



# Interviewing Tips

How to Make a Great  
Impression and Get the Job!

The interview is an integral (and typically the most stressful!) part of your job search process. Employers are not only looking for the right skill set, but also the “right fit” – someone who fulfills the technical job requirements and meshes with the current staff and company culture. The interview is your opportunity to showcase your skills and make an unforgettable impression on the company. It’s also your chance to assess the company and decide if this opportunity will meet *your needs*.

Securing an interview is a major accomplishment! It means you aced the preparation process. Your resume was on-point, highlighting your experience and accomplishments. You developed a well-written, eye-catching cover letter. And your networking skills have paid off, giving you a reputation and track record others are happy to endorse and recommend to others. Now it’s time to show them why you are the right person for the job!

## THE BASICS ~ INTERVIEW ETIQUETTE

In our ultra-cool culture, certain behavioral expectations that were once standard, have become antiquated. Toting a cup of coffee into church, sitting in a restaurant with your dog on your lap, or texting during meetings (or even on a date!) are the “norm.” Some of these “new normals” have even carried over to the professional world.

As a job seeker, however, you’d do well to follow “old school” professional traditions – especially when navigating the interview portion of your search. *Ultimately, the goal of the first interview is to secure a second one!* Let’s start with a few Interview Basics:

If you arrive on time, you’re late: Map your course before you leave for the interview and get a heads-up on parking. 10 minutes early is the new “on time”!

Dress the part: One of the most common questions we get is, “What should I wear to the interview?” Company culture drives employee attire but should not influence the first interview. Men should be in a suit and tie. For women, a blouse and skirt or pantsuit is appropriate. Be aware of your shoes, hair, perfume/cologne, and jewelry, as well. Your appearance also includes what you do and don’t have with you. Bring a copy of your resume and a portfolio for notes and leave your coffee, water, and cell phone in the car!

Sell your brand from minute 1: From the moment your car enters the parking lot, you are selling your brand. Project a professional and respectful image while you’re waiting for the interview; engage the

receptionist in polite conversation; don't smoke or chew gum (You'd think this was obvious. Trust us, it isn't obvious to some.); breathe deeply to calm yourself down; accept a glass of water if offered but do not ask for something to drink. Never underestimate the power of a firm handshake, continuous eye contact, and self-confidence.

It's not what you say, but how you say it: When it's time to answer a question, make eye contact and take a moment to formulate your response before answering. If you're unsure how to answer, ask clarifying questions. Think of the interview as a conversation, not an interrogation. Don't forget you're interviewing them just as they're interviewing you. End the interview with a handshake, thank the interviewer for his/her time, and let him know you want the job. For example: "I'd like to thank you for taking the time to meet with me. I hope you'll strongly consider me for this position" or "Is there anything about my background you'd like me to expand on?".

Never speak negatively about past employers or colleagues: Do not underestimate the power of connections! Chances are, there is some degree of connection between you, a past employer/colleague, and the organization with whom you're trying to land a job. Bad mouthing colleagues will always come back to bite you; and it definitely doesn't paint you in a very good light.

## **BEFORE THE INTERVIEW ~ DO YOUR HOMEWORK!**

Preparing for an interview is just as important as the actual interview itself! With the amount of information available, you can uncover a variety of intelligence.

Be sure you know the full name and title of the individual(s) you are meeting with. Research the company to learn important information such as its history, mission and values, corporate culture, management team, biggest competitors and clients. Referencing the organization's major turning points- acquisitions, biggest wins (and losses)- during your interview demonstrates an authentic interest in the job. Useful resources of information include LinkedIn, corporate websites, analyst reports, press releases, blogs, the news and local publications, recruiters, and most importantly, your network.

Learn about the role you're interviewing for. Understanding the business means understanding what you would add to the business. Do a thorough read of the job description. Doing so gives you the opportunity to shine a light on areas that are a match with your skills and experience. Take it one step further and research

that particular role in other organizations. It's likely there are more ways you can contribute to the business beyond what they've identified in their job description. This will greatly inform your answers, in regard to strengths, fit, and what you can offer.

[Check out & download our 6 Best of Effective Interviewing](#)

## THE MOCK INTERVIEW ~ PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT!

Every interviewer has their own unique style or process for directing an interview. Mock interviewing will enable you to adapt to that style right away. Additionally, mock interviews help you develop interviewing strategies, reduce your anxiety, create a good first impression, communicate your skills effectively and clearly, prepare for the inevitable "difficult questions", and assess non-verbal presentation skills.

