



INTERVIEW PREPARATION

WHY INTERVIEW?

Beyond the resume and cover letter, interviews help employers learn more about how your academic background, skills and experience match the requirements of a job opening. At the same time, employers are evaluating your communication skills and other traits to determine if you will fit with the organizational culture. You, as the interviewee, want to answer the employers' questions competently, smoothly and professionally. You also want to use the interview as a means of learning more about the position and the organization to see if you would be happy and productive in the job. The interview conversation is structured around questions and answers.

Carry these items to the Interview

- Several copies of your resume on quality paper.
- A copy of your references.
- A pad of paper on which to take notes (notes are optional). To look even more professional, invest in a leather portfolio if you can. Keep your questions, paper for notes, and a nice pen inside.
- Directions to the interview site.

Upon Arrival

- Arrive early — enter the building 10 minutes before your appointment.
- Treat receptionist with respect. If she is not formally part of the search committee, you can bet she is informally.
- Smile and greet everyone with a firm handshake. Make eye contact and use names when introduced.
- Review your prepared stories and answers.
- Go to the restroom and check your appearance one last time.
- Announce yourself to the receptionist in a professional manner.
- Stand and greet your interviewer with a hearty — not bone-crushing — handshake.
- Smile and look into the interviewer's eyes.

During the Interview

- Try to focus on the points you have prepared without sounding rehearsed or stiff.
- Relax and enjoy the conversation. Learn what you can about the company.
- Ask questions and listen; read between the lines.
- At the conclusion, thank the interviewer and determine the next steps.
- Ask for the interviewer's business card so you can send a follow-up letter.

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- Tell me about yourself.
- What are your long and short range goals? How are you preparing to achieve them?
- What are three of your strengths and weaknesses?
- What failures have you experienced? What have you learned from your mistakes?
- What do you think makes a good manager?
- Why did you leave your past jobs?
- How did you become interested in this field/industry?
- Assuming that you could do anything you wanted, what would you really like to do in life?
- How do you determine or evaluate success?
- Do you have plans for continued study?
- Tell me about a recent problem and how to solve it.
- What, if any, extracurricular activities have you participated in? What did you learn from them?
- What haven't I asked you that I should have asked?
- Tell me about your leadership experience?

- Give me an example of how you exercised leadership in a recent situation.
- Tell me about a time when you were held accountable for a problem that you hadn't caused.
- Think about the changes you have seen and tell me how you handle change.
- Tell me about a decision you made recently and how you reached it.
- Tell me about a time when you were criticized. What was the issue involved, who made the criticism, and how did you handle it?
- Tell me how you use your communication skills, written and oral.
- Think about a time you were overwhelmed with a project you were assigned. How did you go about managing your time and organizing the project?
- Please tell me about a recent team you worked on. What was the outcome? What was your role?
- How have your education and other experiences prepared you for this position?
- Do you think your grades are a good indication of your academic achievement? Why isn't your GPA higher?
- What makes you better than the other people I'm seeing today?

APPROPRIATE QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES TO ASK IN THE JOB INTERVIEW

Ask questions that will give you additional information on the organization, the position you are interviewing for, or the services or products that the organization supplies.

Do ask:

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| 1. What would a typical first assignment be? | 7. Are there any plans for new goods or services? |
| 2. What type of orientation would I have? | 8. What percentage of supervisory positions are filled from within the organization? |
| 3. What type of training programs do you have? | 9. How much travel is normally expected? |
| 4. What can I expect in terms of job progression in your organization? | 10. How do you (the interviewer) like working here? |
| 5. How often would my performance be reviewed? | 11. What are you doing in the local community? |
| 6. Are there any new offices or sites being planned? | 12. What are the next steps in the interview process? |

Don't ask:

1. About salary or benefits
2. About job pressures, overtime or morale.
3. Questions that are answered in the company literature.
4. Questions about vacation time.

FOLLOW UP

After the interview, it is important to write a thank you notes to the interviewer(s) to acknowledge the meeting, reiterate important points you made in the interview, or provide information you forgot to mention. This letter also shows your organization and professionalism. There are several guidelines that you should follow in writing a follow-up letter: Type or handwrite the letter (email is acceptable in most cases as long as the letter is "professional.")

The letter should be brief and include the following:

- Thank the interviewer for his/her time.
- State the position for which you are applying.
- Mention something from your interview to remind the interviewer who you are.
- Describe in one or two sentences why you are the best applicant.
- Mention the names of the people you met at the interview.
- Send a letter to appropriate individuals you interviewed with (always send to the main interviewer).
- Keep the letter short, less than one page.
- Email/Mail the letter within 24 hours of the interview.
- Thank the interviewer for his/her time.
- Send a thank you letter for every interview you go on.