

INTERVIEWING QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS ABOUT YOURSELF:

Interviewers will ask you a lot of questions about yourself. Some of these will be straightforward questions about your education and work history. Others will be about your character, such as your strengths and weaknesses.

- To prepare for these kinds of questions, be sure to review your resume and cover letter thoroughly. Also look at a list of common interview questions to prepare answers for questions about yourself. Remember to answer honestly, but always put a positive spin on your answers.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE COMPANY:

The employer might also ask you questions about the company, and why you think you are a good fit for the position.

- To answer these questions, be sure to research the company ahead of time. Get a sense of the company culture – its mission, the work environment, and what the company looks for in employees.

BEHAVIORAL:

These questions require you to provide an example of a time when you did something work-related in the past

- “Tell me about a time you had to complete a group project under a tight deadline.”
- Interviewers ask questions about your past to see what kind of an employee you might be in the future.

SITUATIONAL:

Situational interview questions ask you to consider a possible future situation at work.

- “How would you handle working on three tasks that are all due at the same time?”
- Although these are about future situations, you can still answer with an example from a past experience.

INTERVIEWING DO'S

When you accept the invitation to the interview, be sure you know the name of the company, and request the names and job titles of each of the people who will be interviewing you (if they're not offered). You'll want to research the interviewers on LinkedIn. Displaying a little bit of knowledge about an interviewer's professional background can go a long way toward making a great impression.

- Know the type of job interview you will encounter. Ask, if the information is not volunteered by the person setting up the interview. (See Types of Interviews for Job-Seekers.)
- Ask how long the interview(s) is/are expected to take so you can know how it will impact the rest of your day.
- Ask for the street address of the interview location (and, if appropriate, the floor of a building, and/or office number). Also, inquire about parking and/or public transportation, if appropriate.

PREP FOR THE INTERVIEW WELL AHEAD OF TIME:

- If you have a few days before the interview, do take a practice run to the interview location, preferably at the same time you would be traveling on the day of the actual interview.
- Be sure you know exactly where the employer's location is and how long it takes to get there, where to park your car or get off public transportation, etc.
- Demonstrate your interest in the job—and protect yourself—by doing research on the employer, their products and/or services, their competitors, their reputation, and their financial status (you don't want to be the last person hired before the layoffs begin). Search LinkedIn, and search Google (using the News filter) to discover as much as you can about the organization, its management, and even their competitors.
- Prepare to ask intelligent questions about the job, the employer, or the industry. Having no questions to ask shows a lack of interest and/or preparation. Both are interview killers!
- Practice answering the most common job interview questions, with a focus on answers customized for this employer and this job. Keep in mind that the employer is most interested in how hiring you will benefit them.

- Dress the part—for the job, the company, and the industry—and err on the side of caution if you’re unsure of how to dress (i.e., dress more formally than casually).

MAKE A GREAT IMPRESSION AT THE INTERVIEW:

- Plan to arrive about 10 to 15 minutes early. A late arrival for a job interview is never excusable. If you are running late, do phone the employer to let them know. If you arrive more than 15 minutes early, wait until 10 minutes before the interview to present yourself to the employer.
- Turn off or mute your cellphone, and put it out of sight (unless you must use it to demonstrate a job-related skill or accomplishment).
- Be sure to greet the receptionist or assistant and other staff members with courtesy and respect.
- If presented with a job application, do fill it out neatly, completely, and accurately. Keep it “in sync” with both your LinkedIn profile and resume because they will probably be compared to ensure consistency.
- Bring a notepad, in case you need to jot down anything of interest regarding the job. Also bring a copy of the job description, extra resumes, and your personal business cards. If you have a job skills portfolio, bring that with you, too.
- Shake hands firmly, make eye contact, and smile when you are introduced to someone. Avoid having a limp, sweaty, or clammy handshake!
- Wait until you are offered a chair before sitting. And DO remember body language and posture: sit upright with your shoulders back. No slouching!
- Exchange business cards with each person who interviews you, or at least get their business cards (if you don’t have your own).
- Maintain eye contact with your interviewer(s), and show enthusiasm in the position and the company at all times.
- Avoid using poor grammar, bad language, slang, and pause words (such as “like,” “uh,” and “um”).
- When you are answering questions, focus on what you can do for the company rather than what the company can do for you. Stress your achievements and accomplishments, particularly those related to the requirements of the job, and mention what you learned in your research about their products/services, competitors, and the industry.
- Ask questions to determine if the company will be a good place for you to work, and if the job will be a good fit for you. Ask your questions throughout the

