

Interview Preparation and Pointers

Overall Preparation

1. Research the company, their mission and any new initiatives/programs they are implementing or marketing. Be prepared to share how you relate to their mission; what about their company in particular resonates with you and why do you want to work there.
2. Use LinkedIn to research the interviewers and employees. Learn more about the company culture and the background of people who work there; whether you use this information directly or not it will allow you to have a stronger foundation and more confidence.
3. Know the job description thoroughly. Take each duty and each qualification in the job description sentence by sentence and write what skills you have for each statement (whether through experience, education, volunteer work or transferrable skills).
4. Make sure to have your résumé memorized; there is no need to have it in front of you at the interview. You want to make eye contact, listen to the interviewer(s) and create a conversation (no need to look down at your résumé).
5. Practice your interview responses with a career professional or colleague prior to the interview.

Job References

Make sure to contact your job references well in advance, and for each job interview. Once you have an interview date, send your references the job description and an updated resume so they can speak knowledgeably about your experience in relation to the specific job. There is nothing worse than getting a surprise call from a potential employer; your reference will be unprepared and not in the best position to give you the recommendation you deserve.

In-person Interview Preparation

Make sure you are well rested the night before. Leave time for your morning routine to support your being sharp and alert. Have a light, protein breakfast or lunch (no growling stomachs during the interview). Of course you will be well manicured and professionally dressed. Wear no or very light perfume or cologne; many people have allergies or dislike different brands. Wear small jewelry. For women, wear light make-up. Bring a pen and a notebook in case you want to take notes (though you need to make sure you are paying attention and maintaining eye contact). Bring several extra copies of your resume.

Arrive Early

Arrive 15-20 minutes early to the interview. Leave plenty of time for the trains or roads to be late, so you can be on time. The employer is not interested in any excuses concerning lateness. Visit the rest room and check: nose, teeth, fly, shirt/blouse tuck, and tie. Throw out the gum and finish the breath mint.

It Starts Before You Say Hello

Make sure you are friendly to everyone you meet, the secretary, security guard, and people coming in and out of the office. You never know to whom you are speaking or what impression will be shared. While you are waiting for your appointment, review any literature that is in the waiting area. A helpful method for maintaining your calm is to take deep breaths and exhale slowly.

The Greeting

Smile and give a friendly and professional handshake (not too hard or too limp, and do close your hand completely around their hand- no half-hearted handshakes). Make sure you know the correct pronunciation of the interviewer's name. (Call on a prior day to check the pronunciation if you are not sure). Be prepared to make small talk with the interviewer. Topics may range from the weather to current events or hobbies, but nonetheless, you are still being evaluated.

General Pointers

Sit poised, don't fidget or slouch. Use direct eye contact. Don't make up stuff. Focus your attention on what the interviewer is saying (not on what you will say next). Make your responses concise and don't ramble. Don't speak with any "ums, ahs, likes, you knows, or okays." Do not ever speak poorly of a current or former employer. Always speak in positive terms no matter what the subject. Think before you answer. It is fine to pause to consider a question. No matter what the interviewer asks, you need to convey that you are the best person for the job.

Questions you may be asked:

Don't be vague, make sure your responses include concrete examples. Be prepared, listen to the questions, and work on creating a conversation with the interviewer.

1. Tell me something about yourself? (Use this to highlight something not on the resume; give a 3-sentence bio, and always keep in mind how it relates to the job).
2. What interests you about our company/why do you want to work here? (Use your research; include information that is not in the job description).
3. What interests you about this position? (Share how the company, the job and your background fit).
4. What skills do you have for this position? (Be specific, relate your past jobs/skills, etc. to what they need).
5. How does your experience relate to this position? (Have examples ready to show how you did similar work or used similar skills from past jobs/education/volunteer experience).
6. What was the reason for leaving your last position(s)? (Keep it all positive, never bad-mouth past employers).
7. What analytical skills do you have? (Give specific examples of how you approached and solved a problem).
8. Describe a crisis situation/challenge that you've faced and how you handled it? (Use an example from an actual situation that happened, and how you were able to turn the situation around).
9. How do you prioritize your time and activities? (Be prepared with examples).
10. What are your short-term career goals? (This is usually within the next 2-years).
11. What are your long-term career goals? (This is usually between 5-10 years).
12. What do you consider your greatest strengths? (Make it relevant; it can be interpersonal and/or technical as long as it is relevant to the position).
13. In what areas do you need to improve/greatest weakness? (Talk about your ability to self-assess, state areas that need improvement and how you deal with them. Do not use standard answers like "work too hard", etc.).
14. What is one of your proudest achievements or accomplishments? (Make it relevant, show leadership).
15. Why should we hire you? (Summarize your skills and experience in relation to the job; add something that you may not have had a chance to say or expand upon during the interview).
16. Do you have any questions? (See next section).

It's Your Turn To Ask Questions

WHEN THE INTERVIEWER ASKS "DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS?" DO NOT ASK ABOUT SALARY OR BENEFITS UNTIL YOU ARE OFFERED A JOB OR THE INTERVIEWER BRINGS IT UP!

It is important to ask questions at the end of an interview. Every question you ask should demonstrate your interest in the position and confirm your knowledge of the organization. It's important to address your questions based on your research, what you have read, and what was brought up during the interview. Do make sure the questions you ask were not already covered. If you come prepared with a list of questions, make sure to check they were not addressed. The key to a successful interview is good communication and rapport with the interviewer.

It is the employer's responsibility to close the interview by telling you what to expect next. The employer will usually let you know what the next steps are in the process. If the employer has not conveyed the next steps and the interview is about to end, use the opportunity to ask about what the next steps are in the hiring process, and when you might expect to hear from them.