

Ace the Interview!

The insider's guide
from the perspective of the interviewer

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What is the purpose of an interview?

The purpose of interviewing, from the perspective of the interviewer, is to filter out all the possible candidates to find the best fit for the job

Your job is to show that you are a fit for this job and this company

Know the Job

- Read every single word in the job description, including:
 - Company overview
 - Job summary
 - Responsibilities
 - Knowledge, skills and abilities required
 - Make note of what you have and what you don't have
 - How could you get the missing skills, experience, etc.?
 - Look for specific verbiage
- Customize all your communications to the specific job
 - Copy the job description into a new document to create your cover letter or message to the company from scratch
- Resume, cover letter and application must be ERROR FREE!
 - One or more errors can cost you the job

What's in it for *THEM*?

- Always keep in mind what the company needs and what the interviewers are looking for
- Don't decline interviews (as long as it could be a mutual fit between you and the company). These will give you opportunities to practice. If you are invited, take them seriously and do your best. You may wind up surprised.
- Get the job offer, then decide if you want the job or not
- Always answer questions with experiences that are relevant to the job you are discussing
- If this is not the right job for you, might they have other openings which you will be a better fit?
- Flatter them – great company, great opportunity, great question...
 - This trick can help you get feedback after an interview

Interview Basics

- Arrive 15 minutes early. Duh.
- Know the exact time and location of your interview, how long it takes to get there (with traffic), where you should park, etc.
- Dress appropriately. Wear a suit ... unless they specifically tell you not to wear a suit when you ask.
- Treat everyone you encounter with courtesy and respect. For example, the Receptionist might be asked for feedback during the hiring process.
- Make your personal grooming and cleanliness impeccable, including your hair, hands and fingernails
- Wear minimal cologne or perfume
- Eye contact, good posture, a firm handshake, a smile and a friendly greeting go a long way
- Use good grammar and good diction. Say “yes”, not “yeah.” Don’t fill pauses with “um,” “uh” or “ah”. (When thinking, just pause. Silence is golden.) Do not punctuate sentences with “you know,” “like,” “see” or “okay”

Before & During the Interview

- Prepare to **be relevant** during your interview
 - How does your experience apply to what is required for this job?
 - For example, 15 years of Accounting experience alone doesn't qualify you as a Finance Manager. Talk about your Finance and Management experience, even you have much less of it
- Learn everything you can about the organization (just Google it and read)
 - Impress them with your research and preparation skills
 - Determine how you will enjoy working at this company
 - Demonstrate how and why you will be a great employee there
- Research your interviewers – LinkedIn, Google, background, job history, etc.
 - If you don't have their names, ask for them before the interview
 - Get contact information at the end of your interview to send follow up

Interview Tips

- Be prepared to give answers that showcase what the company could gain by hiring you and how you will solve their challenges.
- Don't oversell yourself though; they should need to sell you a little too. Tell them you are going on other interviews and looking for the best role.
- Don't treat the interview casually, as if you are just shopping around or doing the interview for practice. This is insulting to the interviewer.
- Don't make excuses. Take responsibility for your decisions/actions.
- Don't make negative comments about previous companies, managers, etc.
- Don't give the impression you are only interested in salary.
- Don't act as though you would take any job or are desperate.
- Don't chew gum or smell like smoke.
- Don't take cell phone calls during an interview. If you carry a cell phone, turn it off during the interview.

More Interview Tips

- Relax – deep breaths, it’s just a conversation
- Smile and be friendly and genuine (even on the phone)
- Don’t be funny! Don’t make jokes or be sarcastic. It can do more harm than good.
- Take time to think
- Silence is golden! Pauses are better than um’s, uhs and filler words
 - If you want a few seconds to think, say “That’s a great question...” which doubles as a compliment, and flattering your interviewer (genuinely) helps
- When in doubt, ask clarifying questions
- After an answer, ask “Did that sufficiently answer your question?” (not every time)
- Be realistic! Know your qualifications and limitations. Wanting a job does not necessarily mean you are qualified for it, and they will appreciate your honesty.
- Good interviewers know it’s not all about first impressions and presentation.
- Read your interviewer. Show interest and DO NOT hijack the interview! If they are doing most of the talking, that is probably a good thing

After the Interview

- Email a thank you note immediately to everyone you interviewed with
 - Be specific but brief – include insights from the interview and relevant details from your background
 - If you don't have contact info, ask for it to be forwarded on to the right person
- Follow up with your point of contact every Friday.
 - Hi, since it's Friday, I am following up on all my pending job opportunities. I wanted to touch base with you to see if there has been any progress. I understand that these decisions take time, so I am in no way rushing, but would love to know that I have been selected for the next round of interviews. Let me know if you have any further questions about the value I can provide. Thank you.

How to Answer Different Types of Questions

Tell me about yourself

- One sentence about your professional history
- One sentence about your present and
- One sentence about your professional future

Behavioral Based questions ask you to describe a time when you experienced something specific.

- Try to understand the underlying skills they are looking for (i.e. learning quickly, technical ability, collaboration)
- Give an honest answer that is also relevant to the job

Hypothetical questions ask how you would handle a specific situation.

- Ask clarifying questions
- Think about what they are looking for someone to solve
- Answer to the best of your ability

Strengths and Weaknesses

- Know yourself and your genuine strengths and weaknesses
- Provide specific examples of strengths
- State the weakness (or opportunity for improvement) and then what you have learned or done to improve this skill in yourself

Why have you been out of work for the past 2 years (if out of work)?

- I left _____ company in (month, year)
- After that I took a break from looking for a job
- Now I am ready to ...

**Thank you for your time and good luck
with your job search and interviewing!**

Contact me if you have additional questions

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