

How to Have a Good Job Interview

If you want better results in your job interview, prepare to rock. Show the employer why you're an ideal candidate for the job and land it quickly. Follow these steps for your best interview.

Part 1 Being Prepared

Start preparing as early as possible: Larger corporations will generally contact you to schedule an interview week or about a month before the interview will occur. You should spend this whole time prepping so that you're comfortable and knowledgeable going into the interview. Be ready to ask the right kind of questions--and also, to respond well to any questions that will come your way.

Do your research. Research the company and specifically the job description and how it fits in the business unit or department. Get as much background information as you can to show your abilities for doing the job responsibilities and duties--so that you won't get caught speechless, if you're asked to talk about how you work and handle fellow employees, any client contacts, and disciplinary issues (and even more so, if you will be a supervisor, manager or teacher, etc.).



Also use internet search engines to research the business' leaders/managers who you know, or think will be interviewing you.

Get help from others. Don't prepare for a job interview by yourself. There are some valuable resources that can help you along your way to ask for help.

Seek out experts. Find yourself a mentor and/or alumni from your university currently working in your desired career or someone else who has had experience in this area. Talk to them and get an inside scoop. Ask for advice.



Find a friend who is also preparing for a job interview. Interview with each other so that you get comfortable with the verbal and social aspects of the interview. You can also tell each other your anecdotal stories/examples of your strengths, etc. that you're considering for the interview. Ask him or her what each story portrays about you, and use the feedback to choose the ones that best represent the parts of yourself that you want to illustrate and "sell" nicely to the interviewer.

Write down and practice at least three questions to ask the interviewer, showing how much you care about this kind of work. These should not be things that can be easily discovered through simple research (learn long before the hiring interview about the expected pay range and company benefits such as profit-sharing plan, etc., as this interview is **not** the time for that). Think about what you want to know about the specific company, and what your responsibilities and opportunities will be there. Remember that an interview goes both ways and that you have to show that you're very interested in this company; say very rapidly, "I love this opportunity". Then, you want them to know that you really care--so ask your great questions.



Asking for more information about one or two of the toughest (most important) tasks that are part of the job description will show that you've closely read the job description. Now you are revealing what your daily life and contributions at the company will look like.



Write answers to the basic questions that you expect to be asked. Though an interview always has the potential to surprise you, there are a series of basic questions that you'll tend to see in an interview, so it's best to be prepared to answer them thoroughly and honestly before you walk into the interview. Don't look like you're caught off guard or like you haven't spent any time thinking about the job responsibilities. Compose good answers to key questions that you will probably be asked:

- What are your strengths? Can you give us a concrete example to illustrate them?
- What are your weaknesses? (Neither give many bad faults nor say "I have none or one.", as if you've never made a mistake. Because this will make you look like you're dishonest and full of yourself.)
- Why do you want to do this work/for this company? Why do you think you'd be a good fit?
- What are your long-term career goals (such as training and certifications you want)?
- What was the biggest professional challenge you've ever solved/faced? How did you tackle it?
- Are you good at working in teams and sharing better ideas? Can you provide an example of your strong teamwork?

Why are you choosing to leave your present company? (If you're currently employed elsewhere, be honest about wanting to leave without being overly negative or talking bad about your employer. You should always be respectful of management.)

Make sure you are dressed appropriately. Your wardrobe is a sign of your professionalism and is sometimes used to gauge your level of experience and competence. When your coworkers and customers look at you, they should immediately feel comfortable working with you. So, dress as casually or formally as is appropriate, in a professional style for this line of work, a dark suit and conservative necktie for a man--jacket and modest skirt for a woman--is good, even if you will work in a uniform or blue jeans. You can show them that you do look good when you should.



Show up a little early with have everything you need (30 minutes is good) to not be late, dashing about, rumpled and possibly breathless and upset. Carry a nice portfolio/expanding folder, containing loose leaf paper and extra copies of your resume. Make sure to also bring a couple of pens and pencils so that you can jot down notes. Be prepared with a pen and paper, if you're asked for one.

Leave your calculator and gum at home. If you absolutely need to bring your cell phone, make sure it's completely powered off before you go into the interview.

