



Interviewing Tips

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The telephone interview

This is your ticket to an in-person interview. Sound alert and interested. Keep background noise and other distractions to a minimum. Have your resume handy to refer to. When you make an appointment, be sure to write down the correct time, date, name, and title of person you will be seeing, the company's address, phone number and directions.

Be flexible when scheduling an interview

Flexibility is a key asset for any employee! Restricting the times you are available may make it appear you are not too interested in the position or you may appear difficult.

Know what your resume says

Even though you have your resume with you, always be prepared to cite your background and work experience accurately from memory. Be prepared to describe gaps in your employment history and reasons for leaving a previous job. Most interviewers will ask questions about these areas and expect reasonable explanations.

Be prepared to complete an application

The application is a legal and standard document used by each company. Make the application neat and accurate, and never lie. Even if you bring a resume, be prepared to complete all sections of the application completely and thoroughly. Your application will become part of your permanent personnel file should you be hired.

Have realistic salary expectations

Keep in mind the local economy, cost of living and total benefit package offered. On the application where it calls for salary, our best suggestion is to write "open" or "negotiable". Doing otherwise may hurt your chances of getting an offer, especially if your expectations are too high.

Do your homework

Researching the company before you interview will help you determine whether it is a company for which you would like to work, based on their position in their industry and financial stability. In addition, it will give you an opportunity to sound knowledgeable during the interview. Also, if in doubt about the company's location, identify its location the day before to make sure you can find it. If you have a computer with Internet access, it can be a very valuable tool for researching a company.

The importance of the Receptionist

Recognize the Receptionist as a bridge between you and the interviewer, and sometimes even getting the job. Be courteous and friendly. It is not uncommon that any negatives about how you present yourself in the lobby or over the phone will be passed on to the interviewer.

Package yourself

First impressions are crucial! The interview is your only opportunity to make a first impression. A rule of thumb is to dress in appropriate attire for the position or business setting which you are interviewing. Appropriate clothing is clean, neat and well pressed goes a long way towards making a favorable impression. Personal grooming is essential; cleanliness, hairstyle and makeup are all part of your personal image and are very important to your success in the interview. Be sure not to overdress and it's best to omit the cologne!

Practice! Practice! Practice!

Many people experience some degree of nervousness before an interview...this is normal! The best way to be confident in what you are going to say and how you are going to look is to practice. Find a family member or friend to role-play with or practice in front of a mirror. Many interviews consist of similar types of questions. Practice explaining your work history, short and long-term career goals, and strengths and weaknesses. Also spend time practicing your posture, handshake, and eye contact. By practicing ahead of time you can be more comfortable when the questions arise.

Listen! Listen! Listen!

Don't talk yourself out of a job! Answer the questions as concisely as possible. Avoid elaboration unless it is requested. Keep your conversation directed at your previous experience and responsibilities. Avoid discussing company politics, your former employer, or any negatives about co-workers, event, or the company.

Body Language

Much emphasis is placed on the unspoken communication in the interview – the body language, eye contact, posture, handshake and manners.

When being introduced to the interviewer, be sure to give a firm handshake, make eye contact, and smile! A limp, cold, fishy handshake will communicate the wrong signals about yourself and your energy levels. A firm handshake says you are confident, composed and happy to meet them! Once seated in the interview, sit straight and squarely in the chair with your hands folded in your lap. Good posture helps you look self-assured.

The interviewer's body language will show you how you are doing. A red flag to look for is if the interviewer is looking bored, annoyed or distracted. If you notice any of these signs...stop and change direction! Ask if you are answering the questions properly to get a sense if you are on the right track.

Stick to business

Generally speaking, the interview should focus on matters relating to the job opening: i.e.: work experience, education and training, and your ability to handle the responsibilities. The interviewer may bring up a hobby or outside interest if you have them listed on your resume.

This will give you the opportunity to talk about yourself...but keep it brief! It is not appropriate to ask the interviewer any personal or non-business questions.

Strengths and weaknesses

Be honest about your strong points whether they are skill or personality related. However you must show the maturity to have insights into those facets of your skills, personality or work habits which you have had to develop or perhaps need improvement. No need to put your worst foot forward such as informing the interviewer that you are a procrastinator. Also be prepared to list 3 weaknesses that are not camouflaged as strengths. Skill-related weaknesses are acceptable, such as your desire to learn more accounting or software skill, as long as they are not directly related to the job for which you are applying.

Good manners are not old-fashioned

Your conduct in the interview is just as important as what you say! At every step of the interview process you are on display. Good manners are not old-fashioned! Shaking hands, saying "please", "thank you", "May I sit down after you?" go a long way in enhancing your personality profile. Never smoke, eat, drink or chew gum during the interview. Avoid leaning on the interviewer's desk; by doing so you are invading the interviewer's personal space and you may be eliminated and never know why!

Prepare a list of questions

You may be asked if you have any questions. It is appropriate to discuss job responsibilities or company history. It is inadvisable to bring up salary or benefits during the first interview. These discussions typically take place at a later interview and are initiated by the interviewer.

Be sure to follow up

A short follow up note will set you apart from the other applicants! This small gesture goes a long way! Thank the interviewer for the opportunity to speak with him or her and express your sincere interest and enthusiasm for the position, the company and the industry. Close the note by expressing how you look forward to hearing from him/her on the agreed upon date.