



Guide to Interviewing and Professional Dress



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Interviewing Skills

Congratulations on securing an interview! This is an exciting time. The following pages will outline how to prepare, perform, handle, and follow-up an interview. Also, make sure to schedule a practice interview with the Career Services Office. Practice makes perfect!

Traits of a Great Interviewer

- Arrive on time
- Introduce yourself in a courteous manner
- Read company materials while you wait
- Have a firm handshake
- Listen to full question before responding
- Use body language to show interest
- Smile, nod, and give nonverbal feedback to the interviewer
- Ask about the next step in the process
- Thank the interviewer
- Write a thank-you letter to interviewer or search committee

Preparing for Your Interview

Learn about the company and its operation. You'll impress the interviewer if it is obvious you've done some research. It will also help you develop good answers to the interviewer's questions.

Information you should know about the company prior to your interview:

- Organizational structure
- Name of the interviewer
- Divisions/departments that interest you
- Products/Services
- Size of company
- How long have they been in business
- Types of clients
- Growth in the past and future potential
- Job description & job title
- New products and services they are developing
- Geographic location of home office, branches, stores

Prepare answers to typical interview questions. Study and practice your answers.

- Memorize the name of the person who will interview you. Nothing could be more embarrassing than forgetting their name or calling them by the wrong name!
- Decide what you will wear. Check out the section titled "Interview Dressing" for some pointers. Be sure your outfit is ready to go.
- Find out exactly where you are going, where to park, and how long it will take to get there. If you are traveling in an unfamiliar city, it is a wise idea to do a dry run prior to your interview time. Drive to the business, park, find the office and time how long all this takes. This will alleviate any undue stress the day of the interview.
- Get a good night's sleep.
- Arrive 15 minutes early. This not only shows that you are prompt it also gives you a chance to gain your composure. Be friendly to the receptionist/secretary....they often are asked their opinion!

Dress for Success—Professional Dress

Do's

- Dress conservatively
- Men—blazer, tie and dress trousers
- Women—blazer, solid top and dress trousers or knee length skirt
- Practice good grooming
- Do have clean, neatly styled hair
- Do have clean hands and trimmed nails
- Do carry a portfolio or briefcase with extra copies of your resume
- Do bring a clean notepad and pen that works
- Do wear basic hosiery (no textured hose)
- Do wear shoes you can walk easily in

Don'ts

- Don't wear torn, soiled, wrinkled clothing
- Don't dress casual—no jeans or t-shirts
- Don't wear a lot of jewelry (Men should avoid earrings)
- Don't wear a lot of cologne or heavy make-up
- Don't wear athletic shoes
- Don't eat spicy, offensive smelling foods prior to the interview
- Don't wear revealing clothing (i.e. mini-skirt, low cut tops)
- Don't wear "cutesy" ties (i.e. a flashing Mickey Mouse tie)
- Don't chew gum or smoke
- Don't carry a purse AND a briefcase

Typical Concern's of Hiring Managers

The following are some typical concerns interviewers have, which you need to address when answering questions.

- Does the applicant have the ability to do the job?
- Can he or she manage people?
- How does he or she relate to people?
- What kind of a person is this? A leader?
- What strengths does he or she have that we need?
- Why have there been a number of job changes?
- In what areas is he or she weak? How will this affect performance?
- What contribution has the applicant made?
- What are his or her ambitions? Are they realistic?
- Does she or he have growth potential?
- How is the chemistry between us?
- How will other interviewers react?
- Should this person get an offer?

During the Interview

- Offer your hand, and give a firm handshake, a pleasant smile and a positive confident attitude. Introduce yourself with enthusiasm.
- Be comfortable. Take a seat facing the interviewer, however, slightly off center. Be sure you are not facing into direct sunlight or some other uncomfortable situation.
- Listen attentively. Look at the interviewer directly, but don't get into a stare down! Sit up straight. Try to relax.
- Avoid nervous mannerisms. Pay attention to nervous mannerisms you might have such as clicking your pen, jingling change in your pocket, twisting your hair, biting your nails. Control these impulses! Everyone is nervous to some extent; the key is to appear calm and collected.
- Speak clearly. Use good grammar and a friendly tone. Never answer just "yes" or "no" to a question. Always clarify, expand on your answers. Be sure not to ramble on.
- Be positive and enthusiastic. You want to outshine all other candidates so "turn it on" during the interview! No matter how sterling your credentials are, you won't be hired if the interviewer isn't sold. Pump up your enthusiasm prior to the interview.
- Never whine, gripe or complain about past employers, jobs, classes etc.
- Ask pertinent questions. Be prepared to ask a few questions. Do not monopolize the interviewer's time, particularly if you know they have appointments scheduled following your interview.
- Do ask thoughtful questions. Always ask a question!
- Don't ask about salary and benefits, this can be discussed when the company is definitely interested in you!
- Be sure to find out the next step. Ask the interviewer when the decision will be made, when you can expect to hear from them. This way you won't be left hanging.

