



## How to Interview Well

Your resume was reviewed, you got the phone interview and now they want you to come in. Great news! Here are some tips to be successful at interviewing!

**Know where you are going** – In these days of GPS and maps on phones we feel confident we know where things are and how to get there. But periodically, things happen to cause problems with that. If possible, visit the company a day or so before your interview to check out construction delays, where to park, etc. This will help you feel confident walking in the door.

**Preparation** – Before you interview, research the company by at least reading their website. A quick internet search is a good idea as well to find out what others have said about the company. Understanding how they position themselves in the marketplace, what they value in their company and how they describe their workplace can help you frame answers to match.

Prepare an answer to why you want the job. It is important to have a good answer for this question so the company understands your motivation. Money is not the reason you want to state. If money is your reason, think about something that would put this in a positive light. “Because of the company’s history, I feel this would be a stable job and stability is important to me.” Or, “It is important I work for a company that values the work I do and your track record shows that’s the culture here.” Both statements are about getting paid but make it about the company instead.

**Dressing for success** – It is important to present the right image in an interview. Even if the company will provide a uniform when you are working, it is important to let them know you will take care of it when you are working there. There is also an assumption made by most people that if you don’t care about how you look, you won’t care about your work either.

Ideally you would want to find out what the dress code is for people who work there prior to your interview. An easy way to find out is to do your drive by at the end of the day or at lunch time. Seeing people coming in and out of the building will tell you what they generally wear. You can also check out their website for team pictures. Matching the current staff is acceptable as long as you are neat and well groomed. At a minimum, a nice dress shirt or polo and khakis are required with all clothing and shoes being clean. Any accessories should not detract from the attention being on you.

When choosing what to wear, think about how you interact with the clothing. If there is something that is tight or uncomfortable, moves or slips and has to be adjusted, or just doesn’t look good when you are sitting, do not wear it. When you adjust your clothing that becomes what the interviewer notices and they stop hearing what you are saying.

**Scents** – It can be easy to go a little heavy on the perfume or cologne when heading to an interview but that is a very bad idea. Many people are turned off by strong scents and will not appreciate it. Also, if



you have it on your hands, you can get it on the interviewer which can be a problem. Go light on scent or choose to not wear any at all.

**Resumes and paper** – Have copies of your resume with you and take paper in some form so you can take notes. It isn't required for you to actually use it, but if there is something you want to take note on, you'll be ready! And while you may like to take notes on your phone, many interviewers might see that as not paying attention to the discussion at hand. Paper communicates you are ready and interested and focused on them!

**Arriving** – Regardless of what time you arrive, walk into the building no more than 10 minutes before your interview starts. Often people are working right up to the minute of your interview so coming in too early pressures the interviewer. But, you also want to show you were on time as that will be a reflection on the assumptions made about your work habits. Know the name of the person you are meeting and how to pronounce it. If you aren't sure, call in before your appointment and ask the receptionist. Comply with any requests made of you (i.e. watch a safety video, sign in, etc.) and be prepared to wait. It is important if you choose to look at your phone you keep an eye out for someone approaching. Do not make them feel like they are interrupting to get your attention.

Treat everyone you come in contact with as a potential interviewer. Receptionists and Administrative Assistants are often part of the hiring team and will be asked for their opinion on the candidate. Treating them poorly will reflect badly on you as a candidate.

You may be asked to complete an application. Even if you did one online, there may be a reason they ask you to do it again so be sure to complete the information in its entirety. Put in some effort on free-response questions to help explain why you want the job or your background. Adding more than the bare minimum will help you stand apart from your competition.

**Greet the Interviewer** – Be sure to look the interviewer in the eye, shake hands, and say hello. This is your first impression so make it a good one!

**Their Questions** – Most interviewers will have a list of questions prepared for you before you arrive. They will most likely start by asking you to tell them about your background. While the information is on your resume, it is nice to hear a person describe what they did and how they impacted the company. Briefly describe your career path to date and highlight the important accomplishments at those positions. Also explain why you left each position in a positive way. Do not say negative things about your previous companies or bosses as that will not reflect well on you.

A good interviewer will ask you to describe times when you had to accomplish a specific task and how you went about it. This is called Behavioral Interviewing and works under the principal that the only predictor of future behavior is past behavior. If your interviewer isn't aware of this technique, you can help them gather better information by answering that way. For instance, if the interviewer asks you for a time you had a challenge with a co-worker and how you handled it, you can describe a specific



situation and the actual outcome. You will want to have an answer to a variety of questions thought out ahead of time. For example:

Talk about a time you had a difficulty with a co-worker?  
How do you like to be managed?  
How do you measure your success?  
What do you feel is your biggest weakness?  
Where do you see yourself in five years?

**Your Questions** – Be sure to have an idea of three to five questions you would like to ask the company. You want to ask two or three but having five ready to go means you won't be stuck if they answered them already. At the end of interviews most interviewers will give you the chance to ask and this is your opportunity to solidify in their minds your interest. Some good questions include:

What is the next step in the process?  
Why do you like working here?  
How will my success be measured in the first 90 days?  
Assuming a person puts in the time and effort, what is the career path for this position?  
Why is the position open?

Be sure to know if they already answered your question. If you would like them to expand on it, be sure to ask in a way that shows you understood they answered but would like additional information. For instance, if they tell you why the position is open and you would like more information, approach it this way: "I know you said the position was open because the person who had the position moved up to the next level. What does that level look like and what did they do to achieve that success?"

**Leaving** – At the conclusion of the interview, shake the person's hand, thank them for the time and reiterate you would like to work for the company. Be sure to get the interviewer's contact information (you can get their business card) so you can follow up appropriately. Say good bye to anyone you come in contact with and leave the building. Leave the parking lot before making any calls because there are many companies that will watch to see what people do from their windows.

As soon as you get to a place you can stop or to a computer, send the interviewer a thank you email. Sending an email as quickly as possible will solidify in the interviewer's mind that you are conscientious and right for the job. Your email can be short and to the point. If there was something you wanted to say and forgot, this is the time to add it. Or if there was a specific thing you enjoyed discussing, mention it in your thank you.

You can also send a thank you note when you get home as a further way to stand out if you choose.

**Follow Up** – If you did your job in the interview and asked for next steps, you should have some idea of when they are going to make the next decision. Give the person at least 5 business days after the interview to get back to you as they have other job duties as well. It is important to be respectful of their



time. If it was an interview with a temporary or placement service, you can follow up every three days. If you aren't getting responses to your emails, switch to phone calls and vice versa.

An interview can be a stressful event but putting some time and thought in ahead of time can set you up for success!