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## **Ace the Interview**

**An Interview Guide for Job Seekers**

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There are times in your life when you can improvise and hope for the best, but an interview is not one of them. A new job can be life changing, and this type of event calls for research, preparation, and strategy.

This Interview Guide is designed help you gain more confidence in your interviewing abilities. Learn how you can stand out from other applicants and what you should do before, during, and after the interview to increase your chance of receiving a job offer. Let's dig in!

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## Interview Prep

Interviewing. Does that word alone cause your heart to race and palms to sweat? One of the best ways to calm your nerves is to prepare. Follow these three steps:

1. Research your potential employer. Google is your friend. Take some time to not only visit the company website, but also do a few web searches to scope out the company's latest news and events. This will give you a larger picture of the company.
2. Review details. Double check the interview time, location, and interviewer's name. Determine your driving route and estimate the time it will take you to get there, while allowing for extra time. If you don't already have a job description, ask for one.
3. Practice. Look in the mirror and rehearse your answers to common interview questions. Better yet, do a mock interview with a friend. (Use the interview question on page XX in this Interview Guide.)

As you practice, keep these body language tips in mind:

- ▶ Maintain eye contact for about 50% of the time when speaking and about 70% of the time while listening.
- ▶ Fold your hands in your lap. (Do you often fidget? Try this: Press the fingertips of your hands together to form a church steeple. You'll display confidence while keeping your nervous digits under control.)
- ▶ Sit up straight in your chair – no slouching.
- ▶ Nod your head while listening.
- ▶ Pay attention to your breathing and take deep breaths as needed to help you stay calm.
- ▶ Smile!



# 40 mins

The length of an interview depends heavily on the nature of the job. While some interviews can last just ten minutes, others can span several days. The average interview length is 40 minutes.

Source: Interview Success Formula

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## Attire

How you present yourself speaks volumes about your confidence and interest level. You want to stand out as a top candidate, and what you wear should complement your skills and experience.

### What NOT to Wear

Before we talk about what you should wear, let's address what NOT to wear:

- ▶ Stained, wrinkled, torn, or distressed clothing
- ▶ Flashy or excessive jewelry (stick to 1-2 conservative pieces)
- ▶ Ties with cartoon characters, sports teams, etc.
- ▶ Sandals or open-toed shoes
- ▶ The whole bottle of cologne or perfume (one spritz is all you need, trust us!)

### What to Wear

Dress codes vary greatly depending on the company, industry, and location. When deciding what to wear, consider the culture of the company and dress accordingly. Are you interviewing with a company where employees wear suits every day, or do they wear t-shirts and jeans? Here are a few dress code suggestions:

#### Casual

Casual is the least formal type of dress code. It is common in warehouse, industrial, manufacturing, and tech settings.

**Tops:** t-shirt, henley, sweatshirt

**Bottoms:** jeans, khakis, chinos

**Shoes:** tennis shoes, sneakers, boots



## Business casual

Business casual attire is the most standard form of dress in professional settings and is a good option if you are unsure what to wear.

**Tops:** collared button-up shirt, sweater, cardigan, polo shirt

**Bottoms:** chinos, slacks, khakis (dark-colored jeans may be appropriate in some settings)

**Shoes:** boots, loafers, oxfords, tidy, professional-looking sneakers



## Business professional

Business professional clothing is the most formal workplace attire, commonly required in finance, sales, and other client-facing roles.

**Suit:** a tan, blue or black suit jacket or sport coat with a matching pair of pants or skirt

**Alternatives:** shirt and tie, a nice top with dress pants or skirt

**Shoes:** polished dress shoes, close-toed flats or heels



Note, these are only guidelines and may not be appropriate for every situation. If you're unsure what to wear, get in touch with your recruiter.

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## Questions

There are a few questions that seem to surface in just about every interview. The questions may be generic, but your answers shouldn't be. Thoughtful answers demonstrate that you respect the interview process and take the work seriously.

Here are a few questions you might be asked, with suggestions on how to handle them:

### *"Tell me about yourself."*

Share a 15- to 30-second elevator pitch that highlights your skills and career goals. Avoid over-sharing or including too much personal information.

### *"Tell me about your current job. What are your responsibilities?"*

When asked a question like this, answer: "In my current position, I do A, B, and C." Follow up with a brief overview of each responsibility and give examples of results you've achieved.

