

Interviewing Tip Sheet

Preparing for the Interview

- Research the company/ organization by going to their website and by Googling them for news stories, reports, company information, etc. If they are a retail establishment, you might also visit them or another nearby location of the same type and see what you can learn via observation. Many companies also have their training manuals online. The more time you put in, the more it will show in your interview as you have more relevant information to discuss and share.
- Review the job description and your resume and gain as much knowledge as you can about the job requirements before the interview so you can talk about your abilities during the interview. Make an interview chart to sort your experience.
- Get directions to the interview and practice driving there so you know where you are going, where to park, if there is a parking fee, and the exact location of their door. The last thing you want is to be there but not meter money, not be able to find the door, and show up late, out of breath, and sweaty from rushing around.

How to Dress for the Interview

- Dress for the position above the position you are interviewing for. In most cases, you can never overdress, and the more professional you look the more seriously the interviewers will take you.
- Dress shoes are ideal, but if all you have are casual shoes, just wear your nicest and cleanest pair.
- If possible, remove all excess jewelry and piercings. If you choose to wear them, they may impact your professional image, but if you want to be able to wear these things to work, seek environments where they are allowed and worn by employees.
- Limit the use of cologne and perfumes. If your interviewer has allergies or is sensitive to smell, it may distract them.
- If you smoke, don't the day of the interview or, if you do, ensure you change your clothes. Again, if your interviewer has allergies or is sensitive to smell it may distract them.
- Set your clothes out the night before so you are not scrambling the day of the interview to find what you need. Pack an extra outfit in case you tear or stain your clothes en route to interview.

The Day of the Interview

- Eat a healthy meal and drink plenty of fluids prior to your interview.
- Pack a copy of your resume and anything else requested by the employer. Consider making something for the company to give to them to demonstrate your work.
- Pack a bottle of water with you if you have a tendency to get nervous or choked up under pressure. It is better to take a drink during the interview than to have a dry mouth and be unable to communicate. **DO NOT BRING ANYTHING OTHER THAN WATER.**
- Plan to leave your phone in the car, at home, or in your pocket turned completely off, so you are not distracted. If you bring it inside, do not check it at all in the lobby.

- Leave early for your interview. Allow extra time for traffic, getting lost, accidents, parking, etc. I suggest leaving an hour or two earlier than you need and just going to a coffee shop near by while you wait.
- Make sure you use the restroom somewhere other than at the business or organization where you are interviewing. It is rude to ask to use their restroom. All freshening up should be done prior to entering their establishment.
- Walk into the interview area 10 minutes prior to your interview. If you arrive earlier, wait in the car or at a nearby location; do not wait at the business or organization.
- Don't take anyone in to the business or interview with you. They are hiring you, not you and your family or you and your friends. It makes you look like you are dependent on others. Similarly don't have your friends and family wait close by where they might see you with them as you walk out.

At the Interview

- Check in with the first person you see and tell them your name and what time your interview is so they can guide you to the proper person or location.
- Smile and make small conversation, as appropriate, with other employees while you wait. They often will be asked about their interactions with you or their opinion of you when not under pressure.
- Be observant and read any and everything you see related to the company or organization, i.e. handouts, brochures, posters, etc. while you wait. It may help you answer questions in the interview. Don't review or read your resume and don't read magazines and newspapers they have sitting out. Only read company related information at your fingertips.
- Don't check your phone; it should not be with you, but if it is, it should be turned off and put away.
- Do not look impatient or be rude to the person you checked in with. They will get to you when they get to you and looking impatient or irritated shows you may not really want to work there.

During the Interview

- When you first walk in, make eye contact and give a firm handshake to the interviewer, or if there are multiple interviewers, shake hands with them all if it is convenient and they appear to have interest in doing so. If not, at least acknowledge them all with a nod, smile, or greeting. If you have sweaty palms, brush them against your pants or dress gently before you shake hands, and if you are obviously sick, decline out of respect. You may even want to call ahead that morning and let them know you are happy to come in, but wanted to give them the option to reschedule if anyone had an issue with you being sick and in close quarters. There may be staff who are pregnant or who have compromised immunity that may greatly appreciate your offer to reschedule or even Skype.
- Always maintain eye contact and speak clearly, loudly enough to be heard, and with confidence.

