other offers in similar markets and locations and determine if your offer is fair.
- Put together a personal budget for your own reference so you know how much money you need to sustain your lifestyle. Figure out what your bottom-line need is, taking into account the cost of living for the location. If the employer cannot meet this, consider turning down the position.
- Consider all factors, including benefits, to weigh the value of the total employment package.
 - If one of these factors is "exposure", look for examples of those who have used that exposure to further their careers to assess if this is a valuable benefit.
- Don't be afraid to walk away from an offer if you are unable to come to a mutually agreeable solution in your employment. Make sure you are not accepting a subpar offer that is unsustainable for your wellbeing.

Accepting the Offer

- If you accept the offer, ask the employer for resources you can use to get up to speed and prepare for work.
- Continue to do research on the field and the organization so you can start your new job with confidence.

Declining the Offer

- If you do not accept the offer, still make sure to thank the employer for their time and consideration.
- Consider suggesting a friend or colleague that may be an appropriate referral for the position.