### *"Why did you leave your last position?"*

You might say something like: "My current role has taken me as far as I can go" or "I'm looking for a new challenge." To help further explain, list the three most important things you're looking for in a new job.

### *"What are your salary requirements?"*

Try to avoid being specific, as you usually won't get enough information in a first interview to gauge how you should answer. Do some research on typical salary ranges for the role you're interviewing for in case you feel pressured to give an answer and provide a range rather than a specific number.

Here are a few additional questions you may be asked:

- ▶ Where do you see yourself in five years?
- ▶ Tell me about a recent achievement.
- ▶ Why do you want to work here?
- ▶ Why are you the best person for this job?
- ▶ What are your hobbies outside of work?
- ▶ What are your strengths/weaknesses?
- ▶ What motivates you?
- ▶ What do you know about the company?
- ▶ Do you prefer working by yourself or on a team?
- ▶ Tell me about a challenging situation and how you overcame it.
- ▶ What would your previous co-workers say are your best qualities?
- ▶ What makes a good team leader/manager?
- ▶ How do you deal with stress at work?
- ▶ Why is there a gap in your work history?



## Your Attitude

During the interview, never speak negatively about prior employers or co-workers, regardless of your experience with them. Maintaining a positive attitude shows a prospective employer that you're a team player.



## Video Interviews

Looking to make a great first impression in a video interview? Here's a checklist to help you prepare and put your best foot forward:

- Choose a location where you won't be interrupted by kids, family, or pets
- Put your webcam in front of a window so that the light and the camera point toward you
- Position the camera at eye level or slightly above to capture your best angle
- Make sure your background is free from distractions and clutter
- Test your internet connection and equipment
- Set your cell phone ringer to silent
- Dress professionally
- Join the interview a few minutes before the start time to allow time for troubleshooting, if needed
- Practice good body language and sit up straight
- Maintain eye contact with the webcam

## Your Turn

At the end of most interviews, you'll be asked if you have any questions. Asking smart questions will show that you are interested and prepared, plus it's also an opportunity to see if you truly want this job.

Here are a few questions to consider:

### Questions about the company

- ▶ How many people are in this department/company?
- ▶ How would you describe the company culture?
- ▶ What have you enjoyed most about working here?
- ▶ Do you offer continuing education or on-the-job training?
- ▶ How does the company measure and reward success?

### Questions about the job

- ▶ What is a typical day/week for a person in this job?
- ▶ What kind of work can I expect to be doing in the first year?
- ▶ What are the most important skills or experience required to do this job?
- ▶ How do people grow in this job?
- ▶ Can you tell me about the team I'll be working with?
- ▶ What short-term and long-term goals do you have for this position?



## Asking Questions

As you create questions to ask during your interview, keep these tips in mind:

Ask open-ended questions. Avoid questions that can be answered with a simple yes or no.

Prepare more questions than needed. Many of your questions will be answered during the interview.

Don't ask about salary or benefits – yet. Wait until you are in the final steps in the interview process to ask these questions.

A great final question is about the timeline, such as: "What are the next steps in your interview process?" or "When will you be back in touch with me?" Questions like these provide closure to the conversation and allow you to know what to expect next.

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## On the Day

### Be on time.

Or, better yet, early! Punctuality shows a prospective employer that you're conscientious and dependable. Aim to arrive 10-15 minutes before your scheduled interview time to allow for parking and finding your way around the building.

### Act like a pro.

Bring a few extra copies of your resume along. If you have a portfolio, download it to your tablet or laptop or get advance approval to access the wireless network. If you receive a tour as part of the interview process, walk alongside the interviewer and remain engaged. Be kind and personable to everyone you meet. Administrative staff and others in the office often influence hiring decisions.

### Close with confidence.

At the end of the interview, let your interviewer know that you are interested in the position and inquire about the next steps in the process. Asking a question like "Do my qualifications match the needs of your company?" gets right to the point and lets the interviewer know you are serious about employment.

### Follow up with a thank you note.

Not everyone will take the time to write a note, giving you an opportunity to stand out from other applicants. The turnaround time for hiring can be quick. To ensure that the hiring manager receives your note before making a hiring decision, it's best to send your note via email.



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## You've Got This!

Now that you've taken the time to prepare, take a deep breath and try to relax. Walk confidently into the interview knowing that this company would be lucky to have you as an employee.

**Good luck!**