- Don't take out your resume or application unless they ask for it; it will distract you. At the end you can bring it out if you want to give them a copy. If you brought a project specific to them and their company, you can bring it out when appropriate.
- Don't tap your fingers or feet, or play with your hair or clothing. If you have these habits, seek ways to minimize them during the interview, i.e. hands in pocket, feet on chair rung, hair pulled back, etc.
- Take your time. They scheduled time to meet with you, so use each question as a prompt to speak and tell them why you are a good fit for the job. If you are talking too much, you will know from their body language, but most people talk too quickly and finish their interviews way ahead of schedule.
- Never say I don't know or I don't have any; find something you can talk about or give hypothetical examples of what you can do or what you would do.
- Be sure to ask a few questions at the end about the organization or the next step in the hiring process. Do not ask anything about hours, wages, start dates, etc. Wait until you are offered a position to discuss these things.

After the Interview

- As soon as you get to the car or home, write down as many questions as you can remember from the interview so you can practice them for the next interview you might have and think about what you did well and what you need to improve.
- Send or drop by a thank you note or email that day or the next day at the very latest thanking them for their time and reiterating why you are qualified and what you can bring to the position.
- Continue to research the company or business to determine if you want to work there.
- Anticipate their call and ensure you are checking your messages and/or email a few times a day so you don't miss the opportunity to connect with them as soon as possible. Prepare your response for when you can start, what shifts you can work, and your desired wage. Be willing to negotiate all of this, but know what you prefer if you are asked.

On the Job

- Make sure you know what to wear and when to arrive your first day of work.
- Commit to arriving early, going above and beyond, and taking initiative once you start the job, not just showing up and expecting a paycheck. Each job is a chance to build your resume and outgrow your job description. Even if you don't get promoted or see a pay increase, you help yourself and your skill set.
- Keep a list of things you enjoy about work and things you don't so that you can move into positions that include more things you enjoy long term and steer clear of the things you don't.
- Don't get stuck in a random job for 10 years; always keep your long term goals in mind and how this job helps you achieve them. Remember 70% of American's hate their jobs and if we work full time, work takes up 24% of our week, so be deliberate about eventually finding a job where you can proudly say, "I GET TO GO TO WORK TODAY."

Notes about Company Research

Here is a check list to help you research each company you plan to apply to/ interview with.

Taking the time to do this will allow you to talk about what you can do for them during an interview vs. what you have been doing for someone else and this will also ensure you know who you are about to give 24% of your week to. Make sure they are worth your valuable time.

- Mission
- Vision
- Goals
- History
- Culture
- Departments
- Projects
- Management/ Administration
- Supervisor
- Co-Workers
- News Articles
- Annual Report
- Institutional Research/ Data Collection
- Customers/ Clients
- Competition
- Better Business Bureau
- Reference USA/ A-Z Database
- Census Data on the area
- Laws, Codes, Rules, Procedures, and/or Regulations
- Machines, Programs, Equipment

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Sample Interview Chart

List your experience (jobs, volunteer work, clubs, classes, family activities, research, etc.) on the left and choose common interview questions to list on the top. Go through and think of stories you could tell from each experience for each question. Look at the job description you are interviewing for and find the story that demonstrates your qualifications the best based on what the employer is looking for. The two major benefits of the interview chart is that it helps you not just talk about your past job, but the experience you have that is meaningful to the position, and it helps you break away from question/ answer interview prep and instead gets you thinking about stories you can tell no matter what question you are asked and in which order at the interview. The interview chart is something you can keep and expand each time you have new experiences. Consider making it in Excel so you can expand the experiences and questions beyond this single page and always have it handy as a reflection of skills you have to offer.

