

INTERVIEWING SKILLS GUIDE



Employment Services

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PREPARING FOR THE EMPLOYMENT INTERVIEW

WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT?

It's hard to know exactly what to expect. Interviewers conduct interviews differently and have varied styles and preferences. Your job is to be able to effectively communicate your strengths and skills as best you can so that you can demonstrate that there is a fit between personality, goals, and credentials.



All interviews fit a general pattern. The typical interview will last between 30 minutes and an hour, though some may be longer. A typical structure is as follows:

- Five minutes: small talk (developing rapport)
- Fifteen to forty minutes: discussion of your background and credentials as they relate to the needs of the employer
- Five to ten minutes: your opportunity to ask questions of the interviewer to determine if this organization and the manner in which they conduct business matches your career goals
- Determine next step in the process and conclude the interview.

Basically, there are four questions the recruiter wants answered:

1. What job does the candidate want?
2. Can the person do the job?
3. Will the person do the job?
4. Will the person be compatible with the existing team?

What job does the candidate want?

The worst possible answer to this question is “I’m willing to do anything.” Employers are looking to hire someone who WANTS to do the specific job they are interviewing for. They are not looking for someone who applied because they need a job, any job! You must be able to explain what interests you about the job and WHY. This means you have to do your research first. Use specific examples if possible. Be relevant, focused and job-specific.

Can the person do the job?

Preparing for the interview requires that you assess your interests and skills, and research the organization and the position for which you are interviewing. It is helpful to assess the job description of the position for which you are interviewing. Make a list of pertinent functions of the job and the skills needed to get the job done. Then make a list of your experiences and how you have developed and strengthened your skills. Doing this exercise will help you articulate your experiences to an interviewer. You will also have a list of examples ready to support your assertions.

Will the person do the job?

Probably 90% of the candidates a recruiter meets could do the job for which they are applying, but most employers are not looking for employees to just do the job; they want employees who will excel. To that end, a recruiter will try to determine what the candidate's leadership and performance have been in the recent past so that reasonable estimations can be made for your potential performance in the position you are interviewing for. Therefore, you need to give clear examples of what you have recently done that was "beyond the normal call of duty."

Will the person be compatible with the existing team?

In today's workplace, it is critical that people work well together and have respect for their fellow employees. If other factors are equal, ex: your resume looks like other candidates, your personal skills – or lack thereof – can tip the scales in either direction. You need to demonstrate as many positive attributes as possible, including your ability to work well with people.

→ The Interviewee should have three goals for the interview:

1. Present yourself as well-prepared and well-educated: You must come across as a person who can represent the organization well. Being prepared for the interview by knowing the organization, the position and your credentials helps offer the organization an understanding of why you are the asset they are looking for.
2. Determine if the job is right for you: You have the opportunity to determine if this job or fits with your short and long term career goals. Be sure to ask the right questions!
3. Get to the next step in the process: After the first interview, typically you will have a second interview (usually on-site). If everything goes well, you hopefully will be offered a job!

Interview Formats

Screening—If there is a screening interview, it is usually conducted by a member of Human Resources. It can be in person, over the phone or via video to determine if you meet the MINIMUM requirements listed for the job. You must emphasize that you have the needed abilities required for the job to get to the next interview.

One-on-One—Typically conducted by the person authorized to do the hiring, perhaps the "Manager." This is also the most common type of an interview format as many companies may not have a full Human Resources department to conduct screening of candidates. This first interview will assess your skills and your knowledge as they relate to the job. You must sell your key strengths as they relate to the job you are interviewing for.

Panel—Some organizations conduct panel interviews. They may do this to save time, or they may just want to make sure everyone gets the same picture of a candidate. There could be 2 people, or there could be 5 or more! The interviewers usually represent various departments of the organization. Direct your answers to the person raising the question, but make sure you maintain comfortable eye contact with the group.



Peer Group—This type of interview is an introduction to your potential co-workers. These individuals will evaluate you on your “fit” with the existing team. Although their opinions may not be the deciding factor, you must focus on being agreeable and approachable.



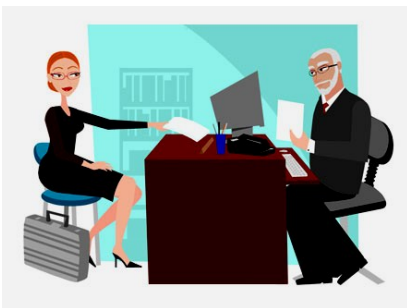
Meal—This type of interview may be the first time you meet with your potential boss, co-workers, Human Resource professionals and other possible candidates, or it may be after all of this has concluded. This interview is designed to assess how you handle yourself in a social situation. You will need to select your meal carefully. Do not order items that are difficult to chew or that have heavy or staining sauces. Light and healthy varieties are always available and they can help to keep you awake for the rest of your interview day! Always stay away from alcohol even if others are partaking! You must focus your conversation on topics that are appropriate and match the style of interaction of your tablemates. Follow their lead, and remember your table manners!

