

Building Strong Families

Preparing for the Interview

Getting Ready

1. Find out the exact **place** and **time** for the interview.
2. Get the interviewer's **full name**; make sure you pronounce it correctly.
3. Go alone.
4. Take a pencil and paper.
5. Know and remember your **resume**. Have a copy, just in case.
6. Take inventory of yourself and know what you have to offer. Be prepared to tell your story in 60 seconds.
7. Find out what you can about the company before you go.
8. Know and remember the description of the job for which you are applying so you can tell the employer exactly why you think you would fit into the organization.
9. Be prepared to answer questions (see Interview Questions). No answer should be longer than 60 seconds.
10. Questions will help you better understand the position. Be prepared with four or five questions that will help you decide if the job is what you want. Here are some questions you may want to ask:
 - ◆ Where will I work?
 - ◆ What are the hours and training period (if any)?
 - ◆ With whom will I work?
 - ◆ From whom can I get a detailed description of the position?
 - ◆ Whom will I report to?
 - ◆ Why is the position open?
 - ◆ What are the earnings and future incentives (if any)?
 - ◆ What are the company growth plans?
 - ◆ When does the position begin?
 - ◆ What is the company policy on working overtime and weekends?

Personal Appearance

Your physical appearance is extremely important **before** the interview begins because it is how you look that the interviewer notices first. You can make a good first impression by:

- ◆ Being neat and clean
- ◆ Wearing clean, well-pressed clothes
- ◆ Having fingernails clean and well-trimmed
- ◆ Having hair neatly combed
- ◆ Dressing appropriately. Leave the jeans at home (it is recommended that a woman wear a skirt, a dress or suit, and a man wear slacks and a tie or suit).
- ◆ Wearing clean and/or shined shoes.
- ◆ Dressing as you would for the job. The interviewer wants to see what you would look like.

The Interview

| Dos | Don'ts |
|--|---|
| Arrive 5 or 10 minutes ahead of time. | Smoke, even if the interviewer offers you a cigarette. |
| Give the receptionist your name and the name of the person you are to see. | Chew gum. |
| Greet interviewer by last name. | Answer questions with a simple yes or no. |
| Greet interviewer with a smile. If a hand is offered, shake hands. Be courteous. | Say negative things about your present or former employers. |
| Remain standing until you are offered a seat. | Claim skills you cannot "deliver" on the job. |
| Make eye contact with the interviewer. | Bring friends, partner or children. |
| Talk slowly and clearly. | Gaze around the room when talking. |
| Be respectful and optimistic. | Argue or interrupt the interviewer. |
| Answer questions completely and truthfully. | Stress your need for work. |
| Give only requested information. Let the interviewer lead the conversation. | |
| Use clues from the interviewer's remarks to show how you fit the job's requirements. | |
| Stress your qualifications for the job and your interest in it. | |
| Rather than saying "I'll take anything," talk about the specific job you want. | |
| Understand specific job requirements before you accept a position. | |
| As the interview ends, say, "I enjoyed our interview. I hope you will consider me." | |
| Leave promptly when the interview is over with a good-natured, courteous farewell. | |

Potential Interview Questions

Most job-hunters make two mistakes in an interview. First, they do not listen to the questions and end up giving unnecessary information. Second and more important, they do not do their homework and come to the interview unprepared. Take a look at the frequently asked questions and pointers listed below to practice for an interview.

Q: Tell me about yourself.

A: Indicate trustworthiness, stability, job-related interests and skills.

Q: How old are you?*

A: A suggested response might be: "I believe age is not a requirement for this position. My skills are..."

Q: Are you married?*

A: A suggested response might be: "I think what you want to know is if I am dependable. I am responsible and dependable and my work requirements are a major priority."

Q: What are your future plans?

A: Talk about gaining more work experience to become a valuable employee.

Q: Have you done this type of work before?

A: Never say "no." Mention similar tasks from past experience, training or education, the ability to learn quickly.

Q: Why do you want to work here?

A: Be positive about your interest in the company. Mention that you like this type of work and you feel that you can do a good job.

Q: What kind of machines, tools, or equipment can you use?

A: Include anything you have operated that you think relates to the job. Know the manufacturer's name on equipment, if possible.

Q: Can you work under pressure and deadlines?

A: Assure the employer that you can. Give examples from previous employment.

Q: Why did you leave your last job?

A: Be brief and factual! If you frequently missed work, got fired or had conflict with your boss, say, "To be honest, I did not have a good handle on my personal situation then. I have since gotten training to learn how to prevent personal issues from affecting my performance on the job." **Never** say negative things about your previous employer!

* Employers are not supposed to ask these questions. However, it may be beneficial to have a prepared response in case they would.

Q: What was your past employer's opinion about your work?

A: Refer to a letter of recommendation, if possible. If you did not get along with your employer, discuss things about which the employer did not complain.

Q: What position do you expect to have in five years?

A: Indicate a desire to learn new things. You might say that you hope to become the best person the company has in the relevant area.

Q: How long do you plan to stay with the company?

A: Say that you see no reason why you will not stay for many years and that you expect to be happy in the job.

Q: What are your salary requirements?

A: It is usually best to discuss pay *after* the job is offered. You can say that salary is negotiable. Turn the tables and ask, "What figure do you have in mind?"

Q: What is your biggest strength?

A: Present yourself as a good worker (for example, punctual, efficient, dependable).

Q: What is your biggest weakness?

A: Turn a "weakness" into a strength. For example, "I tend to take on too much sometimes. I've learned to recognize when to renegotiate work load when necessary." (It shows you are a hard worker, but realistic.)

Q: When are you available for work?

A: Express interest in beginning as soon as possible; however, if you have another job, it is customary to give notice, if possible.

Q: Why should we hire you instead of someone else?

A: Highlight qualities that make you an asset to the company. Say that you like this type of work, are good at it, and know that you would work very hard at it.

Q: Why do you want to change jobs?

A: Mention that you are in a dead-end position and you need more of a challenge. Avoid mentioning boredom, money, or problems with a former boss.

Q: How many people have you hired or fired?

A: The interviewer is trying to determine the depth of your experience. Be careful not to exaggerate. Be honest.

Q: What are the reasons for your success?

A: Keep your answer very general. You might say, "I like to work hard," or "I get along with all kinds of people and I know how to listen."

Why People Get Hired

Often the best job hunter, rather than the best qualified candidate, gets hired. Although qualifications and experience are important, the impression the job hunter makes is critical. Following are good impressions and the ways that job hunters can demonstrate them.

Self-confidence

- ◆ describe past work history
- ◆ describe training and education
- ◆ ask meaningful questions

Ability to get along

- ◆ be friendly and smiling
- ◆ do not argue with interviewer
- ◆ use a positive attitude
- ◆ do not bad-mouth past employers

Dependability

- ◆ complete materials accurately
- ◆ be on time for interview

Good employee (few problems)

- ◆ do not tell family problems
- ◆ talk honestly

Ability to fit into company

- ◆ dress right for the job
- ◆ use good manners
- ◆ look neat and clean
- ◆ show eagerness to learn

That you know what you want

- ◆ apply for a specific job
- ◆ have a future goal
- ◆ ask meaningful questions
- ◆ offer to call interviewer back

The interview is your opportunity to show what type of employee you can be, so learn to use your interviewing skills effectively.