



Finding Work

The Job Interview

A job interview is a time to exhibit your talents. The employment interview is the most important part of your job search. Those 20 or 30 minutes can determine your career path. You have to sell yourself by the way you look and the way you act, as well as by the qualifications you present. It is your opportunity to convince an employer that you can make a contribution to the company or organization where you are interviewing. During the job interview an employer judges your qualifications, appearance and over-all qualities for the job opening. Equally important, a job interview gives you a chance to evaluate the job and the employing organization.

Before the Interview

1. Assemble all necessary papers to take to the interview

- Resume or personal data sheet
- Licenses, Social Security card and/or military records
- Samples of work, if relevant
- List of questions you want to ask the interviewer about the job

2. Learn all you can about the prospective employer

- What are the products and services?
- What is its reputation?
- What types of jobs are available?

- What are the hiring policies and practices?
- What are their salary ranges?
- What are their goals?

3. Identify what you have to offer—Refer to Preparing A Resume, SP-461-C.

- Your education, training and experience—what you have done, know how to do and can do.
- Remember all the skills, abilities and talents you possess that will make you an excellent employee.

4. Consider your potentials as an employee

- Why do you feel you can do the job?
- What makes you qualified for the job?
- What do you have to offer the company or organization?
- Why do you want to work for the employer in question?

Pre-Interview Checklist

Before you leave home for your interview, check the following:

- Are you properly dressed? Avoid fashion extremes. Be clean, neat and well-groomed.
- Have you researched the organization you are interviewing with?
- Do you know the interviewer's name? If not, get it from the

receptionist before the interview.

- Have you formulated answers for usual interview questions?
- Do you have all necessary information for the interview? This includes items such as resume or personal data sheet, names and addresses of references, pen and note pad.
- Is there someone you could do a practice interview with? You will benefit from suggestions for improvement.

The Interview

1. Be pleasant and friendly, but businesslike.
2. Go alone to the interview.
3. Tell the receptionist your name when you arrive.
4. Obey the rules of politeness and etiquette. Shake hands if a hand is extended to you first; do not chew gum or your nails; and greet the interviewer by appropriate title: Mr., Mrs., Miss or Ms.
5. Let the employer control the interview. Your answers should be frank and brief but complete, without rambling. Avoid being a yes-or-no applicant.
6. Know what job you are applying for. Avoid saying "I'll do anything if you will give me a chance." Be ready to show you are interested in learning a new job if your interviewer offers to train you.
7. Stress your qualifications. The employer's questions or statements will indicate the type of person wanted for the job. Use

<p>these as clues in presenting your qualifications.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Be ready for surprise questions, and think before you answer. 9. In discussing your previous jobs and work situations, avoid criticizing former employers or fellow workers. 10. Do not discuss your personal, domestic or financial problems unless you are specifically asked about them. Then, limit your comment. 11. Do not be in a hurry to ask questions unless the employer invites them. But do not be afraid to ask what you need to know. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 12. If the employer offers you a job, be sure you understand exactly what your duties will be. A definite understanding about the nature of your job will avoid future disappointment for either you or your employer. 13. Be prepared to state the salary you want, but not until the employer has introduced the subject. Be realistic in discussing salary. 14. If the employer does not definitely offer you a job or indicate when you will hear about it, ask when you can expect the hiring decision. Conduct yourself in a 	<p>positive and confident manner. Remember, you have maturity and valuable life experience to offer an employer.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 15. If the employer asks you to call or return for another interview, make a written note of the time, date and place. 16. At the end of the interview, thank the interviewer for the time and consideration for employment. If the firm cannot use you, ask about other potential employers who may need a person with your qualifications. 17. Write a follow-up letter to the interviewer.
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Answer Questions with Care

Following is a list of questions job interviewers might ask and what they really want to know. How you answer questions is the key to your employment. Consider these questions carefully and formulate answers prior to your interview.

The Question Asked	What the Interviewer Really Means	How to Answer
1. What is your experience?	1. Tell me what you know and what you have done in previous jobs that will be useful in handling this job.	1. In answering this question, build on your knowledge of the organization and stress the details of your experience that match the needs of the job. Tie your abilities to the needs of the position.
2. Why are you interested in this job?	2. If we hire you, will you be able to manage the problems involved?	2. Avoid general comments; zero in on how you can contribute to solving specific problems and reaching goals.
3. Tell me about yourself.	3. Tell me what you can do for this company and how you will fit in here if we hire you.	3. Be ready to give examples of previous experiences and personal characteristics that fit this job. Also include what others have said about your performance.
4. What is your greatest strength?	4. Are you good at any of the things we have a problem with and/or are important to this job?	4. Know what the organization needs and capitalize on that. For example, if you know the last person to hold the job was disorganized, comment on your organizational abilities. Emphasize your maturity and life experiences.
5. What is your greatest weakness?	5. Do not tell me you're perfect. I will not believe it.	5. Do not confess real problems. Choose a "weakness" that can be considered a strength. For example, confess to having a "thing" about promptness.
6. Why do you want to change jobs?	6. I want to know what kinds of trouble we can expect from you.	6. Give an honest, straightforward answer. Avoid bad-mouthing others and disguise difficulties in positive language. Point out what attracts you to this job.
7. What kinds of personal crises have forced you to miss work?	7. I want to see if you are a dedicated employee and also get around equal opportunity laws relating to marital status and children.	7. Be careful not to fall into the trap of mentioning child-related crises. Use a personal example, such as the day a dental filling fell out.
8. What are your interests outside of work?	8. Will your leisure activities embarrass us or interfere with your giving us your best?	8. Describe interests that enhance your value to the company, not those that might result in costs to the organization. If the company is into supporting the community, highlight your volunteer work.
9. What salary do you expect?	9. Do you have realistic expectations or are we wasting each other's time?	9. Put this question off as long as possible and try to get the interviewer to give you a salary figure first. Go prepared with what you consider to be a fair wage based on your knowledge of the organization and local wages for similar jobs. Be prepared to deal with a lower offer than you expect. Be prepared to discuss your salary realistically.



