The Job Interview

Congratulations! Your hard work has paid off, and you’ve received a call to come in for an interview. Keep moving forward by:

• Studying the employer again
• Preparing a list of questions
• Answering questions you anticipate during the interview and doing mock interviews

Look smart, think smart and be ready.

Interview Preparation

Knowing the kind of information the employer is seeking will help you prepare for the interview. What do employers want to know?

• Your motivation for employment
• Your ability to do the job
• How you’ll fit in
• How much you’ll cost them

Before you walk in the door, cover these topics on your own:

• **Do your research** – Ask about the interview process, who’ll you meet with, how long it will take
• **Match your skills to the job** – Be prepared to show how other skills will compensate for weaknesses
• **Prepare to win the job** – Be positive, truthful and realistic
• **Look good** – For the big day, try to be the best-dressed person to visit the employer’s office or plant

Types of Interviews – Let’s Get Acquainted

The purpose of an interview is to get to know you and for you to learn about the employer. Employers evaluate your qualifications. You provide a human face to your resume and sell your skills, experience and enthusiasm. It is an opportunity for you to learn what it is really like to work for the company – and to find out if you really want this job.

• **Telephone screening interview** – Keep job search records organized, in case of an unexpected call
• **In-person screening interview** – The goal is to select candidates to meet with the decision-maker
• **Selection interview** – Conducted by the hiring decision-maker, and you may be invited to return
• **Behavioral interview** – Gives employers insight about your on-the-job behavior and character
• **Work sample interview** – An opportunity to show what you know
• **Peer group interview** – An opportunity to meet and talk with prospective co-workers
• **Group interview** – This occurs with a group of other candidates for the job
• **Lunch or coffee interview** – This interview assesses how well you handle yourself in a social setting
• **Stress interview** – A test of whether you can handle stress on the job
• **Video conference interview** – Useful for candidates who live in distant cities or other states

**Communicate Your Best Image**

Get yourself together early. Complete applications and gather letters of recommendation, if asked. Include a list of your references, copies of licenses (for jobs that require licenses), notebook, pens, business cards and extra resumes. Bring a portfolio and put everything together in a briefcase. Look professional.

• **Send positive signals** – Watch your nonverbal communication
• **Show and tell** – Back up your statements with work samples
• **Finish strong** – Demonstrate your interest, summarize your qualifications, don’t overstay your time
• **Follow up** – Evaluate your interview, send thank-you letters, notes or emails within one day

**Key Interview Questions**

Employers use many strategies to interview job candidates. Here are some typical questions.

• **Tell me about yourself** – An open-ended question
• **Why are you interested in working for this company** – Your answer will show you’ve done your homework
• **Tell me about your education** – Describe the impact your education has had on your understanding of your professional field
• **Why have you chosen this field** – Show your enthusiasm and commitment to your career
• **Describe your best and worst bosses** – Don’t present a negative impression of former employers
• **What interests you the most and least in a job** – A gauge for measuring how you’ll fit in
• **What is your major weakness** – State how you overcame a weakness.
• **What are your strengths** – Offer a confident response that will “market” you as an employee.
• **Where do you see yourself in three years** – Indicate your goal of acquiring skills and knowledge within that time to make a positive contribution to the company

Keep your answers brief and related to the job.

**Questions to Ask in an Interview**

• Describe an average day on the job.
• What is the history of the position, and why is it vacant?
• What are the key challenges of this position?
• How would you describe the ideal candidate?
• Can the duties of the position be expanded?
• What are some outside influences that affect company growth?
• What are your short- and long-range objectives?
• When will you make a hiring decision? May I call for the decision? When is a good time?