

Job Interview Overview

Interviewers expect a candidate for employment to be able to review their work history in detail. Be prepared to tell the interviewer the names of the companies you worked for, your job title, your starting and ending dates of employment, how much you earned and what your job entailed. You'd be surprised how many job applicants fumble when asked about prior employment. Don't be one of them!

Refresh your memory prior to the interview by reviewing your resume, so you can speak about your prior work history in detail and accurately. If you don't have a resume, make sure what you tell the interviewer matches what you filled out on your job application. The best way to prepare is to download a sample job application ahead of time. Complete the sample application and bring it with you when you are applying for employment. This way you will be able to copy the information rather than having to remember dates and other employment information.

You can receive a statement of your employment history from Social Security by completing a "Request for Social Security Earnings Information" form. You will receive detailed information about your work history including employment dates, employer names and addresses, and earnings. The Social Security Administration charges a small fee for detailed information based on the length of time for which you would like to receive records.

PREPARING FOR AN INTERVIEW

- Do some research on the business before the interview.
- Practice interviewing.
- Go alone. Do not take children or friends.
- Greet the employer with a handshake.
- Make frequent eye contact.
- Smile, be polite, and try to relax.
- Listen carefully to the questions asked. Ask the interviewer to restate a question if you are confused.
- Answer questions as directly as possible.
- Be upbeat and make positive statements.
- If you've worked before, talk about what you learned from it.
- Use examples of how your skills and abilities would fit the job.
- Bring your "Fact Sheet" with telephone numbers and addresses of your references and former employers, just in case you are asked to complete an application.

RESEARCH THE COMPANY AND PREPARE QUESTIONS BASED ON YOUR RESEARCH

- Practice before-hand: do a mock interview to prepare (try a family member).
- Prepare responses to possible questions with concrete examples.
- Prepare the questions that you want to ask.
- Know the location of the interview and plan your route ahead of time.
- Allow ample time and arrive at least 10 minutes early.
- Bring additional materials with you: i.e. extra resume, list of references, Portfolio, and, if available, transcripts and certificates.

OTHER TIPS

- If your interviewer extends his or her hand in greeting, give a firm handshake.
- Make eye contact and smile.
- Be aware of your body language: sit erect, stand and walk with confidence, lean forward toward the interviewer.
- Be a good listener. Answer what's asked in a brief but effective manner.
- Don't be afraid to ask for clarification if you aren't sure about the question.
- Show enthusiasm and interest.
- Don't forget to thank your interviewer for their time.
- Close by saying you would welcome the opportunity to work with their team.

DRESS FOR SUCCESS

- A traditional, conservative style is usually your best bet:
- Get a haircut a few days before
- Prepare your outfit the night before by
 - polishing your shoes.
 - ironing anything that needs pressing.
 - removing any pet hair.
 - ensuring that your fingernails and hair are clean.
 - using deodorant, but avoid body sprays and perfumes.
 - not wearing super high heels, flip-flops, or sneakers.
 - not wearing wear anything low cut.
 - going easy on makeup and jewelry.
 - bring a breath mint with you to ensure you make a good first impression.

TYPES OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- **SITUATIONAL QUESTIONS**

Questions that expect the interviewee to make a decision about how they would address a scenario are situational. "What would you do if..." type phrases hint that it may be a situational question. The employer wants to know if the interviewee can handle the scenario appropriately.

- **BEHAVIORAL QUESTIONS**

Behavior-based interview questions are increasing in popularity because they are considered to be valid predictors of on-the-job performance. These questions usually begin with phrases such as:

- Tell me about a time when you ...
- Describe a situation in which..
- Recall an instance when..
- Give me an example of...
- You need to be prepared with specific examples that demonstrate your accomplishments and abilities.

- **NEGATIVE QUESTIONS**

Use a positive response to a negative question. Questions that conjure an immediately negative response in the interview can be rephrased in a positive light without dishonesty. "Did you like your previous job?" may be an example of a negative question, so you could instead express what you learned from your past position.