As you can see from the previous questions, interviewers are really quite interested in what you have to offer the organization they represent. Listen carefully to the interviewer, and with each question, think "What do I possess that would be useful in that situation?" Discuss that skill, ability, experience or talent. Help the interviewer see that you are indeed a product the organization cannot do without. This is your chance to sell your abilities and maturity.

Questions You May Ask

An interview is a two-way street; you are expected to ask questions. Ask relevant questions which indicate you have thought through the job carefully. Questions you might ask include:

- What are the responsibilities of this position?
- With whom will I be working?
- What opportunities will the position offer for advancement?
- Does the organization promote from within?
- Is there an organizational training program available for self-improvement?

Avoid questions about breaks, vacation schedules and working hours.

Illegal Interview Questions

An interviewer must be careful not to ask certain questions because they may be discriminatory. These questions may not be asked on job application forms either. The questions relate to age, children, marital status, national origin, race and religion. If an interviewer does ask you one of these illegal questions, you can:

- Ignore the fact that it is illegal and answer it in a way that will not harm your chances of getting the job.
- Answer with a question of your own, such as "Is that relevant to the requirements of the position?" or "Does that have any bearing on my work performance? I don't want to burden you with details of my personal life."

You should ask yourself, "Do you really want to work for someone who is interested in such questions?"

Make Yourself a Memorable Applicant

Leave the interview on an upbeat note, stating your interest in the job and your hope for a favorable

decision. After an interview, a courteous and valuable job-getting idea is to write a letter to the person who interviewed you. Its purpose is to thank the interviewer for his or her time and interest or advice. The hidden purpose is to remind the interviewer of your particular qualifications and continuing interest. Never follow up with daily telephone calls to find out what has been decided about the job. Your follow-up letter can be very simple. Make sure it looks professional and is free of mistakes and misspellings. Here is a sample of an excellent follow-up letter.

Learn from Each Interview

After you leave an interview, take a few minutes to evaluate how things went. Be honest with yourself, but don't be too hard. The important point is that you do your best and

715 Clovis Drive
Somewhere, TN 20000
April 25, 1995

Mr. Sam R. White
Marketing Coordinator
Zoom Corporation
3893 Factory Boulevard
Anywhere, GA 99999

Dear Mr. White:

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me yesterday about working for Zoom Corporation. The description of the regional marketing assistant position sounds extremely interesting, and I would like to be part of your organization. Zoom Corporation impresses me as a company that recognizes employees' skills and assists employees to grow and become productive.

I appreciate having the opportunity to be interviewed for the position. I look forward to hearing from you about your hiring decision.

Sincerely,

John W. Doe

learn from your mistakes. Ask yourself.....

- Did this interview go well? Why?
- Was there something I could improve? What?
- Was there anything I could do differently next time? If so, what?
- Do I need assistance in planning future interviews? If so, what kind of assistance? Where can I find this type of help?

You will not be offered a job every time you are interviewed. This happens to everyone. When you are not hired, you will wonder why. Perhaps you did something wrong during the interview. Use the checklist on this page to determine how you might better prepare yourself for the next interview. Check "yes" or "no" after each statement.

Total up your "yes" answers and your "no" answers. If you come up with more "no" answers, you need to find ways to improve your image as a potential employee. If you have more "yes" answers, you are well on your way to that successful job. The following ideas might help you as you continue your job search.

- Seek help from friends and associates as you undertake your job search. You will want to be careful not to jeopardize your present job, if currently employed.
- Follow up on all reasonable job leads. Be assertive in your search. More than one contact may be needed to land the perfect job.
- Keep up your spirits. Don't let rejections undermine your self-confidence.

Interviewing for a job is hard work. It requires continued effort. Try

	Yes	No
1. I was neat and well groomed.		
2. I exhibited a positive attitude.		
3. I was self-confident, but not cocky.		
4. I was enthusiastic.		
5. I had my career goals well defined.		
6. I completed the job application neatly and accurately.		
7. I was aware of the organization, its product and/or service.		
8. I spoke clearly and looked at the interviewer.		
9. I had the training and/or experience required.		
10. I was tactful and avoided criticizing others.		
11. I was courteous and thanked the interviewer for his/her time.		
12. I had realistic salary demands.		
13. I was on time for my interview.		
14. I inquired about job security and benefits, but I didn't show excessive interest.		
15. I asked questions about the job and its responsibilities.		
Total		

not to get discouraged if you don't get the first few jobs you interview for. Remember, the job market is tight, and often many people are competing for the same job. Let each interview be a learning experience for you. Learn from each contact and improve your skills, so when the "right" job comes along, you will be the best candidate.

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