Second—This type of interview is similar to the first interview, whatever the style, but usually longer. It can be ½ to two full days. You might have several one-one-one interviews, or a combination of one-on-one and panel interviews. Lunch or dinner can sometimes be a part of the second interview process. You will probably meet your immediate supervisor, human resource professionals and co-workers. You might also meet with higher level members of the organization, Vice President or Partner for example. If you make it to the second interview, relax, and do more of what you did in the first interview!

Tips for Answering Interview Questions

When answering any interview question, take your time! Silence in an interview is okay. The interviewer wants to hear your best thought-out answer, not the first thing that comes to mind! If you need a moment to think about your answer, take a moment to think about it. Looking away signals to the interviewer that you’re thinking.

If you feel like you need more than a few seconds, feel free to ask the interviewer, “Do you mind if I have a moment to think about it?” He or she will undoubtedly say “Take all the time you need.” Once you have stated your answer – STOP TALKING. If the interviewer is just looking at you, chances are, they are simply processing your answer and taking a moment to see if they would like to ask any follow up questions. If you are unsure if you answered their question, simply ask “Does that answer your question?” Many people will keep talking just to fill the silence. This is a mistake.



Traditional—Be prepared to expand on any item on your resume involving your work experience, GPA, community involvement, etc. The question format will be general information gathering. The employer is looking for information on your skills, abilities and willingness to learn. Questions will focus on your past, present and future self. Even though some questions may be general, feel free to give answers with examples to illustrate your points.

Behavioral—Behavior-based interviews are extremely popular and are now the norm. They consist of very specific questions about past behavior, which are typically followed up with more probing questions. You will be asked in detail what you did, thought, and felt in key situations as if you were reliving them. This allows the interviewer to “be there” with you so that he or she can understand your thought process, decision-making skills, and emotional state.

The basic principle of asking behavioral questions is: Past behavior is the best predictor of future behavior. The interviewer is looking for *characteristics* in your answers: initiative, analytical skills, teamwork, leadership, communication, flexibility, decision making, creativity, assertiveness and commitment.

Questions will begin with phrases like: “Tell me about a time when...”, “Give me a specific example of...”, or “Describe a situation where...”

- ★ Initiative
- ★ Analytical Skills
- ★ Teamwork
- ★ Leadership
- ★ Communication
- ★ Flexibility
- ★ Decision Making
- ★ Creativity
- ★ Assertiveness

To prepare for behavioral questions:

- ➔ Review the position qualifications. Identify specific examples from your past experience that illustrate the skills or attributes required in the job description. For example, if the job description states the employer is looking for someone with initiative, think of a time that you demonstrated initiative. The most important part of your answer is the behavior illustrated, not necessarily the content of your anecdote.

Answer behavioral questions with the S.T.A.R. method:



Situation—describe the situation in detail while being concise and straightforward

Task—detail what your task or obstacle was (even in a group setting)

Action—detail what your actions were to complete the task or overcome the obstacle

Result—detail what the result of your action was and the outcome of the situation

You should have examples demonstrating teamwork, initiative, problem solving, overcoming an obstacle, leadership, and going above and beyond what was expected. You might also want to think of three accomplishments you are proud of in general, as each example you come up with could easily answer any number of interview questions. Review your previous jobs, involvement in volunteer organizations, roles on team projects, etc. to help you think of your examples or stories. Then practice telling them in a detailed but concise manner.

Do Your Research!

You need to do your research as a way of (1) demonstrating interest or reassuring the interviewer that you cared enough to learn something about them, (2) to protect yourself from making an embarrassing mistake, and (3) to present yourself as the best fit candidate at the interview. After all, how can you answer “What is your ideal work day?” if you don’t know what a typical day is like at ABC Company?

So, what do you need to know? Try to identify such things as:

- The goals of the organization. How do they evaluate their success?
- What ‘the corporate culture’ is like. Is it competitive, or warm and appreciative?
- What the job is really like on a day to day basis. How will you spend your time?
- Will the skills you enjoy using the most get used on a regular basis?
- More about the boss and your co-workers. What they are like to work for and with.



Read about the company; attend information sessions and receptions, and ask as many questions as possible of any company employees or interns you know – or whom your friends or family know.

Use the Internet. Of course, company websites are a good place to start, but there are many online business databases to assist you in conducting your pre-interview research.



Know Your Skills!

Many employers note that most job seekers do not present their skills effectively. Meaning, they may have the necessary skills to do the job, but do not have the words to effectively communicate them.

All employers are looking for communication skills, honesty/integrity, interpersonal skills, motivation and initiative, a strong work ethic, and teamwork skills. They also want someone who can get along with their supervisor and coworkers. If you are not sure what skills to stress, stress these! Make sure to have examples ready to demonstrate these key skills.

