

Candidates Guide to the Perfect Interview

Before the Interview- Prepare.

Often overlooked, interview preparation is critical to a successful interview.

1. Gather Information - How much do you know about the company you are about to visit? Employers respect candidates who do their research. Access to the Internet has made it simple to learn about a firm's performance, growth plans, and reputation in the marketplace. Check for their web page, or search for any newspaper or periodical reports that may give you some insight into a particular firm.
2. Prepare your Answers - Be ready to describe your most significant personal and professional accomplishments, your short-term and long-term goals, and your strengths and weaknesses. Have concrete examples ready. DO NOT rely on your ability to "ad-lib" in this situation.
3. Sweat the Details - Know exactly where the interview is located, and how long it will take you to arrive at the appointed time. Prepare for any possible traffic delays. Make sure you have the correct spelling and pronunciation of the interviewer's name, and know their title. Bring an updated copy of your resume, a list of personal references, a pen and a notepad.
4. Dress Appropriately - A professional and well-groomed appearance is critical. It is often a good idea to keep your dress conservative. Consult with your placement consultant to help determine proper attire.

At the Interview...

1. Arrive early. 5 to 10 minutes are sufficient.
2. Express a positive and enthusiastic attitude.
3. Remember your body language. The manner in which you carry yourself can leave either a positive or negative impression. Sit straight, yet comfortably. Don't be afraid to lean forward and show interest. Make eye contact with the interviewer whenever you can.
4. Show confidence, without arrogance. You should be selling yourself and your background as an excellent fit for the position, but DO NOT boast or brag excessively. Remember that confidence is impressive, but cockiness is annoying.
5. Speak positively about past and current employers. You do not want to appear negative towards management.
6. A firm handshake is still important!

Frequently Asked Questions...

1. What are your strengths? Provide the interviewer an example of one or two strengths, and provide concrete examples of how it affected your work in a positive way. Stay away from identifying standard characteristics without examples (i.e. "I'm detail-oriented, I'm a hard worker, etc.")
2. Why are you interested in working here? This is a good opportunity to show that you've researched the company, and that you had been impressed by their reputation, growth-track, and so forth. Show interest in the job responsibilities of the position available, as opposed to what you hope the position

will lead to next. Stay away from answers like "well, it's more money," or "it's an easier commute for me." The interviewer may think you'll leave their company for similar reasons.

3. What is your biggest weakness? Cite a lack of experience in an area largely unnecessary to the job you'll be performing.

4. Why are you leaving your current position? Make it clear that you have arrived at this decision after long and careful deliberation. Never criticize a current or former employer. In fact, show appreciation to them for the opportunities they gave you.

5. What has been your proudest accomplishment? As part of your preparation, you should have an impressive example ready. Have you ever saved your employer significant amounts of time or money? What have you done that you may be remembered for in a positive way? Show the interviewer how valuable you can be!

Questions to Ask

1. "I understand what a (NAME OF POSITION) does, but just so we're on the same page, what are the duties and responsibilities of this position?" This is an excellent way to discover exactly what the employer expects of you. Show the interviewer how you will perform those tasks effectively, and how your approach to the position will solve their company's problems.

2. "What are the most important aspects of the successful candidate?" Again, this question should provide you with insight into what the company needs, both personally and professionally, from the ideal applicant. After their answer, give them examples of how you fit the profile.

3. "If I were hired, what would be my first project or production goal?" If your prospective employer has unrealistic expectations, this is a good way to uncover them. Hopefully, they will appear attainable. Illustrate how you can exceed, not just meet, their goals. Give examples from your work experience, if possible.

4. "How will my performance be assessed?" You certainly want to know how your work will be measured, and the employer should see this as a fair and insightful question.

Questions Not to Ask

1. "What will my salary be? How are your benefits?" The employer wants to believe you're interested for reasons other than compensation and benefits. NEVER bring this up in the first interview. If you are asked about your salary expectations, especially towards the end of the meeting, it's often a good sign—a "buying signal" that the interviewer is interested. Simply reply— "Right now, my total compensation is (\$). To make a move, I would expect a reasonable increase."

2. "What are the hours here? What time do we go home? How long is lunch?..etc." Even if you're just curious, you may appear to be someone who watches the clock until it's time to leave. The employer must feel that you are ready to put in whatever hours are necessary to get the job done and that you bring a good work ethic to the table.

3. "How soon will I have the chance to advance?" It is perfectly fine to inquire about personal growth potential, however, the employer's most pressing concern is filling the job at hand. Don't give them the

impression that you'll be ready to move on after 6 months! Instead, ask the interviewer- "If my performance is judged as excellent, how could I further my career within your organization?"

In Conclusion...

1. Restate the position's requirements and responsibilities as you understand them, and ask the interviewer if your conclusions are correct. If so, tell the interviewer that you will be able to solve the critical challenges of the position. Reiterate the reasons why this is true, showing how your background and attributes matches their needs perfectly.
2. Ask the interviewer if you can address any of their remaining concerns.
3. Tell the interviewer that you want the job! This can be done easily and diplomatically- "I am very interested in joining your organization. What is the next step?" or "I am excited at the prospect of working for your firm, and would accept an offer, if extended." You must show enthusiasm for the position to receive an offer, and it is common for a company to miss out on the best candidate for their opening because of a perceived lack of interest on the candidate's part.
4. Write a thank you note that day, using their business card to get the correct spelling of their name and their correct title.

Remember...

The best jobs go to the candidates with the best interviewing skills! Qualifications and references are often not enough to land the job you really want. Through research and preparation, you can interview with the best of them. Good Luck!