

Launch

Interviews and Salary Negotiations



Insider Advice for Interviewing

An interview is usually your first meeting with a prospective employer and is your opportunity to convince him that you are the right person for the job.

For a successful interview, you must make a positive first impression. Answer the interviewer's questions in ways that demonstrate that your experience and qualifications meet the requirements of the job, ask intelligent questions, and conclude by determining when the next point of contact will be.

Before the Interview

The key to a successful interview is preparation. Research the company to find information on their products, services, and industry trends that could influence present or future operations. Find out how to pronounce your interviewer's name. Determine the appropriate dress for an interview by calling or visiting the company. Locate the company on a map and find out how long it will take you to get there. If you can, visit the company beforehand to ensure you can find the company on the day of your interview.

Additionally, you will want to:

- Develop and practice a 60-second introductory statement that describes who you are and what you can bring to the company.

- Practice describing your experience and accomplishments.
- Practice identifying and describing your weaknesses in a positive light.
- Practice your answers to interview questions.
- For the interview, bring several extra resumes, examples of your work, letters of recommendation, a list of your references, and any research you have gathered on the company. Also, bring a note pad and pen.
- Finally, get a good night's sleep. You will make the best impression if you are in a calm and positive state of mind.

*“The key
to a successful
interview
is preparation.”*

During the Interview

Arrive at the company a few minutes early. Greet everyone in a positive and friendly manner. You never know if the person you meet in the parking lot is the same person who will be interviewing you, or whether the hiring manager will ask the receptionist about your behavior and attitude. When you meet your interviewer, look him in the eye and greet him by his first name. Follow his cues about handshaking. If he offers his hand, shake it in a firm manner.

One of the things a potential employer looks for in an interview is whether your personality will fit well within the group. Try to establish a

If asked about your weaknesses, answer by describing a quality that could also be considered a positive trait.

personal connection with the person interviewing you. Be friendly and personable as well as professional. You want to sell yourself as a person as well as an employee.

The interviewer may begin by revealing information about the company and position. If he says something you would like to address, put a reminder in your notebook to mention it later. When the interviewer begins asking questions about your experience, answer each question confidently and honestly in a way that highlights your abilities as they pertain to the requirements of the job. If you are not asked questions about key strengths and abilities find other ways to describe them during the interview. If asked about your weaknesses, answer by describing a quality that could also be considered a positive trait. For example, you could say, "I am sometimes seen as being too demanding. I work hard and expect others to do the same."

Ending the Interview

Ask questions about the position and the company. This lets an employer know that you are interested in the position, took the time and energy to research the company, and that you care enough to want to know more about this opportunity. Use your questions to initiate discussions that reinforce how your skills and abilities will fit the needs of the department or company. Asking questions can also help you determine whether the company is the right fit for you.

Try to delay answering questions about salary until the end of the interview. If you are asked for a target salary before you had the chance to

demonstrate your experience and qualifications, explain that you would like to learn more about the position before discussing salary. The more the employer understands how your skills, abilities, and personality will be a good fit for the company, the more you will be worth to them. For more information about negotiating salary, refer to the Salary Negotiation section in Expert Advice.

When your interview ends, determine what the next step will be. Ask where the company is in the hiring cycle and how many candidates they are considering. Ask if you can provide any additional information to support your qualifications, such as references or examples of your work. Finally, always remember to thank the interviewer for his time, re-affirm that you are interested in the position, and ask when would be an appropriate time to follow up.

"Ask where the company is in the hiring cycle and how many candidates they are considering."

Following-up after an Interview

After your interview, be sure to send a thank you letter. A handwritten letter will provide a personal touch that an employer will appreciate. It is the polite thing to do and demonstrates your personal and professional courtesy. Be sure to follow up with a telephone call within the time frame set during the inter-

view to ask: where the company is in the decision process, whether you can provide any additional information, or if they would like to schedule another interview. Follow up at least once a week unless given a specific timeframe for the decision-making process. This will demonstrate your continued interest in the company.

Common Interview Mistakes to Avoid

Some of the top reasons that candidates are eliminated from consideration are:

Poor communication skills:

You must speak clearly, look the employer in the eye when talking, answer his or her questions directly, and communicate your skills, abilities, accomplishments, and experience succinctly and confidently.

Lack of confidence or overt arrogance:

You want to give the impression that you know what you are doing, but you don't want to appear as if you are trying to tell the employer his or her business.

Dishonesty:

Dishonesty in your resume, interview, or follow-up can end your candidacy or even your job if discovered. Always be truthful in your resume.

Inappropriate attire:

Your clothing and personal hygiene should reflect the social standards of the company and that of other professionals at your level.

Lack of research:

By researching the company and industry, you have the opportunity to learn how the job you are applying for affects the short-term and long-term goals of the company, and how your skills and abilities will help in achieving these goals.

Political correctness blunders:

You should not talk about issues such as race, religion, or lifestyle choices; or display prejudice of any kind in an interview.

Inappropriate salary discussion:

Bringing up salary too early in the interview, or not negotiating salary effectively at the end, will reduce your chances of getting the offer. Be sure to get a clear understanding of the position's requirements, communicate the value you can bring to the company, understand what an appropriate salary would be, and research the range of salaries the company can offer before entering into salary negotiations.

*“Dishonesty
in your
resume,
interview,
or follow-up
can end your
candidacy...”*

You should not talk about issues such as race, religion, or lifestyle choices; or display prejudice of any kind in an interview.