Key Job Related Skills:

These are skills that are specific to the occupation you are seeking. Job-related skills may have been gained in a variety of ways including education, training, work, or extracurricular activities. Your resume will showcase most of the job related skills you possess and you should be able to discuss them in an interview.

Visit the O*Net Online website at www.onetonline.org for assistance in defining your job related skills. Explore the tasks associated with the job you are targeting or the tasks associated with jobs you have had in the past. If you need further help in defining your skills sets prior to the interview, ask for assistance from your Career Counselor.

Making A Great Impression: *First Impressions Count!*

You are **MARKETING** a great product—**YOU!!!** Stand up and sit up straight, make eye contact, and practice your handshake! Employers are looking for confidence, appearance, punctuality, and polish.

Quick Tips:

Before the Interview:

- ✓ Research the company and the job.
- ✓ Fill out the application completely, if there is one.
- ✓ Analyze yourself: interests, values, strengths and weaknesses, skills, accomplishments, education, and career goals.
- ✓ Ask yourself:
 - Why do you want this company/position?
 - What contributions you can make to the company/position?
 - Why you are a great candidate for the position?
 - What skills you have that are similar to the ones described in the job description?
- ✓ Plan your interview attire in advance and make sure your clothes are pressed, your shoes shined, and your hair and nails well groomed. The day before is the time for everyone to seriously consider a manicure!
- ✓ Focus on things you can control. Put your energy into things that can influence the outcome of your interview, researching the company and preparing your questions for the interviewer, for example. Don't worry about things you can't control, such as how many applicants there are for the job.
- ✓ Rehearse for the interview, but don't overdo it.
- ✓ Have a 60 second commercial about yourself for career fairs, telephone conversations, etc. Touch on your background (including education), your current activities, your future goals, and your availability.
- ✓ **Arrive Early!!!** This means you are in the reception area 10 or 15 minutes prior to the start of your interview. But do not come earlier than this as doing so makes receptionists and hiring managers uncomfortable.
- ✓ Bring extra copies of your resume and a list of references.
- ✓ Introduce yourself in a courteous manner, and have a firm handshake. Read **FIRM**, not crushing, nor the "limp fish".
- ✓ Be courteous...to everyone you come in contact with during the interview process.
- ✓ Anticipate frequently asked questions about your education, work experience, career goals, personal qualities, and your knowledge of the organization, as well as behavioral interview questions.

During the Interview:

- Be positive and enthusiastic about the job!
- Be polished and professional!
- Speak slowly and clearly and don't be afraid to pause for a moment to collect your thoughts.





- Be honest. Don't try to cover up mistakes – focus on what you learned from them.
- Listen, and use body language to show interest.
- Smile, nod, and give nonverbal feedback to the interviewer.
- Ask *intelligent* questions that demonstrate the fact that you have done your research. But don't ask combative questions that can be perceived as attacking the interviewers or their employer.
- Be assertive but not aggressive. Remember, this is the way for you to learn if the job is right for you.
- ***Do not*** ask about salary or benefits...this isn't the right time for that.

After the Interview:

- ⇒ Thank the interviewer and ask about the next step in the interview process. In other words, act interested!
- ⇒ Ask the interviewer for a business card and send a thank-you letter or e-mail as soon as possible.

Dress for Success

If you don't dress seriously, the interviewer won't take you seriously. Some experts suggest that if you enter the interview dressed poorly, you've taken away 50% of your chance to be hired. So follow these tips and dress for success!

Tips for Men:

Suits

- Pants with cuffs are recommended
- 100% wool suits in navy blue, charcoal grey and black are recommended
- Solid colors and pinstripes are best - pinstripes should be muted/narrow
- Clothes should not be too tight or too loose
- Use a heavier material suit if you are traveling
- When interviewing, leave the bottom suit jacket button unbuttoned
- For a cocktail/dressy suit, add a silk pocket-handkerchief
- Avoid pocked suits for the interview, unless it fits with the company
- Darker suits carry more authority; blue is the easiest color to wear and it goes with just about any shirt and tie!
- Don't wear your suit coat in the car – hang it up or lay it on the car seat/trunk

Shirts

- Pinstripes should be thin, if any
- Solid white is always appropriate
- Cotton shirts look better and hold up better under perspiration
- Iron your shirt, even if it claims to be “wash and wear”
- Wear long sleeved shirts with cuffs extending 1/4” below suit sleeve