	What is your greatest strength?	What is your greatest Weakness?	Please describe a time you had a conflict with someone and how you solved the situation.	Please describe your leadership experience.
JOB: McDonalds Cashier	Customer Service and awarded employee of the month 3 times last year.	Not being bilingual, but taking classes and practicing with friends to improve.	Customer upset order filled incorrectly. Apologized, refilled order quickly, and gave coupon for next visit for free meal.	Trained new employees on cash register.
VOLUNTEER: Food Bank Food Sorter	Attention to Detail and ability to sort and organize food quicker than any other volunteer based on criteria we need to look for.	Forklift certification but I am signed up to get trained next month and will be able to help in the warehouse.	Misunderstanding about assigned work. Looked in staff and volunteer handbook for clarification and redid the assigned job accordingly.	Worked independently to complete tasks and encouraged others around me.
CLUB: ASB Treasurer	Organization and ability to always know the balance of our accounts and our spending history as a result.	New to the school and getting to know the students and teachers more by attending more events and going to meetings.	Frustration with club president not responding to emails. Met with them and found out they don't check email. Asked preferred contact method and improved communication.	Facilitated conversations with members about finances and anticipated costs and purchases.
Class: Art	Creativity and award for pencil drawings at the school art show and the county fair.	Limited experience with graphic design but taking classes to improve and practicing at home.	Fellow student not participating in group assignment. Talked to student about interests and reassigned new assignment to them based on interests so they were motivated to participate.	Served as team leader on large group project.
HOME: Babysat Siblings	Ability to resolve conflict	Need more experience helping children with Math Homework but great with English and History.	Siblings refusing to listen while parents are away.	Served as a mentor, helped with homework, and made decisions based on the well being of the children.

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Reframing the Interview Questions: What Employers REALLY want to Ask but Can't

The entire interview should be focused on what you can do for the employer and how you are valuable to them. It should not be an exhausting amount of information about what you have done in the past for someone else.

Imagine being on a first date and having your date talk about their ex for 45 minutes. Help the employer envision you working there and all the wonderful things they can expect from you. Interviews have to be conducted fairly and legally so here is a list of things the employer is really asking followed by the question you might actually hear. How can you tell them what they can't really ask in a more effective way?

WHO ARE YOU AND WHY SHOULD I CARE?

- We have had a chance to review your resume and your application, but so we can get to know you better, please tell us about yourself.

AM I ONE OF 50 JOBS YOU APPLIED FOR THIS WEEK?

- Why did you apply to our company/ organization?
- Why did you apply for this position?

WHAT IS YOUR MOTIVE?

- What are your short and long term goals?
- What is the thing you like most about this position?
- What is the thing you like least about this position?

WHAT CAN YOU DO FOR ME?

- Please describe your past experience that has prepared you for this position.
- What are your strengths as they relate to the position?
- What are three words your previous boss, teacher, coach, or counselor would use to describe you?

WHAT DO I HAVE TO TEACH YOU?

- What are your weaknesses as they relate to the position?

CAN YOU GET ALONG WITH ME AND WITH COWORKERS?

- Please describe a time you had a conflict and how you handled the situation.
- Please describe your ability to work in a team.

DO I HAVE TO BABYSIT YOU?

- Please describe your ability to work independently to complete a large task.
- Please describe your ability to handle competing priorities and multitask to meet deadlines.

DO YOU JUST SHOW UP OR DO YOU CONTRIBUTE?

- What is your greatest accomplishment?
- Please describe a time you saw a problem and took initiative to solve it.

ARE YOU ETHICAL?

- What would you do if your supervisor asked you to do something that compromised your ethics and values?
- If you were going to be late for work, what would you do?
- Please describe a time you made a mistake and how you handled the situation.
- What would you do if you thought your supervisor was stealing from the company?

HOW MUCH DO YOU WANT THIS JOB?

- What else should I know about you and why should I hire you for this position?
- Do you have any questions for us?

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