



INTERVIEWING TIPS

Introduction

An interview is a dialogue—it is as much about the interviewer assessing your skills, experience and overall fit for the position as it is an opportunity for you to learn about an organization and meet potential colleagues. The interviewer will ask you questions designed to gain information about your personality, background, and qualifications. You will ask questions concerning the job and the organization. During the conversation, you have the opportunity to frame your experience and skills in a way that best suits the position you are applying for. The key to success in an interview is preparation—mapping out your strategy, crafting speaking points, and researching the organization, position and interviewers. Below are tips to guide you through all stages of an interview process: research and preparation, the interview, and post-interview follow-up.

Before the Interview

- *Research.* Make sure you have a complete job description and all the interviewers' correct names and titles. Search for information about the organization online—peruse their website, read articles about their work, read through their annual report, and check out their social media presence. Collecting information about the organization's mission, history, staff size, and current projects will help you gear your comments to the needs and interests of the interviewer.
- *Prepare.* Take a personal inventory: analyze how your strengths, skills, experience, and interests can be applied to the position. Consider what the organization's priorities are for this position, so that you can lead with these attributes.
- *Review potential questions.* Write out answers to commonly asked questions and practice out loud to make sure you are articulating your qualifications for the position clearly and concisely. Create a list of questions you would like to ask.
- *Practice.* Mock interviewing is a great way to work out nerves and gain confidence. Do it with a friend or acquaintance in your field (ideally someone who you'll be a little nervous with) so that it will approximate the real thing. Remember that first impressions are lasting, so clearly articulate your strong points early on in the interview.
- *Find out the time and place.* Be sure you have the correct address and directions to the interview. Make sure you arrive with time to relax and collect your thoughts before the interview.

During the Interview

1. *Clearly show that you meet and exceed the position's requirements.* Share concrete examples from past jobs or work experience—whether professional, artistic or volunteer—that demonstrate your ability to meet the demands of the position. Specific examples and evidence of your accomplishments are the best indicators of your expected success in the new position. It's best to work out these 'anecdotes' before the interview—it's easy to share too much detail if you are improvising in the moment.

2. *Show Enthusiasm.* In addition to assessing whether you have the necessary qualifications, a hiring manager is trying to feel out who you are as a person. They want to find someone who will be a reliable team member and fit the culture of the organization. Remember to make eye contact, smile, and express yourself with energy and warmth. The more ‘open’ your stance is, the easier it will be for an interviewer to connect with you and your ideas.
3. *Regroup when a question goes awry.* It’s almost impossible to ace every question. Remember that an interview is more about the overall impression—your thoughtfulness, qualifications, clarity, and enthusiasm—than any particular answer. If you do flounder, just wrap up the question quickly and move on with confidence.
4. *Take Time to Compose Your Answers.* Take a few seconds to map out your answer before you dive in. We have all had the experience of losing our focus in the middle of an answer and floundering to rein it in. If you are asked a challenging question, you can buy a few extra seconds by smiling and saying, “that’s a great question,” or “yes, I have thought a lot about that.” These few seconds will enable you to quickly map out your answer and deliver it with purpose.
5. *Express your career goals and interests.* Managers look for workers who are motivated, focused, and enthusiastic. Communicating your long-term goals, however broadly, will give an employer a sense of your interests, ambition and ability to plan for the future. If you don’t yet have clearly defined goals, it’s okay to talk about some of the principles that guide your thinking about the future. For example, you might speak about your desire to work in interdisciplinary environments, or your interest in a position that focuses on arts advocacy on an international scale.
6. *Show that you are a sound decision-maker.* Managers look for workers with interpersonal and problem-solving skills. If you have accomplishments that demonstrate these qualities, make sure you speak about these in the interview.
7. *Asses your salary requirements.* Generally speaking, compensation will be discussed in detail once a job offer is made. That said, an employer may ask what your salary requirements are before or during an interview. As much as possible, try to assess what people in similar positions are earning and use this information to provide a realistic salary range. If an HR representative from the organization is overseeing the interview process, you can ask if there is a set salary range for the position. In either case, you can always negotiate once an offer is made, at which point you will have more leverage than during the interview process.