- Ties** Silk ties with classic patterns (solid, stripes or small prints) are ideal
Tie color(s) should complement the suit and shirt colors.
Width should be about the same as lapels, generally 2 3/4" to 3 1/2"
- Shoes** Black and burgundy leather are recommended
Black lace up shoes, cap toe, and wing tips are the most conservative
Slip-on dress shoes (even with tassels) are the most versatile for day or evening
- Socks** Socks should be cotton or nylon and should complement the suit
They should not bunch around your ankles
They should be long enough that skin is not seen when legs are crossed
- Accessories** Belt buckles should be simple
Watches should be simple and plain
Don't wear a belt if you wear suspenders
Jewelry should be very simple and conservative
Suspenders are best with leather tips and buttons (as opposed to clips)
Blue, black, or gray suits, wear black belt and shoes
Brown, tan, or beige suits, wear brown belt and shoes
Bags and resume portfolios should be leather (dark colors are recommended)
Your belt should be leather and should match or complement your shoes
- Other** Shave/Keep facial hair trimmed and neat
Cologne should be light, if worn at all
Keep fingernails clean. Remember manicure is a great idea the day before!
Keep hair neat (cut above your collar)
Do not wear earrings, tongue-rings, etc.
Wearing your wedding ring is perfectly acceptable
Necklaces are acceptable (not too clunky and without medallions or distasteful or large charms)
- Business** Dress leather belt (black or brown acceptable)
Casual A blazer or sport coat, usually navy or black
High-quality polo shirt or crew-neck shirt
Long-sleeved sport shirts (tie is not necessary)
Dress slacks, cotton chinos or khakis (pressed—navy, olive, khaki, black)
Patterned or colored socks in a heavier knit than dress socks
Loafers or other shoes that bridge the gap between casual and dress



Tips for Women:

In General

- Avoid low necklines
- Perfume should be light if worn at all
- Flesh-tone pantyhose are a must
- Makeup should be natural looking
- If wearing a cocktail dress to an evening meal, this should be conservative
- No nose-rings, tongue-rings, etc.
- When in doubt, dress on the conservative side
- Jewelry should be simple (no costume jewelry)
- Clean and neatly pressed clothes that fit properly—there should be NO tugs or stretched seams on your interview day
- Wearing your wedding ring(s) is perfectly acceptable
- Earrings should be small, wear only one in each ear
- Do not wear clunky, heavy, or thick-soled shoes or boots

Business/ Interview Attire

- Do not wear flats (shoes)
- Wear a classic and conservative skirt or pants suit
- 100% wool suits in navy blue, charcoal grey or black are ideal
- Pant or skirt should not be too tight or form-fitting
- Closed toe shoes/heels should be of medium height (1½” to 3”)
- Skirts should touch knee or right below the knee
- Wear nude, flesh-tone pantyhose with knee length skirts—NO fish-nets or patterns!
- You may wear a watch, but don’t look at it or play with it
- White, ivory, or French blue blouses are recommended
- Keep nail polish neutral, clear is preferred because it won’t show chips. Remember the day before the interview is perfect for a manicure!

Business Casual

- Tailored blouse
- Tailored pantsuits
- Dresses with sleeves
- Lightweight wool blazers
- Mix-and-match knit separates
- Skirts or slacks in neutral colors
- Twin sweater sets in neutral colors
- Casual low-heeled shoes or flats are acceptable
- Cotton button-down shirts in solid colors and stripes
- Sandals (in good taste) may be worn, but no flip-flops
- Business casual means you should still look professional
- Events the night before the interview, wear something dressier



Don't Sweat These Questions

Don't worry, sweaty palms and shaky voices are nothing new to interviewers. They know you're nervous, but you still need to have good answers to their questions and solid communication skills. The key to interview success is to practice, practice, practice. Practice saying the answers out loud. Practice saying the answers in the mirror. Practice with a family member. Practice with a career counselor.

Sample Questions and Answers:

Tell me about yourself.

This question gets asked at nearly every interview. You may want to mention the highlights of your education, your experience (especially as it relates to the job you are applying for), and your career goals (they should be in-line with what the company has to offer). You might tell them why you are interested in this position/company. You might tell them why they should hire you. Your answer should last about one minute.

Why should I hire you?

You should have an understanding of the job you are interviewing for and the type of candidate the employer is looking for (their strengths, skills, personality, etc.) Identify several themes about yourself that fit what the employer is looking for. Then think of examples that demonstrate those themes.

What is the most significant contribution you made to the company during your last job?

Tell a story about an accomplishment that added value to the company, demonstrating skills that show initiative or resilience. Tell the interviewer about the options and the outcome of your work.

What is the biggest mistake you've made?

Be honest. You'll show credibility and integrity. While mistakes aren't rewarded, those who make mistakes aren't shot either. Sometimes making a mistake can show that you've pushed yourself to the limit. Be careful, however, to concentrate your answer on describing what you learned from your mistake. Your example should demonstrate your ability to confront and resolve a difficult situation in a responsible manner.

Is there anything you were afraid I was going to ask you today?

Most importantly, keep your cool. Many people blurt out the question that they didn't want asked – and raise new questions in the interviewer's mind. You should already have thought about the worst question you could possibly face, and you should have an answer ready.

Tell me about the positive and negative aspects of your last job.