There are certain questions you can bet your bottom dollar will be asked in some form or another, regardless of the role or field. Developing and perfecting well-thought-out answers to those questions during a mock interview, makes impressing your interviewer easy! The most common questions you will encounter are some variation of:

*Why are you interested in this role?*

*What are your strengths?*

*Why do you want to work at this particular company?*

Your answers should be authentic, not something you found in a Google search. Our 20+ years of experience, though, have shown the best answers to the above questions center around:

How your experiences and skills make you a great fit for the position, with concrete examples

What you have to offer the organization in the long-term

How your personal and professional goals align with the company's mission and culture

Don't forget: When you make it past the first interview, you'll have to successfully navigate 2-4 more before you receive an offer. Be sure to have multiple examples to avoid repeating the same answers.

In addition to arriving prepared with expert answers, you should also be armed with important questions. Demonstrate your competence and interest in the job and by asking about your day to day responsibilities, expectations and measurements of success, and future career paths from this position. Asking smart

questions shows you have knowledge of the industry and you're already thinking about how you can contribute to it.

[Download our Mock Interview Cheat Sheet for a list of questions and answers to prepare](#)

## **PHONE INTERVIEW ~ THE FIRST STEP TOWARD THE “REAL” INTERVIEW**

A first-round interview is usually done over the phone or by video call. It's the first hurdle you must successfully clear to proceed further in the interviewing process. It shouldn't be taken lightly as it is your time to set the stage by putting your best foot forward.

Effectively representing yourself over the phone can be challenging. The sound of your voice is one of the only ways for an interviewer to get an impression of your attitude because, unlike in-person interviews, the conversation doesn't include nuances and visual aids we typically use in conversation.

Before the call begins, prepare your environment. Find a quiet, private space with a strong signal. Have your laptop ready to take notes, reference any documents they want to send to you, or open any links they might pass along. Keep your research handy – company and role research, job description, interviewer information, mock interview answers, and questions you want to ask.

During the phone interview, communicate effectively by using professional grammar. Act as if you are speaking in-person. Everyone knows you can “hear” a smile (or a frown) in someone's voice. Answer questions directly and succinctly, with concrete examples whenever possible. We suggest standing up to keep your energy up, but don't walk around too much (or fold laundry!) and get winded or distracted. Remember, you only have a limited amount of time on the phone, so be concise and stay on point – don't ramble!

When wrapping up the call, be sure to express your interest and ask about the [timing and next steps](#). Don't be afraid to ask the interviewer if he or she has any concerns or questions you can clarify. Be sure to ask for the interviewer's email so you can follow up with a personalized email. Finally, ask if he or she is on [LinkedIn](#) or [Twitter](#) and if it's OK to invite them to join your network.

[Get our Effective Phone Screen Cheat Sheet](#)

## THE INTERVIEW ~ THE MOMENT OF YOU'VE BEEN WAITING FOR!

You've finally landed the in-person interview. This is your opportunity to shine. Before the first question is asked, greet your interviewer with eye contact, extend a firm handshake, use his or her last name, and smile.

The interview is your chance to stand out and showcase your strengths and to highlight your skills and experience that are applicable to the position you're interviewing for. We like to tackle in-person interviews by using the 6 BEs of Effective Interviewing. We addressed the first BE (BE Prepared) earlier. The other 5 are essential to successfully navigating your interview.

### **BE a Good Listener**

Listen carefully. One of the worst offenses you can commit during an interview is to constantly interrupt the interviewer. Not only does this demonstrate your lack of listening skills, it also causes the interviewer to question your ability to manage a team and communicate with others. Bring a notepad with you to take notes and write down your questions as they arise. Before asking a question, determine whether it's the most appropriate time. With some patience, perhaps the interviewer will answer the question before you ask it. Finally, eliminate distractions by leaving your cell phone in the car.

### **BE Inquisitive**

This is one of the most obvious components of an effective interview, yet it's often underutilized. An in-person interview provides you with an opportunity to discuss the true substance of the position. This is your chance to ask questions about the company's culture, the long-term prospects for growth, the day-to-day activities, the hiring manager's expectations, the manager's work ethic and work style, and the makeup and tenure of the department. Without asking the proper questions, much of this substance remains a mystery... and the worst time to solve that mystery is after you start working for the company! You should have already developed a list of questions such as these during your Mock Interview process.