Hints for Some “Tough Questions”

- *Tell me about yourself.* A common opener, this broad question throws many candidates. It is in fact a “sell-me” invitation. Develop a brief summary of your background, interest in the particular field and organization, as well as your qualifications for the position.
- *Why should we hire you?* Know your strengths, skills, and relevant experience relative to the position. Articulate these clearly and concisely. Mention key functions of the job and discuss your skills in relation to these functions. Back up your attributes with specific examples from previous jobs, internships, and activities.
- *What are your long-range goals?* This question is popular because it gathers a lot of useful information: maturity, foresight and realistic outlook, degree of preparation in career planning, and commitment to the organization and to the profession. While you may be unsure of your future plans, demonstrate your knowledge of potential career paths.
- *What is your greatest weakness?* The key to answering this question is remaining positive. You can discuss a weakness that may be a by-product of a strength, or an opportunity for growth. For example, you might say, “my deep commitment to the projects I take on often makes it difficult for me to effectively delegate when I need help.” Or, “I see that this position calls for Lotus 1-2-3 for

spreadsheet work and I am not yet familiar with that program. But, I'm a quick study, and I'm looking forward to picking up that skill."

- *Why did you leave your last job?* Don't air dirty laundry. Don't share any negative impressions of past jobs, supervisors, colleagues or schools. If a previous job was a poor fit for your interests or skills, explain that clearly and positively. Make sure you have something good to say about each job or supervisor because it is very likely you will be asked about them.
- You also may be asked to explain any gaps in your employment history. If this is the case, focus on how you filled your time with productive, career enhancing activities. Such as, "I took this time off to re-examine my career priorities, take courses, and to explore the area of arts management, and worked as a development consultant for the local arts council."

Common Interview Questions

General Questions

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Why should I hire you?
3. Describe the best manager you ever had.
4. Describe the worst manager you ever had.
5. Why did you choose this particular field?
6. Why would you like to work for our organization/company?
7. How long would you stay with us?
8. You may be over-qualified or too experienced for the position we have to offer. What are your thoughts?
9. What is your management style?
10. Describe what you feel to be an ideal working environment.
11. In your current or last position, what are or were your five most significant accomplishments?
12. Can you work under pressure, deadlines, etc.? Give examples.
13. What are your salary expectations?
14. What other types of jobs or companies are you considering?
15. What are your strong points?
16. What are your weak points?
17. How would you describe your own personality?
18. What was the last book you read? Movie you saw? Concert you heard?
19. What motivates you to put forth your greatest effort?
20. In what ways do you think you can make a contribution to this organization?
21. What 2 or 3 accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction? Why?
22. How would your references describe you?
23. What are your long-term career goals?
24. Where do you see yourself in five years? In ten years?

For Management Positions:

1. How many people do you manage?
2. How would you characterize your management style?
4. Tell me about a crisis.
5. How many people have you hired?
6. What has been your biggest hiring mistake?
7. How do you maintain checks and balances on employee performance?
8. How do you handle poor employee performance?
9. How would you describe the best manager you ever had?

Suggested Questions to Ask the Employer:

1. What are your goals for this position or work portfolio in the next 6-12 months?
2. Describe who you feel would be an ideal candidate for this job.
3. With whom will I be working?
4. What qualities do you look for most in your employees?
5. What kind of growth opportunities exist for the person in this job?
6. How would you define your management philosophy?
7. How does this organization / company reward personal and professional achievement?
8. Are performance reviews held on a regular basis?
9. Are employees afforded an opportunity for continuing education, and/or professional development?
10. What is the next step in the interview process? When can I expect to hear something?

10 Routinely Covered Interview Topics:

1. Leadership: Give an example of how you exercised leadership in a recent situation.
2. Problem Solving: Describe a recent problem and how you solved it.
3. Change: You must have seen some interesting developments in your prior job. Think about the changes you have seen and tell me how you changed.
4. Decision Making: Tell me about a decision you made recently and how you reached it.
5. Criticism: Tell me about a time when you were criticized. What was the issue involved, who made the criticism, and how did you handle it?
6. Communication Skills: Tell me how you use your communication skills, written and orally.
7. Time Management: Think about a recent project you were assigned. How did you go about managing your time and organizing the project?
8. Teamwork: Tell about a recent team you worked on.
9. Persuasion: Have you ever had to persuade someone to do something they were initially reluctant about? What happened?

10. Pressure: Tell me about a time when you were under enormous pressure. What was the source of the pressure and how did you cope?

After the Interview

- *Evaluate the interview.* Consider what you did well and which questions challenged you. By reviewing and rehearsing the weak areas, you will improve your next interview.
- *Send a thank you email.* Write a thank you note and send it the same day. It makes a very good impression and too many candidates fail to do this simple and effective step. You can send a hand-written note in addition, but due to the speed of digital communication, it is best to send an email the day of the interview. Don't worry if the interviewer does not respond to the email, it is very rare to receive recognition of a post-interview thank you.
- *Follow up.* If you do not get a response soon after the date that the interviewers indicated, it is a good idea to reach out, either via phone or email, to inquire about the position.
- *Continue your job search.* Just because you have an interview, don't stop researching and following through with other job leads — keep the momentum going — it may take many interviews to find the right job for you.

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