Focus on the positive aspects of your last job. That goes for former employers as well. Negatives should be kept as neutral as possible. Turn negative aspects into "lessons learned". Make sure that the negative aspect of your past job would not be present in this job. For example, don't say that the company you used to work for was "too small" if the company you are interviewing with is also small.



- ❑ **Are you looking at other employers? Do you have any offers?**
Of course you are looking at other employers. You want to make the most informed decision you can, so you have to explore all of your options. You do not need to imply that you have other job offers if you do not.
- ❑ **What experience would you like to gain here?**
Stress what you have to offer the company more than what the company can offer you.
- ❑ **Describe your ideal work environment/job.**
Try to be sure that the answer you offer closely correlates with the environment/job at the company you're interviewing with. If it does not, the interviewer may wonder if you will be satisfied or happy with the position.
- ❑ **What do you know about our company?**
You want to show that you've done your homework. You want to sound smart, professional, and serious enough about the job to have taken the time to do an Internet search and asked around about the company. You should always take the time to do this kind of preparation for an interview, but you'd be surprised at how many people fail to take the time. Lack of preparation is a common complaint among interviewers, and if you are prepared, you will stand out among your competitors. State how what you have learned about the organization relates to your career goals.
- ❑ **What is your greatest weakness?**
Choose something that is not critical to the job you are interviewing for. Be honest. Discuss a real weakness and how you overcame it.
- ❑ **Why do you want this job?**
Your answer should reflect company research and why you are a good fit. Talk about something you discovered that will stand out to the interviewer. Not just their training program, but the company's values. The people doing the interview want to know that you respect their organization.
- ❑ **What skills do you want to learn or improve?**
Choose skills that are required for the job you are interviewing for, but make sure you don't sound as if you have no other skills. You might talk about your skill at market research, using an example, and then discuss how you would like to strengthen that skill.
- ❑ **If you are hired, how long will you stay with this company?**
Definitely do not tell them you plan on leaving after one to two years. Focus on the positive aspects of the job. For example, "As long as the work is challenging and I have the opportunity to learn, I see no reason to leave."
- ❑ **How do you work under pressure?**
Walk the middle ground here. You don't want to sound like pressure is the only thing that will get you to do your work, but you don't want to sound like a wimp either.



❑ **What is your greatest strength?**

You know what you are good at, so be proud of it. Choose a talent that would benefit the position you are interviewing for. Many strengths, such as efficiency, would be valuable in any job.

❑ **How do you feel about working in groups?**

Obviously, if you are going to be alone in a room all day doing some type of individual research, you don't want to convey the idea that you hate working alone. Conversely, if you are planning a career in management consulting where teamwork is everything, you don't want to come off as an anti-social hermit.

❑ **What role do you tend to play in groups?**

There are four types of roles people tend to play in groups: the leader, the creative idea generator, the analyzer/interpreter, and the completer-finisher. All of these roles are equally important, and the best groups contain at least one member from each category.

Sample Behavioral Interview Questions

The more you know about a particular job, the easier it will be to identify the critical job skills, and therefore, anticipate questions the interviewer might ask. Here are some common behavioral questions:

- Tell me about a difficult decision you have made.
- Tell me about an obstacle you overcame.
- Tell me about a time when a co-worker or manager criticized your work or an idea.
- Tell me about a time you had to work with someone who was difficult to get along with.
- Tell me about a time you went above and beyond what was expected.
- Tell me about a situation you wish you had handled differently.
- Think of the last team you were a member of. What would your team members say you did well? What would they say you could improve upon?
- Tell me about a time a teammate didn't do their fair share of work. What did you do? What was the result? (Remember to tell the interview what YOU did, not what the team did).
- Tell me about a time you demonstrated leadership/initiative.
- Tell me about a time you had to deal with a crisis.
- Tell me about a time you had trouble with a boss or coworker (or team member).
- Tell me about a time you had too much on your plate. How did you handle it?
- Tell me about an accomplishment you are proud of and why.
- Give me a specific example of a time when you sold your supervisor or client on an idea or concept. How did you proceed? What was the result?



- Describe the system you use for keeping track of multiple projects. How do you track your progress so that you can meet deadlines? How do you stay focused?
- Describe a time when you got co-workers who dislike each other to work together. How did you accomplish this? What was the outcome?
- Give me a specific example of something you did that helped build enthusiasm in others.
- Tell me about a time when you failed to meet a deadline. What things did you fail to do? What were the repercussions? What did you learn?
- Describe a time when you put your needs aside to help a co-worker. How did you assist them? What was the result?
- Describe a specific goal you set for yourself and how you went about meeting it. What factors led to your success in meeting your goals?

Notice that your answer to one question may easily answer several different questions. That is okay – you don't have to have a unique answer for each and every question. In a typical 30 minute interview, you will answer 7 – 10 questions, and not all of them will be behavioral.