Sample Questions to Ask the Interviewer

- What are the company's greatest strengths?
- Who will I report to?
- Could you give some examples of projects I would be working on?
- How much travel is involved?
- Will relocation be required?
- What kind of assignments could I expect in the first 6 months?
- What products (or services or stores) are in the development stage?
- Is this a new position or will I be replacing someone?
- What is the largest single problem facing your company now?
- What qualities are you looking for in a candidate?
- What characteristics do successful employees in your company share?
- Is there a lot of team work?
- What growth areas do you foresee?
- Will I be encouraged to attend professional conferences?
- Could you describe your training program?
- How frequently are performance appraisals done?
- How do you feel about the company?
- Could you describe possible advancements within the company?
- What is the next step in the interview process?
- What is the company's management philosophy?
- What would a typical day be like?
- Is this job a result of increased growth or expansion?

Common Interview Questions

These are some of the most commonly asked questions. You may also have industry or job specific questions. Put some thought into your answers and practice them prior to your interview!

- Tell me about yourself.
- What are the responsibilities of your current or previous position?
- What do you know about this industry?
- What do you know about our company?
- How long will it take for you to make a significant contribution?
- What is your most significant accomplishment?
- Why did you leave your last job?
- Why do you think you would like to work for our company?
- If it were your first day, what would you say to the associates you will be working with?
- What have you done to overcome major obstacles in your life?
- Are you willing to relocate?
- How would you describe your work style?
- Why do you think we should hire you for this job?
- How do you define success?
- What was the last book you read?
- What area of this job would you find most difficult?
- What leadership/supervisory roles have you held?
- What is your weakness?
- What is your strength?
- What accomplishments are you most proud of?
- What has been your greatest crisis, how did you solve it?
- What person has had the greatest influence on you, why?
- What do you like best about your job/school? What do you like least?
- How has college prepared you for this career?
- Describe your ideal job.
- Why did you choose this particular field of work?
- What have you done that shows initiative?
- In what areas of the job would you expect to be most successful....least?
- What do you see yourself doing in 5 or 10 years?
- What frustrates you?
- Describe a situation with an irate customer and how you handled it?
- What aspect of this job do you consider most crucial?
- What motivates you?
- How do you work under pressure?
- What two or three things are most important to you in your job?
- What makes a good supervisor?
- What skills do you want to improve

Illegal Interview Questions

INQUIRY AREA	APPROPRIATE	INAPPROPRIATE
Age	Questions about age are only permitted if it is necessary to ensure that a person is legally old enough to do the job.	Questions about age, dates of attending school, dates of military service, requests for birth certificate.
Address	What is your address?	Examples: Do you own or rent your home? How long have you lived at your current address?
Arrest Record	May ask about arrests or pending charges if they are substantially related to the job.	Questions about arrests or pending charges for jobs other than those that are substantially related to the particular job.
Convictions	May ask about convictions if they are substantially related to the job. May let applicants know that policy requires a background check prior to hire.	Questions about convictions that are not substantially related to the job.
Citizenship/ National Origin	May ask about legal authorization to work in the specific position if all applicants are asked.	Examples: Are you a US citizen? Where were you born? Where were your parents born? Are you an American? What kind of name is that?
Credit Rating or Garnishments	Only if the job requires significant financial responsibility or access to cash or funds. In most cases, no question is acceptable.	Questions about credit ratings since they have little or no relations to job performance.
Disability	Are you able to perform the essential functions of this job – with or without accommodations? Questions about knowledge of skills necessary to perform the job requirements.	Example: Do you have a disability? What is the nature of severity of your disability?
Education	Inquiries about degrees or equivalent experiences that are related to the job being applied for.	Questions about education that are not related to the job being applied for.
Family/Marital Status	Whether an applicant can meet work schedules or job requirements. If asking, should ask all applicants.	Any inquiry about marital status: married, single, separated, divorced, and engaged; children; pregnancy or child care plans.
Health	None	Example: How is your (or your family's) health?
Military	Type of education and experience in service as it relates to a particular job.	Type of discharge or registration status.
Name	May ask current legal name. "Is additional information, such as a different name or nickname necessary in order to check job references?"	Questions about national origin, ancestry, or prior marital status.
Organizations	Inquiries about professional organizations related to the position.	Inquiries about organizations that might indicate race, sex, religion or national origin.
Race or Appearance	None	Comments about complexion, color, height, or weight.
Religion	Describe the work schedule and ask whether applicant can work that schedule. If asking, should ask of all applicants.	Inquiries on religious preferences, affiliations, or denominations.
Sexual Orientation	None	Inquiries about sexual orientation. Inquiries revealing stereotypes for certain sexual orientation (i.e. why do you wear an earring?)
Work Experience	Applicants' previous employment experience.	Questions about sick leave use or worker's compensation claims in previous jobs.

After the Interview

- Say thanks. The next day write the interviewer a brief note reiterating your interest in the job. Spell his or her name correctly!
- Follow up. If you haven't heard from the interviewer within the time frame indicated at the close of the interview, call them to relay a polite reminder that you're still interested in the job. Ask when they plan to make a hiring decision.
- If you are hired...report your offer to the Career Services Office and accept the position if you feel it is a good fit.
- If you aren't hired... If you continue to be interested in the company, it pays to keep in touch with the interviewer. Often, through persistence, you may be offered a position at a later date.
- Chin Up. Gear up for your next interview. After all the more interviews you tackle the more polished you become. You may want to contact the interviewer who rejected you and see if you can get any pointers on what to improve before your next interview.

NOTES: