

# Interviewing

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Proper preparation will help alleviate some of the stress involved in interviewing for jobs. The more you prepare, the more comfortable and successful you will be interviewing. So, what can you do to ensure that you are ready for your interview?

**1. Practice** – Practice answering interview questions and practice your responses to typical job interview questions (both general and industry-specific). Providing evidence of your successes is a great way to promote your candidacy, so think of concrete examples you can use to highlight your skills. Prepare a list of your own questions to ask the employer. Once you have practiced answering interview questions on your own, schedule a mock interview with the Center for Career & Professional Development so that we can help you hone your interviewing skills.

**2. Research** – Prior to the interview, find out who you will be meeting with so that you can research them beforehand. Do your homework about the employer and the industry so you are ready for the question “What do you know about this company?” Try to relate what you have learned about the company when answering questions. Also be sure that you thoroughly understand the job description and what skills the employer is seeking, so that you can relate your experience to their needs.

**3. Present a professional image** – Make sure your interview attire is neat and appropriate to the position. Bring a nice portfolio with copies of your resume. Include a pen and paper for taking notes (if you choose to do so). When greeting the employer, have a firm, confident handshake.

**4. Don't be late** – Be on time for the interview, meaning five to ten minutes early. If needed, drive to the interview location ahead of time so you know where you are going and how long it will take to get there.

**5. Relax** – During the job interview try to relax and stay as calm possible. Remember that your body language says as much about you as your answers to the questions. Proper preparation will allow you to exude confidence. Maintain eye contact with the interviewer. Listen to the entire question before you answer and be sure to answer each question fully yet succinctly.

**6. Apply your skills and knowledge** – Try to relate what you know about the company when answering questions. When discussing your career accomplishments match them to what the company is looking for. Use examples from your research when answering questions, such as “I noticed that when you implemented a new software system last year, your customer satisfaction ratings improved dramatically. I am well versed in the latest technologies from my experience with developing software at ABC, and appreciate a company who strives to be a leader in its industry.”

**7. Follow up** – Always follow-up with a thank you note reiterating your interest in the position. You can also include any details you may have forgotten to mention during your interview. If you interview with multiple people, send each one a personal thank you note. Send your thank you note/email within 24 hours of your interview. (*See page 23 for a sample.*)

## **Types of Interviews & Tips on How to Prepare**

There are a few different types of interviews and interview questions. Understanding the structure and purpose of each can help you prepare.

**Screening or phone interview** – Initial round of interviews to narrow down candidates.

Tips for preparing/answering:

- Treat this interview as you would a face-to-face conversation. Arrange for a quiet space that will be free from interruptions.
- Focus on the conversation. Listen to the questions carefully before you answer.
- Since the interviewer cannot see you, be sure to convey energy and enthusiasm with your voice.
- Have a copy of your resume, the job description, and any notes you've made in front of you as a reference.

**In-person/traditional interview** – Most common type of interview. Can be with just one person or a group of people. Can last as little as 30 minutes or as long as all day.

Tips for preparing/answering:

- Before the interview, get information on the structure of the interview - how long it will be, who you will be meeting with, etc. Be sure to research the department and jobs of the people interviewing you, so that you have a basic understanding of their roles and can prepare some questions in advance.
- Prepare for this interview by practicing answering interview questions and coming up with questions to ask the interviewer(s). (*See page 31 for sample questions.*)
- Maintain eye contact and answer questions thoroughly yet succinctly.
- If interviewing with more than one person at a time, direct your answer primarily to the person asking the question, but make eye contact with the others as you answer.

**Behavioral interview** – Behavioral interview questions are asked based on the assumption that your past behavior is predictive of your future performance. They can be asked in any interview situation. These questions typically start with “Describe a situation where” or “Tell me about a time when.” (*See page 31 for examples.*)

Tips for preparing/answering:

- The interviewer is looking for results and outcomes, so tell the story, but then be sure to talk about the outcome(s) and what you learned from that experience.
- Think of specific examples that demonstrate your competence in core behaviors such as teamwork, problem-solving, communication, creativity and leadership.

**Situational interview** – Situational interview questions focus on future performance rather than past performance. The interviewer will give you a problem and ask how you would deal with it. For example: “Your boss is on a whirlwind business trip. He assigned you a report to write for a client while he is gone, and he expects a first draft in two days. You thought everything was clear, but when you look back through your meeting notes and emails, there are outstanding questions that will make it difficult to complete the report. What do you do?”

Tips for preparing/answering:

- Employers want to know how you would likely solve a problem and, in some cases, they want to measure your expertise. Address the problem and describe your solution, including the action(s) that you would take.

**Case interview** – Case interviews are used almost exclusively in the consulting industry and focus on your problem-solving skills. The interviewer will outline a situation and ask you to formulate a plan that deals with the problem. For example: “How many pounds of hamburger meat do New York City McDonald’s restaurants go through each month?” You do not have to come up with the ultimate solution. The interviewer is looking for how you apply your knowledge and skills to a real-life situation.

Tips for preparing/answering:

- Before answering, be prepared to ask the employer numerous questions for clarity and informational purposes.
- Speak and reason aloud so that the interviewer has a full understanding of your thought process.

**Lunch/Dinner interview** – Sometimes part of the interview will take place during a meal. While this part of the interview may feel more casual, remember that it is still a formal part of the interview process.

Tips or preparing/answering:

- Use the interview to develop common ground with your interviewer.
- Follow his/her lead in both selection of food and in etiquette; but never order alcohol, even if the interviewer does.
- Choose food that is easy to eat, so that you can answer questions and pay attention to the conversation.

At the end of any interview, be sure to ask the interviewer(s) about the next steps and the timeline for follow-up. Thank them for their time, then be sure to send them a thank you note/email.

**Discussing salary and benefits:**

Avoid discussing the salary or benefits offered for a position until given this information by the employer. Asking how much money you will earn often makes you seem more interested in what the employer can do for you than in what you can do for the employer. Employers will give you this information once a formal offer has been made. Employers should not ask you how much you want to make, although some may. For guidance on handling this question and negotiating a starting salary, call the Center for Career & Professional Development at 859-238-5283. We can walk you through all of this.