Additional Questions Asked by Employers:

Personal

- What are your hobbies? How do you spend your free time?
- Why did you choose to interview with our organization?
- Tell me about a weakness and give me an example of a time this weakness affected you negatively in your life.
- Define success. Failure.
- Have you ever had any failures? What did you learn from them?
- Of which three accomplishments are you most proud?
- Who are your role models? Why?
- How does your college education or work experience relate to this job?
- What motivates you most in a job?
- Have you ever spoken before a group of people? How large?
- Why should we hire you rather than another candidate?
- What do you know about our organization?
- Where do you want to be in five years? Ten years?
- Do you plan to return to school for further education?

Education/Training

- Why did you choose your major?
- Why did you choose to attend your college or university?
- Do you think you received a good education? In what ways?
- Which classes in your major did you like best? Least? Why?
- If you were to start over, what would you change about your education?
- Do your grades accurately reflect your ability? Why or why not?
- Were you financially responsible for any portion of your college education?



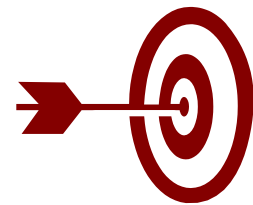
Experience

- What job-related skills have you developed?
- Why did you leave your last position?
- Have you ever quit a job? Why?
- Have you ever done any volunteer work? What kind?
- Give an example of a time when you worked under deadline pressure.
- Give an example of a situation where you provided a solution to an employer.
- How do you think a former supervisor would describe your work?
- What would your previous supervisor say you could improve upon?



Career Goals

- Do you prefer to work under supervision or on your own?
- What kind of boss do you prefer?
- Would you be successful working with a team?
- Do you prefer large or small organizations? Why?
- What other types of positions are you considering?
- Give me an example of a time you had several assignments at once?
- How do you feel about working overtime?
- How do you feel about travel?



Questions for the Interviewer

You need to have some questions prepared for when the interviewer asks, “Do you have any questions?” Otherwise you will be perceived as uninterested. Your questions don’t have to be “profound” – they can be very simple. You don’t need to have 20 questions, 3 to 5 will do. Here are some questions worth asking:

The HR Manager:

- Are employees encouraged and given the opportunity to express their ideas and concerns?
- What do employees seem to like best and least about the company?
- What is the rate of employee turnover?
- How large is the department where the opening exists?

- Why is the position open?
- Does the job require much travel?
- What are the chances of being relocated after starting the job?
- What type of orientation or training do new employees receive?
- How often are performance reviews given?



Your Prospective Supervisor or Co-Worker:

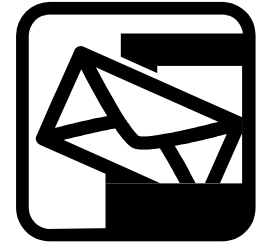
- What would I be expected to accomplish in the first six months on the job? In the first year?
- What are some of the department's ongoing and anticipated special projects?
- How much contact or exposure does the department and staff have with management?
- Describe your ideal candidate.
- Describe a typical day.
- What do you like best/least about working for this department/company?
- Do you feel free to express your ideas and concerns here?
- What are the possibilities for professional growth and development?
- How much interaction do you have with superiors, colleagues, and customers?
- Do you have much of an opportunity to work independently?
- How long have you been with the company?



Points to Remember

It is critical to allow the recruiter to lead the interview, but showing some initiative is good. At the end of most interviews it is common for the interviewer to ask if you have any additional or final comments. In fact, if you are not asked, it is quite appropriate to make the comment, "If you don't mind, I would like to add..." Then describe yourself in two to three brief points. Do not restate the obvious, such as your degree and other qualifications listed on your resume. Communicate information about yourself as a person. Highlight areas that were not discussed completely in the interview or strengths you feel are especially important.

The employer should tell you how the process will continue from this point. If that does not occur, feel free to ask, "What is the next step in the interview process?" Or, "When can I expect to hear from you?" You should ask for permission to follow up with the interviewer if you have not heard from them by a certain period of time. An employer may also request references and/or transcripts, so you should have them ready. A photocopy of an official transcript should do. Ask for a business card, and conclude the interview with a firm handshake and a statement reaffirming your interest in the position, and thanking the employer for his or her time.



Interview Follow Up

Within 24 hours, you should send a thank you note to the interviewer. In the note, reinforce your interest in the position. Take the opportunity to highlight something that was positive from the interview, or restate something that you learned from the discussion. E-mailed thank you notes are perfectly acceptable. Mailed thank you notes can be handwritten or typed. If a company is very conservative, stick with typed. You can write to all the people with whom you interviewed, or you can identify the decision-maker and write to him or her, requesting that he or she share your thanks with the rest of the team (this is more pertinent to a second interview).

How to Come Out First in the Second Interview

Clearly, you had to do something right the first time around to be invited back. So, if you gave concise answers to the interviewers' questions; explained how you could apply your skills to the position; and were well mannered, well dressed, and well prepared, then by all means, give a repeat performance.