- **SKILL-BASED QUESTIONS**

Discovering the strengths and weaknesses of the interviewee is essential for the interviewer. Many of the common interview questions will be assessing the skills and abilities of the interviewee. Use real situations and stories to make skills tangible and personal.

QUESTIONS TO EXPECT (WHAT THE EMPLOYER MAY ASK YOU):

- Tell me about yourself. (This is often an ice-breaker question. Keep the answer job or skill related.)
- What do you know about the type of work we do? (This is your chance to tell what you know from the research you completed ahead of time.)
- What is your weakness? (Always make this a positive answer. For example, "My spelling is not always perfect, so I always use a spell checker.")
- What are your strengths? (Describe your skills in a way that will show you as a desirable employee for the company.)

- Why did you leave your last job? (Answer with a positive statement. Try not to say: "I was fired," "terminated," "quit," "had no babysitter," or "couldn't get along with coworkers or supervisor". However, you can say: "new job," "contract ended," "seasonal," "temporary," "career change," "returned to school," to raise a family," or "relocated.")
- Why have you been unemployed for such a long time? (Tell the truth. Emphasize that you were looking for a good company where you can settle and make a contribution.)
- Why should we hire you? (Make a positive statement, such as "I would like the opportunity to work with you and believe that I can do the work.")
- Do you have references? (It is most important that you contact your references ahead of time and have their name, current address, and telephone numbers.)

ANSWERING STRATEGIES

- **C-A-R**
When answering questions, use the Challenge-Action-Result model to formulate stories and responses. Highlight a *challenge* that happened, describe the *action* taken in regard to the challenge, and finish with the *results* of this action. Make sure that your action is positive (for example, don't use a story where you had to tell on a co-worker).
- **5-FINGER RULE**
What skills are needed to be successful in this position? Assign to each finger 5 relevant and major points or stories to get across in the interview. Make sure these points are conveyed no matter what!
- **Communicating Personal Brand**
After the interview is complete, the employer is left with an impression of the interviewee. Use the interview to craft and shape the impression that lingers after the conversation is over. Strategically communicate skills that will leave a positive branding impact.

QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD ASK OF THE EMPLOYER

At the end of the formal interview the employer will ask if you have any questions. The following are examples of acceptable questions to ask.

- Who would supervise me?
- How soon do you expect to make a hiring decision?
- What are the opportunities for advancement?
- What kind of training is provided or available?
- Is there a dress code?
- Can you describe a typical day on the job?
- What are the top priorities for this position in the next few months?

THE SEVEN WORST THINGS TO SAY IN AN INTERVIEW

- “I hated my last boss.”
- “I don’t know anything about your company.”
- “I’m going to need to take these days off.”
- “How long until I get a promotion?”
- “I don't have any weaknesses.”
- “What does the job pay?” (Wait until you’re offered the position to ask this question!)
- “And another thing I hate...”

THANK YOU LETTER/NOTE

Thank you letters or notes should always be sent within 24 hours after the interview. This action allows you to show genuine gratitude and keeps your name in front of the interviewer well after the conversation has ended. Remind the employer how you fit with his/her company, highlighting specific skills that connect you to the organization. Here are a few tips for thank you letters/notes:

- Neatly hand write or type the note.
- Address the note to the interviewer or the lead interviewer.
- Keep it short (no longer than one page).
- First paragraph: Thank the employer for the interview. Also, mention that you are interested in the position.
- Second paragraph: Briefly state a few of your skills without repeating the information on your resume word for word. Include any important information not mentioned at the interview.
- Third paragraph: Provide your contact information, telephone number with area code, and an e-mail address, if available.
- Sign the note with your first and last name.
- Proofread the note to check for spelling or grammar errors. Ask another person to proofread the note.
- Mail the note within two to three days after your interview.

THE PITFALLS: REASONS WHY PEOPLE DON'T GET HIRED. DON'T LET THIS HAPPEN TO YOU!!!

- Untidy personal appearance
- Inability to express information clearly
- Lack of genuine interest or enthusiasm
- Unwillingness to start at the bottom
- Negative attitude
- Lack of eye contact
- Incomplete or sloppy application
- Being late for the interview