- Do not bring anyone with you to the interview unless they drop you off and wait nearby.
- Do *not* roll into the interview with your cup of Starbucks. This shows that you're taking a much-too casual approach or that you're too inexperienced.

Part 2. Being Professional

Remain respectful, professional and confident, smiling a little (not with a pasted-on grin) and be as calm, yet enthusiastic as possible. Don't act nervous, tapping fingers, wagging your legs or wringing your hands (crossing ankles or arms is considered defensive body language), nor sitting stiffly as a statue, but also not flopping around like you're lazy (silly or too relaxed). If you're asked to answer a case (what if...) question, talk through the process you would use, in such a case. Don't be afraid to ask whether your ideas sound thorough enough, you'll be evaluated on your ability to structure your thinking and to share your thoughts well, not on the number of questions you ask. In fact, talking through your process is a great way to engage the interviewer and turn the interview into more of a give and take discussion. This can give you valuable clues and a guide on what they want to know (so you can show how you can fulfill their needs).



- If you need something clarified, don't be afraid to ask. You'll do better if you know exactly what is being asked of you. Don't ask a question every few seconds, or you'll sound confused (you want to show that you have good motivation toward what's good, reasonable and logical).



Sell yourself. What are your unique selling points and how can you match your highlights to what they want? Make sure you use plenty of examples as proof of your abilities. Show the interviewer that you can find the positives in your past experiences—this is not a time to complain about what you hated in your previous work situation(s). Focus on how this job really is good/much more suitable for you.

- Remember those examples of your strengths that you wrote down earlier? This is exactly when they'll come in handy.
- There's a difference between being confident and bragging. Make sure you show what a capable, intelligent employee you are without singing your own praises.



Be inquisitive. Don't forget to ask your questions. Pay attention as the interviewer answers—you may even want to jot down notes. This is both to prove that you are listening and also to give yourself a way to reflect on the interview later if you end up having to decide between multiple positions.

Don't ask the same questions at every interview. Ask questions that are tailored to the company to show that you've really done your research.

Be polite. Listen to each question fully before you begin to respond. Never assume that your interviewer has read your resume, but don't treat him or her as though he or she hasn't, either. After the interview, do not forget to send a follow-up thank-you-email. These are generally better than handwritten thank you notes, as they are quicker than snail mail. However, you should be sure that it is well proofread and addressed to the right person and identifying yourself and the matters involved, before you send them.

Part of being polite is remembering to thank the interviewer for meeting with you after the interview. Show him/her that you really appreciate the time and effort spent on speaking with you.





Be **persistent**. Keep interviewing. The more you interview, the better you will become at it. Don't get discouraged. It's unlikely that your first interview will lead to you landing your dream job, but that doesn't mean you should lower your standards after the third interview. Keep aiming for what is realistic for your goals and background, and you will eventually find what you're looking for.

Part 3 Being Savvy During Phone or Skype Interviews

Be **savvy during phone interviews**. Make sure to use keywords while answering questions because you are trying to paint a picture with words, since the interviewer has no visual clues of you.

Treat the phone interview like a *real* professional interview. Go to a quiet place, don't get distracted or do anything else but speak, and talk slowly and clearly.

Keep your notes in front of you but still be prepared to talk on the fly. Having your notes can make you feel more confident about what to say, but don't lean on them.

Dress for business. Dressing in a professional manner will make you feel more prepared than if you do your phone interview in pajamas or shorts.

Be **savvy during Skype Interviews**. The Skype interview is becoming more popular than ever and has been a great way for employers to weed out employees that may not be a good fit during the first or second round of interviews. So, find a place with good lighting and a simple professional background, dress up and groom properly, and test your camera and microphone beforehand to make sure you're ready for the interview.

Treat the interview just as you would a **face-to-face interview**. Don't think it's less serious or professional just because you're meeting over the computer.

Do a **follow-up after the phone interview**. It's both polite and helpful to follow up your phone interview with a thank you note, as it demonstrates your interest in the position. Also, if a few weeks have passed since your phone interview, and you've not heard back from the interviewers, a quick call or email to check on the progress of the application is appropriate etiquette. If you do find out you didn't get the position, it does at least signal your enthusiasm and availability for other opportunities.