The biggest difference between the first and second interviews is the interviewer. An example is the typical HR interviewer has received formal training and conducts the interview in a more formal manner. A typical second interview might consist of an on-site visit with an individual who most likely has little, if any, formal training in interviewing and recruiting. During an on-site visit, it is common to talk with at least two types of interviewers: fairly new employees and those who have been with the company for more than 10 years. Make sure you bring extra copies of your resume.

Keep in mind that you will be meeting with more people, probably at corporate headquarters, perhaps over the course of an entire day. A series of individual interviews is the most common format for the second job interview. The people conducting the interviews may consist of your prospective peers or superiors. They are primarily interested in whether you can do the job and work well with them. The second interview may also include a meal and a tour of the facility.

A group of candidates may be invited for individual interviews during the same time period. Your challenge is to distinguish yourself from your competition. One way to do this is to acquire more than a cursory knowledge about the company. Companies are impressed by candidates who have networked with their employees, or who have shown enough interest in the company to have found out more than just who they are, what they do, and what the job would entail.



Evaluating Job Offers & Negotiating Salary

Consider the following factors before making your final decision.

1. **Job Content**

Your first test for any offer is the nature of the work. People master the basics of the job between three weeks to six months. Ask yourself, "Am I proud of the products or services of the employer? Is the job interesting to me? Does this position fit into my long-range career plans and personal goals?"

2. **Your Boss**

Don't dismiss this concern. Ask yourself honestly, "Can I work and get along with this person?" Almost as important as the chemistry is how the boss will serve as a mentor. You will want to feel comfortable with his/her interpersonal and management style. You will want to work for a supervisor who is capable and interested in your growth.

3. **Salary and Benefits**

Is the salary at market level? Would taking this position create economic hardship? How are individual increases determined (performance, job level, length of service, etc.)? How are salary reviews and promotions handled? Your salary should be reviewed on a regular basis; many organizations do it every 12 months. Your potential for salary growth quickly becomes more important than your starting salary. Salary is not the only compensation you will receive, and working solely for money will eventually leave you feeling unfulfilled. Think also of the benefits package when considering the offer.

4. **Your Co-Workers**

One major reason people leave their jobs is not "fitting in" with their co-workers. How will you fit into the corporate culture? How did you like the people that you met? Did you feel at home in the surroundings? Sometimes peers can be more difficult to deal with than a prospective boss. Ask potential co-workers and supervisors about the culture and how people work together.

5. **Typical Work Week**

What is a typical work week like? How many hours a week does the position require? Will you work evenings? Weekends? At home?

6. **Location**

Do you like the location or region where you'll be working and living? How long and arduous is the commute? Don't underestimate location as a satisfaction issue.

Additional Factors to Consider:

Searching for a position is difficult. After spending many hours on a search, making a careful decision regarding a job offer is important. Getting an offer does not necessarily mean you should take the job. Most employers will not expect you to make a decision on the spot. You will probably be given a few days to one week to make up your mind. Weighing the advantages and disadvantages of the job will help you make a more informed decision, rather than deciding on impulse.

There are some general parameters you should follow when evaluating job offers. How well the employer's values match your own is key to making a good decision. Consider ranking the following work values in order of importance by using this scale: 1-very important, 2-important, 3-somewhat important, 4-not important.

<p>The Job</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Duties and responsibilities 2. Match for values/interests/skills 3. Personalities of supervisors and colleagues 4. Variety of work assignments 5. Opportunity for individual achievement 6. Exposure to outstanding colleagues 7. Opportunity to work independently 8. Opportunity and frequency of travel 9. Overtime 10. Opportunity to apply academic background 11. Social significance of job 12. Physical environment and working conditions 13. Pressure and pace of work; turnover 14. Intellectual stimulation 	<p>The Organization</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Technologically innovative 2. High involvement in research and design 3. Management styles 4. Opportunities for growth and advancement 5. Layoffs and restructuring 6. Reputation and image of employer 7. Financial stability and growth prospects 8. Salary, benefits, and compensation 9. People in top-level positions 10. Personnel policies and flex-time 11. Training and continuing education 12. Required relocations and transfers 13. Public or private employer 14. Well established vs. fledgling company
<p>The Industry</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Growth history 2. Future need for goods and services 3. Dependence on the business cycle 4. Dependence on government policies and programs 5. Long-term future potential 6. Record of layoffs or downsizing 	<p>The Location</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Proximity of graduate schools 2. Opportunity for partner's career 3. Climate 4. Cost of living; distance from work 5. Community life; environment 6. Location of company headquarters and branches

Once you have ranked the values, star the ones ranked 1 or 2. Now you have a picture of what is important to you in a job. Consider this information when evaluating a job offer as well as your initial reaction about the people or place you have visited. Are the type of people you met the kind you would like to work with on a regular basis? Did they seem excited about their work?

