

Interview – Before, During, After

Interview Preparation – Before

If you don't prepare for an interview a number of things can happen:

1. Someone else will prepare and you will not get the job
2. You will be too concerned about being perfect and not communicating your true strengths and attributes
3. You will look unprofessional and unreliable to an employer

What to Wear

This is not the area to stand out in. You don't want to over-dress, you certainly don't want to under dress either. Hair should be neat. Don't attempt a new hair trend that day, but do consider a professional haircut and grooming. Companies want to see that you care about the job by what you choose to wear.

Men and Women

- Conservative two-piece business suit (solid dark blue or grey is best, black is fine)
- Conservative long-sleeved shirt/blouse (white is best, pastel is next best)
- Clean, polished conservative shoes
- Well-groomed hairstyle
- Clean, trimmed fingernails
- Smell is important. Many places of employment are 'scent free' due to allergies. Our recommendation is to shower the day of the interview and apply deodorant but avoid body sprays, cologne, and perfumes.
- Empty pockets—no bulges or tinkling coins
- No gum, candy, or cigarettes
- Light briefcase or portfolio case
- No visible body piercing (nose rings, eyebrow rings, etc.) or tattoos

Men

- Necktie should be silk with a conservative pattern
- Dark shoes (black lace-ups are best)
- Dark socks (black is best, match your slacks)
- Belt and shoes should match in colour
- Get a haircut; short hair always fares best in interviews
- Fresh shave; mustaches and beards are a possible negative, but if you must, make sure it is neat and trimmed
- No earrings or rings other than wedding ring or college ring

Women

- Wear a suit with a jacket and skirt or slacks



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- Skirts or dresses should hit just above, at or below the knee
- Shoes with conservative heels or dress flats; closed-toe and neutral colour
- Conservative hosiery at or near skin color (and no runs!)
- Be cautious about having a purse that does not match your outfit; consider carrying a briefcase instead
- If you wear nail polish, use clear or a conservative color
- Keep your makeup simple and natural (it should not be too noticeable)
- One set of earrings only

Polished is the name of the game.

Do Your Research

- Do you know details, people, projects that excite you about the company and the job? Look through the company's website and social media platforms
- Who are their main competitors?
- If you know someone that has worked there before or is currently an employee, talk to them about their interview experience and what to expect in the role you are applying for
- Prepare examples – situational responses are preferable
 - Tension with co-worker or classmate
 - A customer or client got upset with you
 - Multiple managers give you tasks, how do you prioritize?

If you take time to think of (even write out and memorize) 5-7 examples of past personal work or volunteer situations that had positive results, you can often answer most of these situational questions. It is all about being prepared!

Items to Bring

- We recommend you bring hard copies of your resume. Have one for yourself and the interviewer(s). Carry your resume in a neutral coloured folder to keep clean and flat on your way to the interview
- Professional looking notebook - don't bring your personal journal! This can be used to take a few notes about the company or job during the interview as long as it does not become a distraction
- List of questions for the interviewers - you may have them memorized, but it can't hurt to have them written down (see notebook point above) just in case you forget
- Portfolio of your work - this may not be relevant for every job, but it is increasingly more common for people to bring examples of their work to an interview
- Hard copy of your references in case they ask for this at the interview
- If you have a purse or bag with you (only one) keep it subtle and easy to take on and off. Some things to include in your bag might be cough drops, tissue, and even hand sanitizer to avoid potential awkward moments
- Turn OFF your cell phone

Interview Preparation - During

Attitude

You are not likely interviewing for your ‘forever’ job right now. But this role is important to the company or they would not be hiring. Convince them that you are what they have been looking for! This requires you to be confident, but be careful not to let your attitude come off as arrogant. Be ready to back up statements about your character and skills with examples.

Communication – Verbal

People like to talk about themselves. You are flattered to be asked for an interview. Then you realize at the end of the interview how much you really talked about yourself. You want to give details and clearly communicate relevant information about how you can contribute to the company, not all about how they will benefit your career.