### **BE Specific & Cite Real Examples**

The current trend in screening talent is behavioral or situational interviewing. This style of interviewing challenges you by asking about specific situations such as "Tell me about a time when..." or "Give me an example of a situation in which you..." or "How did you handle a situation with a difficult..." The most effective way to demonstrate your experience and showcase your talents is to provide specific examples of your accomplishments. Once again, this can't be accomplished without properly preparing for the

interview. Ideally, the examples you cited on your resume are the same examples you'll use during the interview process. Be sure to outline your role in each accomplishment, the reason you were involved in the situation, the challenges you faced and how you overcame them. Most importantly, describe the outcome and how it benefited the team, department, and company. A word of caution: don't take credit for other people's successes. At some point during the process, your exaggerations will be discovered!

### **BE Energetic & Enthusiastic**

A positive attitude and an enthusiastic demeanor won't single-handedly secure a job for which you're unqualified. On the flip side, you'll almost certainly lose a job that you *are* qualified for if you fail to demonstrate your interest and excitement during the interview. Throughout the screening process, the hiring manager will spend a great deal of time evaluating your culture fit in addition to your technical fit. Whether the department is high energy or low key, the hiring manager wants to hire someone who's passionate about the work he or she will be doing. Remember to smile, use open body language, nod in agreement, ask follow-on questions, maintain eye contact, and show emotion in your responses. Caution: This is not an invitation to be disingenuous or annoyingly "peppy." If you're unable to demonstrate your interest and enthusiasm in the position, perhaps it's not for you.

### **BE Yourself!**

Finally, but most important of all, be yourself! The only way to avoid a mismatched placement is to provide the interviewer with a genuine picture of your approach, style and skills. (Note: this includes the presentation of a truthful resume.) While there's always some degree of "selling" during the interview process, you'll avoid surprises and misaligned expectations if and only if you discuss your work style and work ethic in an honest fashion from the very beginning. A recent survey conducted by Leadership IQ indicated that 46% of new hires fail within 18 months...with nearly 89% leaving their position due to a lack of culture fit.

The process of Interviewing can seem overwhelming, exhausting and nerve-racking if you're not prepared. However, by adhering to these guidelines, you'll greatly enhance your success rate and gain a competitive edge.

[Get your handy copy of the Memorable Interviewing – The Bes of Effective Interviewing](#)

## **FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEWS ~ YOU'VE ONLY JUST BEGUN!**

Including your initial phone interview, you can expect a minimum of 3 interviews and as many as 6 before you receive a job offer. If an organization puts you through more than that, you might want to reevaluate how badly you want to work for them. Excessive interviews can be a sign of a lack of communication between departments and leadership or cumbersome processes in need of streamlining!

There are a few things to remember during follow-up interviews. First, be consistent with your messaging. This is why it is essential to be honest about your experience, skills, and achievements. It's ok to emphasize different experiences during each interview, but the overall picture you paint of your professional background should be consistent.

Be prepared with variations of your answers to questions that might be repeated. Compile multiple examples you can use and save some of them for subsequent interviews. If the organization is well-structured, employees at the various interviews will communicate with one another and share their thoughts. A variety of answers and examples provides them with a broad range of information to discuss and compare. They'll definitely be impressed by the breadth and depth of your experience when each person has something different to share.

Lastly, always act like it's your first interview... even if it's your sixth. Continue to be enthusiastic, engaged, inquisitive, and a good listener throughout the entire process. Your attitude could be the exactly what you need to put you at the top of their list.

## **FOLLOW UP – ONE MORE CHANCE TO SHINE**

Whether you've wrapped up your phone interview or your 4th in-person interview, following up is essential. Following up later that day with a prompt, well-worded email briefly reminding the interviewers of your skills, why you would be a great fit, and your interest in the position will help you stand out. Don't forget to thank them for their time and tell them you're looking forward to further discussing the opportunity.

If you don't hear anything for a week or two, follow up again in an email. Keep it short and to the point- simply say you were excited about the job, are hoping there has been some development, and available if they have more questions.



## NOW WHAT? YOU'VE GOT 3 OPTIONS

You've made it! You passed the resume test, survived your phone interview, and maintained confidence and a smile through each in-person interview. Congratulations! Now what? In most cases, there are three possible outcomes.

Option #1: You're in a holding pattern. Some organization put the search on hold (even after you've sat through 4 interviews!) as they reassess their needs or budget. Others have an extensive decision-making timeline, leaving you waiting anxiously for a call. Unfortunately, there isn't a lot you can do in this situation. It's perfectly reasonable to inquire about their timeline. If you aren't satisfied with their answer, you can pull yourself out of the pipeline. If this job is important to you, hang in there and continue to follow-up with a brief email or phone call.