interview, as appropriate, unless you are instructed to hold your questions until the end.

- Do your best to dodge the “salary requirement” question, if asked. Respond that you are sure the salary will be appropriate for the job (even if you aren’t sure), and that you’d like to learn more about the job before discussing salary. (Visit our salary tutorial for more tips and strategies.)
- Close the interview by telling the interviewer(s) that you’re very interested in the job (if that applies once the interview wraps), and ask if they have any concerns about your qualifications or fit for the job and the organization. Also inform the interviewers that if they think of additional questions at a later point, to reach out by phone or email.

MAKE A GREAT IMPRESSION AFTER THE INTERVIEW:

- At the end of the interview, ask about next steps in the hiring process—who you should stay in touch with, the details (name, phone number, and email address) for staying in touch, and when they plan to be back in touch with you.
- After you have left, take down notes (if you were unable to jot any down during the interview) on any crucial job/company details that you want fresh in your head.
- Write a unique thank you letter/email within 24 hours to each person who interviewed you, and also to the person who set up the interviews (if that person didn’t interview you). And do know all the rules of following up after the interview.

INTERVIEWING DON'TS

AS YOU ARE GETTING READY FOR THE INTERVIEW:

- Don’t assume that you can “wing it” and be impressive without trying, or without advanced preparation.
- Don’t assume that an invitation to a job interview means that you have a job offer “in the bag.” That’s wrong and a big mistake and the farthest thing from the truth!
- Don’t arrive late. Let’s repeat that one: DON’T arrive late.
- Don’t dress inappropriately. If you’re unsure of how to dress (formal vs. business casual), aim for clothing that is a bit more formal to be on the safe side.

DURING THE INTERVIEW:

- Don't eat, drink, or chew gum during the interview, and DON'T drink alcohol prior to the interview. Also, DON'T smoke before the interview—you'll end up smelling like smoke if you do.
- Don't answer cellphone calls or send or respond to texts during the interview. Keep your cellphone turned off and stowed away.
- Don't inquire about salary, vacations, bonuses, retirement, or other benefits until you've received an offer. This is a very big DON'T that you can't lose track of during the interview.
- Don't act desperate, as though you would take any job with any employer.
- Don't act disinterested in the job or the employer.
- Don't say anything negative about former colleagues, supervisors, or employers, and don't offer any negative information about yourself, even if you're being self-deprecating.
- Don't answer questions with a simple "yes" or "no." Explain whenever possible. Describe those things about yourself that showcase your relevant talents, skills, and determination. Give detailed examples of your accomplishments.
- Don't be soft-spoken. Speak clearly, and project confidence and preparation.
- Don't fidget or slouch.
- Don't bring up or discuss personal issues or family problems.
- Don't respond to an unexpected question with an extended pause or by saying something like, "boy, that's a good question." A short pause before responding is okay. Ask for a clarification if you don't understand the question or want guidance on what is an appropriate response.
- Don't ever lie. Answer questions truthfully, frankly, and succinctly.
- Don't over-answer questions. Sharing too much information (TMI) can be more damaging than not sharing enough. Be sure to answer the question asked, and then wait for the next question, or ask a question of your own.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW:

- Don't forget to follow up immediately with thank you notes (or emails) to each interviewer.