Communication - Non-Verbal

- Handshake is so important. Practice your handshake today! Ask others for their impression of your handshake. It cannot be like a wet noodle, but you can’t crush someone’s hand either!
- Be conscience of your bad conversation habits (i.e. twirling your hair, talking too much with your hands, using words like “umm” or “like” too much, fidgeting etc.).
- Eye contact is an art that takes practice. You don’t want to stare, however it is important to maintain consistent eye contact. We recommend you try to look at the interviewer(s) for about 40-60% of the interview. Where should you look? Focus on the eyes, forehead and nose area!

Listen – Take deep breaths

Can you put aside your worries and nerves to ensure you really hear what the interviewer is asking? Focus is imperative.

One of the worst mistakes people make in an interview is to interrupt the individual who is conducting the interview.

Content

- Know your work and volunteer experiences – job titles, dates employed, and the main job responsibilities involved
- Measurable Achievements – Did you increase sales? Meet quotas or sales targets? Did you improve work schedules or structures? Did you receive an award or recognition for your work or receive consistent positive feedback on performance reviews? Get a promotion?
- Skills and Qualifications – This was important to highlight in your resume, and now you bring it to life in the interview. Discuss the relevant skills that you bring to the job. The company cares less about what you’ve accomplished, and more about how what you’ve accomplished can benefit their organization. Did you attend conferences or gain specific skills training? (Excel, mail merges, best mark in your Marketing class etc.)

Answering the “weakness” question?

You will often need to articulate your strengths and weaknesses. No one is perfect, so it’s crucial to be prepared to answer the question about your weaknesses. Practice the art of turning weakness into strength without it sounding like you are trying too hard. Place your weakness in the context of a story from a past assignment or job task and how you have developed tools or methods to overcome/manage this weakness.

Reasons for leaving your last position

Never say unkind or negative things about a former company or superior. This is unprofessional at any level. Typical reasons for leaving are: graduated and moved, hit a growth ceiling, not where my future career goals lie, looking for new ways to contribute and grow, you have something specific to add to the new job.

Difficult Questions

Sometimes a question is asked that is vague and you may not know how to answer it without going on for an hour. It is wise to ask clarifying questions.

For example:

Interviewer: Tell me about yourself.

Interviewee: “I would be happy to, is there anything particular you would like me to focus on?”

Interviewer: “Yes, tell me about your personal interests” OR “Yes, tell me about your background in customer service.”

Those are two very different areas that the employer is interested in hearing about.

Asking Questions to Employers

Having questions to ask the employer at an interview is very important. It shows you are engaged and can reveal your intelligence with regard to listening and what research you have done on the role. It allows you to ensure the interviewer has no reservations about hiring you. Finally, asking questions is also your chance to learn more how you might fit the open position. We recommend you prepare 3-5 questions before an interview and ask three of them. Here are some examples:

- Is there anything else I can provide to help you make your decision?
- Who do you think would be the ideal candidate for this position, and how do I compare?
- What do you hope the person taking on this role will accomplish in the next six months/year?
- What is the largest problem facing the company and would I be in a position to help you solve this problem?
- What is the largest opportunity facing the company and how do you see me contributing to the future goals?
- What can you tell me about your new products or plans for growth?
- Why is this position open?
- What are the next steps in the interview process?
- When do you hope to have someone start in the role?



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This is not the time to ask about salary/benefits as you have not yet been offered the position and it can come across as too aggressive.

Interview Preparation - Ending the Interview and After

- Thank the interviewer for his or her time
- Shake hands and look in the eye
- Request a business card from interviewer
- Ask when you can expect to hear from them next
- Email a note of thanks to interviewer for the opportunity within 48 hours. Sending a personal handwritten note will help you stand out even more, however you want to ensure it can be express posted or dropped off within a few days of the interview



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