Interview Tips

Don’t leave anything to chance. Remember: you can never be too prepared!

Congratulations! You have passed through the first screening and have an interview scheduled. By the time you get to this stage, you have already outlined your experience in your resume and described your relevant work experience in your cover letter. Now it is time for the interview, which, as everyone knows, is a way for the employer to evaluate whether you are the right person for a job. In other words, will you fit in with the company's staff, values and goals? Of course, your objective is to show the employer that the answers to these questions are yes, yes and yes! But the interview is also a way for you to find out more about the company and determine whether or not it is a right fit for you. Use this meeting as a chance to see if this atmosphere is one in which you want to work.

To help you prepare for your big day, we have some interview tips for you. Read the suggestions below for helpful advice on making the most of this opportunity.

A few days before the interview:

- Learn as much as you can about the prospective employer by reviewing its Web site thoroughly, reading industry publications and talking to others who may know about the company's culture and what the firm may be looking for in an employee.
- Review your resume. Think about how your skills and accomplishments can be assets to the company.
- Be prepared to answer these standard questions:
  - Can you tell me a little about yourself?
  - Why do you want to work here? What do you know about the company?
  - What are your strengths/weaknesses?
  - Why did you leave your last job and what have you been doing since then?
- Also be prepared for off-the-wall questions, which are increasingly common. Don’t be surprised if you're asked a questions such as, "If you could have lunch with someone famous, who would it be?" These questions provide information about your personality and how you think on your feet.
- Practice answering interview questions out loud. You want your responses to sound confident but not rehearsed.
- Prepare your own list of questions to ask the interviewer. Remember: this is your opportunity to learn more about the position and the company's culture.
- Complete a list of two to three professional references, or people who can speak positively about your skills and work ethic. Just be sure to ask if they are willing to serve as your references before you give out their contact information.
• Be prepared to complete a written application, which will likely ask for your contact information and the addresses and phone numbers of your previous employers.

The day before the interview:

• Make plans for getting to the interview; know exactly where you’re going and to whom you will be speaking. Allow extra time to get to your interview in case there are delays due to rush hour or weather.
• Buy a subway, bus or train ticket, fill your car with gas; or re-confirm other transportation plans.
• Decide what you will wear and check that it is clean, pressed, has no missing buttons, etc.
• Make sure that you have at least two pair of new or as-good-as-new sheer, off-black or nude hosiery.
• Confirm child care and any other plans that require you to depend on someone else. Have back-up plans in case your primary ones fall through.

The night before the interview:

• Check the weather forecast. Will you need an umbrella? Should you wear a coat?
• Plan how you will wear your hair and makeup. You shouldn't try anything new, and your appearance should be appropriate for a professional setting.
• Your fingernails should be conservative in length and color, and your polish should not be chipped.
• Do as much of your morning preparation as you can for both yourself and your family.
• Do something to relax, such as taking a warm bath or exercising.
• Pack your bag for the interview. Remember to bring:
  o Photo identification for building security or your application
  o Directions to the interview and the exact address, including floor and suite numbers, and the name and phone number of the interviewer in case you’re running late
  o A few copies of your resume and cover letter. Don’t forget to prepare a list of professional references, too
  o A pad or paper and pen
  o Samples of your work if you’ve been asked to bring them or think you might have an opportunity to show them
  o The questions you have prepared to ask your interviewer
• Eat a healthy dinner and go to bed early.
The day of the interview:

- Go light on the perfume. If you smoke, try not to do so right before the interview.
- Give yourself plenty of time to get to the hiring manager’s office. Aim to arrive 10 minutes early. If you arrive earlier than that, take a walk or wait outside.
- If you feel nervous, take a deep breath, counting to 10 as you do so. Then exhale slowly to the same count.
- Once inside, observe your surroundings to get a feel for the workplace. Do you like what you see?
- Turn off your cell phone, pager or anything else that beeps. The interview is too important to be interrupted.
- Remember, the interview starts as soon as you step inside the building. Be courteous to everyone you meet because you never know who has a say in the hiring decision.

After the interview:

- Send the interviewer a thank-you note within 48 hours of your interview. Use the opportunity to restate your qualifications and interest in the position.
- Stay positive! Interviewing can be a lengthy process, especially if a company wants to conduct a second interview with additional staff members.

Interview DOs:

- **DO** take out your pad of paper and pen so you can take notes.
- **DO** be friendly. Give a firm handshake, make eye contact, smile and speak up. Try breaking the ice by engaging in small talk. For example, comment on the nice surroundings or a book you notice on the hiring manager’s shelf.
- **DO** tell yourself you deserve the job. (That doesn’t mean they owe it to you. You must convince them.)
- **DO** use the interview to describe your strengths and how they align with the requirements of the position.
- **DO** be prepared to talk about your professional goals.
- **DO** be enthusiastic, courteous and alert throughout the entire interview.
- **DO** sit calmly. If you tend to gesture a lot when you talk, try clasping your hands in your lap.
- **DO** ask for a business card so that you can send your interviewer a brief, concise thank-you note.

Interview DON'Ts:

- **DON'T** bring a friend or child along.
- **DON'T** be insincere. Fake flattery shows.
- **DON'T** wear flashy jewelry (keep it simple and small) or a facial piercing.
• DON’T speak negatively about former employers or colleagues. Focus on the positive aspects of your work history.
• DON’T start with questions about your salary or time off. These questions are only appropriate if you have been offered the position or the interviewer expresses serious interest in hiring you.
• DON’T be afraid to express your interest in the position. It’s okay to say, “I want this job. I know I could make a real contribution to the company.”
• DON’T slump, yawn or chew your nails or gum during the interview.
• DON’T panic if you make a mistake, trip over your words or even knock something over. Show how cool you are under pressure.

You made a great first impression during your interview; your hard work and preparation paid off and you got the job! Although you have your foot in the door now, there are still some important things to keep in mind as you begin your new job and acquaint yourself with co-workers, supervisors and your office environment.