Option #2: You didn't get the job. Of course, you're disappointed. You did your research, put your best foot forward in each and every interview, and sent a friendly follow up note. Unfortunately, this wasn't "the one." Don't throw in the towel yet, your efforts weren't for nothing. Each person you've been in contact with is now a HOT connection. Be sure to connect with each of them on LinkedIn and other professional platforms. Don't use the standard request. Take a few minutes to write a personal message with your request. Keep the relationship on good terms. Believe it or not, we've had several instances when clients have decided to hire more than one person for the position, offered a different role, or even created a new job for a candidate they were impressed with.

Option #3: You got the job! You aced the interviews, the chemistry between you and your soon-to-be boss is solid, and you are passionate about the company's products and services. Now take a deep breath and pat yourself on the back. It has probably taken you a few months to reach this point in your job search – savor the moment!

Now it's time to negotiate a compensation package that is competitive, meets your financial needs, and falls within the company's budget. And you thought the hard part was over!

As we discussed earlier, proper preparation is key to a successful job search. This is especially true when it comes to salary negotiation. Before you get to the final interview, you should take some time to determine what you feel is the appropriate compensation package for the position, considering all aspects of the job (location, travel, upward mobility, the state of the business, the expectations of the company, etc.). Based on your earlier research, you should already have your Dream, Walk-Away, and Comfort numbers. If you

start negotiations with your dream number, you will likely land in comfort zone. If you don't initially ask for that higher number, we guarantee you will never get it. Salary negotiation is difficult, but once mastered, will take your earning power to new heights. A recent survey showed that less than 30% of job seekers negotiated their compensation package during the interview process. While it is certainly more prevalent in some positions vs. others, don't be afraid.

[Download our guide to securing a competitive salary](#)

Remember, you must maintain a positive attitude and respectful demeanor throughout the salary negotiation process. Continue to demonstrate your excitement and enthusiasm for the position even if things don't go exactly as you planned. After all, assuming you come to an agreement, you will be working alongside the very same people you negotiated with. It's important that you start out on the right foot.

When negotiations are done effectively and for the right position, you will be the proud owner of a new job. You will be earning a competitive paycheck and your new employer will have gained a committed, engaged, and savvy employee. However, if an agreement is not reached, it is very important that you avoid burning bridges. If your ultimate response to their offer is, "I'm sorry, but I just can't accept this position for that salary. I am going to have to turn your offer down," it is important that you keep it professional and respectful. Chances are your paths will cross again someday and this town is too small to risk leaving a bad taste in their mouth.

## **THINGS TO AVOID – INTERVIEW FAILS WE'VE ACTUALLY SEEN**

### ***Assuming the final interview is simply a "rubber stamp."***

It doesn't matter if the hiring manager or CEO tells you the final interview is "simply a formality." It is still important! Some companies want to test your resolve and commitment to the job by observing how you conduct yourself when your guard is down. So, do not arrive at your final interview with tobacco in your lip and a Pepsi can as your spittoon! Showing up too drunk to stand up, with your own "refreshments" in a non-descript cup is another "fail" to avoid. We guarantee, it will not end well for you.

### ***Renegotiating your compensation for the wrong reasons.***

We are proponents of seeking the compensation you deserve. Not all companies are looking to hire the best talent for the least amount of money. If you can demonstrate how the value of your skills is higher than the suggested compensation, by all means, make the sale. However, returning to the hiring manager

and asking for an increase in compensation simply because your spouse makes more money than you... Not recommended.

***Sharing your recent weekend on social media.***

Like we said earlier, once you have landed the job, you are still “interviewing”. Employers want you to prove you were the right hire. They want to see you going the extra mile, taking on more than you are asked to do, and being on your best behavior. Calling the boss to let her know you will be coming in late on Monday because you “aren’t feeling well” and then posting about your all-night binge in Tijuana is not going to end well. And whatever you do, do NOT share pictures like these using your work computer or during company time. Better yet, don’t post it to begin with! (Our motto: If you wouldn’t want your mom to read it, don’t post it!)

***Feeling a little too “at home” at the office.***

Office culture ranks fairly high on most job seekers’ list of “demands”. The days of standing around the water cooler might be over, but offices without walls, the addition of communal break areas, and providing corporate gyms are excellent ways for companies to make the office a more comfortable home-away-from-home and promote community. However, no matter how “homey” the second floor might be, it is not, in fact, your home. Therefore, taking a 6-minute phone call from a family member during a staff meeting or even at your desk, napping on your desk, and leaving the office in the middle of the day because you feel like it’s been a “long week” – only 1 week into your new job – are not choices we would endorse.