Job Offers

"On the Spot" Offers:

- Don't feel the need to accept or reject these offers on the spot.
- Show interest, but ask for time to consider the offer—a few days to a few weeks is generally enough time to ask for depending on your and the employers needs.
- Get the SPECIFIC OFFER in WRITING.

Options for All Offers:

1. Stall

First and foremost, express appreciation for the offer. Tell them that because this is such an important decision you would like to ask them for some time to carefully think about your decision. Agree on a reasonable time frame to get back to them with your decision. There is no reason to accept an offer immediately, and fortunately most organizations will not expect you to accept an offer on the spot.

2. Accept

Show your appreciation for the offer. Ask the employer to confirm the offer in writing. At this point you should not interview for any other positions. Reject all other offers by telephone and then with a short letter. Never renege on an offer you have already accepted.

3. Reject

Again, express your appreciation for the offer and for their confidence in you. Say something positive about the employer and be diplomatic. This can be done by letter and is a professional way to conclude your interactions even if you have already said it verbally.

- Most employers will not discuss the issue of pay until they have decided to hire you.

Negotiating Salary

Note that sometimes there is flexibility with starting salaries for employment but sometimes there is not. Don't feel like you have to negotiate your salary. However, if you legitimately feel like you deserve more, you might want to try. Here are some tips:



Perform Research On Your Salary Worth

Start by taking a good look at your own salary requirements as well as developing an understanding of what your skills are worth in the market. Keep in mind that your paycheck after taxes is approximately 28 percent less than your gross monthly salary. Salary range information is available from a variety of sources including professional journals/associations, and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Websites such as www.salary.com and www.glassdoor.com may also be helpful. Consider your range in terms of low/middle/high. If you are considering salary and benefits in another region or city, be aware of the differences in the cost of living.

Get It In Writing

Most employers will send an offer letter confirming your start date and salary, employment location, and details of your package. If the employer does not offer this, ask, "Will you be confirming this in writing?"

Take into account that a starting salary is just that, a start. Your salary should be reviewed on a regular basis. Some employers conduct an annual review. If the employer is pleased with your performance, how much can you expect to make after one year? Two years? Three years, etc.?

If you approach salary as something that you and the employer will agree on as mutually beneficial, your chances of salary negotiation success are greatly enhanced.

Considering Benefits

Don't focus solely on salary, because most employers offer a range of other benefits, sometimes worth as much as 30-40 percent in addition to your actual salary. Listed below are some of the major categories of benefits. When you evaluate a job offer, there is much to consider. Only you can be the one to decide whether a larger salary will balance more promising advancement opportunities, or whether better health insurance will make a longer commute worthwhile.

- Vacation (*2 weeks is average to start, after a few years, 3 weeks*)
- Holidays (*10 paid holidays a year is typical*)
- Life and Disability Insurance
- Medical and Dental Insurance
- Stock Purchase or Savings Plan
- Retirement (401k or pension)
- Child Care
- Bonus Incentives
- Relocation Packages
- Flexible Schedules
- Work from Home

Sample Evaluation Form

Scale: 1—Very Good, 2—Satisfactory, 3—Needs Improvement

I. Personal Appearance/First Impressions				Comments
Arrived on time	1	2	3	
Greeting, eye contact, handshake, enthusiasm	1	2	3	
Sitting position/posture	1	2	3	
General appearance, grooming, dress	1	2	3	
II. Responses to Interview Questions				
Preparedness, professionalism, maturity	1	2	3	
Quality of initial or opening verbal presentation	1	2	3	
Ability to describe past work experience, projects, education, and training	1	2	3	
Ability to explain skills, weaknesses, abilities, values, and relate to position sought	1	2	3	
Ability to explain personal goals, interests and desires and relate to position seeking	1	2	3	
Ability to give examples in response to behavioral/ situational questions; used STAR formula (situation, task, action, result)	1	2	3	
Ability to explain possible questionable factors such as frequent job changes/gaps in employment, lack of activity in field of interest	1	2	3	
Demonstrated key skills: initiative, leadership, communication, teamwork, problem solving	1	2	3	
Quality of candidate questions about the position/ program/organization	1	2	3	
Quality of closing statement; why you? Close of interview (next step, sincere appreciation)	1	2	3	
III. Communication Skills/Attitude				
Ability to listen attentively to questions, respond to questions being asked, and ask for clarification	1	2	3	
Poise under pressure and ability to turn objections into positive points	1	2	3	
Clarity of speech or conversation (voice, tone, volume, pitch, speed)	1	2	3	
Physical mannerisms (facial expressions, gestures, posture, nervous habits)	1	2	3	
Level of enthusiasm, interest in the job	1	2	3	
Answered questions concise yet thorough; no prompting needed	1	2	3	
Level of confidence (being natural and at ease)	1	2	3	
IV. Additional Comments				