

How to Prepare for the Interview



Being well prepared for a job interview will increase your chances of receiving a job offer. When you are prepared for the interview, you will come across as self-confident and assured. Preparation lets you take care of the details ahead of time, minimizes the effects of Murphy's Law ("Whatever can go wrong, will go wrong") and allows you to focus on the task at hand - landing that job.

Preparing in advance gives you an edge by:

Eliminating the fear of the unknown

When giving a speech, it is often helpful to overcome your anxiety and fear of "freezing" by writing it out and practicing it ahead of time. Why not apply the same technique to the interview process by writing out and practicing your responses to the most frequently asked interview questions?

Reducing the element of surprise

If you prepare properly by taking care of the logistical details of getting to the interview and anticipating questions you'll be asked, you will reduce your chances of being surprised and caught off-guard.

Increasing your self-confidence

Employers look for applicants who are confident in their ability to do the job. Knowing you have prepared thoroughly in advance only adds to your confidence level, an attribute that comes across loud and clear to the interviewer.



Allowing you to focus on the interview itself

As you get ready the day of the interview, you won't be bothered trying to remember the details. Since you already will have taken care of them, you'll be able to review your responses to the anticipated questions.

Preparation falls into several categories

For more in-depth information about these, refer to the appropriate **JobSearch Guides** on each topic.

Know yourself

You must know the product, you, that you are promoting in this sales transaction known as an interview. Know your career goals, skills, interests and aptitudes, strengths/weaknesses and value that you would add to the company. See the **JobSearch Guide *Ideal Job Worksheet***.

Practice your interviewing skills

Anticipate common questions that could be asked, and know your answers to them; practice responses to difficult questions; and use videotape and/or mock interviews to practice your skills. See the **JobSearch Guide *Common Interview Questions***.



Research the job and the company

This high-value activity can pay off handsomely. The more time you spend here, the less time you waste later. Not only will you avoid wasting time on a job you don't really want, you will impress an employer during an interview by taking the time to find out about the organization and its competitors. The employer's assumption is that your thoroughness here will also show up in your job performance. See the **JobSearch Guide *How to Research the Job & the Employer***.

Preliminary activities

Know where you're going:

- Being late is the kiss of death! Employers assume that if you are late for an interview, you will be late for the job.
- Find out the exact address, building, floor and room number. Don't be late because you've been wandering around an office complex or a large building looking for the right place.
- Get directions to the interview when you are contacted for the interview or by using the Internet mapping service such as Google Maps (<http://maps.google.com/maps>) or MapQuest (www.mapquest.com).
- Decide on the best route. Find an alternative route in case rush hour traffic or construction interferes with your timetable.
- Arrive at least 10 minutes early so you can catch your breath and visit the restroom to check out your appearance and make any last minute adjustments.
- If your interview is being conducted by telephone or video, be sure you are familiar with the procedures and any video/virtual meeting software that might be used. You may need to download and install free video conferencing software. Familiarize yourself well in advance of the interview with the software. If you need assistance, seek help from your local One-stop Career Center.



Know who is conducting the interview:

- From the person who contacts you for the interview:
 - Find out the name and title of the interviewer(s) and write the information down. Don't rely on your memory.
 - Make sure you know how to pronounce and spell the name correctly.
 - If a group or panel will be interviewing, find out the number of people and their job responsibilities.
- Have enough résumés for everyone on the panel plus yourself.



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What to do the day before the interview

Think about your agenda

Know what points you want to get across. You don't want to take over the interview, but make sure they know what you can bring to the job as well as the value you can add to the company.



Fuel up

Put gas in the car. Have a map of the area handy in case you are forced to take an alternate route. If using public transportation, make sure you have change or tokens, and a schedule.

Get your money together

Have enough cash for parking, public transportation and snack machines.

Pick out your clothes

Decide on the outfit you will be wearing to the interview. Choose conservative clothing. Make sure your clothes are clean, fresh and pressed. Don't forget to shine your shoes. Lay out clothes and shoes the night before.

Set your alarm clock

Synchronize your alarm clock and watch with the correct time, then set the alarm. Use a wind-up, or battery powered alarm clock or your cell phone's alarm function as a back-up in case you lose electrical power during the night.

Get a good night's rest

You'll want to be at your best for the interview, so a sound night's sleep will ensure that you are clear-headed.

The day of the interview

Personal hygiene

Shower, shave, use deodorant and clean your fingernails. Avoid excessive amounts of aftershave or perfume. Also, do not drink alcohol or eat unusual or garlicky foods before the interview. Take along some breath mints that you can chew 15 minutes before the interview.



Review your materials

If it has been awhile since you have looked at your résumé and other materials, do so. It can be embarrassing to forget something you included in your own materials. This will also help you present your qualifications succinctly and accurately.

Relax

Listen to your favorite music, take a deep breath or use relaxation techniques to stay calm and collected and put yourself in a positive frame of mind. You want to appear calm, confident and self-assured.

Review your What, Can, Will and How Much

Take some time before the interview to review what it is the interviewer is looking for. Review the **JobSearch Guide *What Are Interviewer Looking For?***.

WHAT: How does the job for which you are interviewing match what you really want to do with your life at this time? Prepare three or four examples of how it matches.

CAN: Jot down at least three skills that you believe a person in this occupation should have. Inventory your skills and compare them with these skills. Prepare at least two examples of how you have successfully used each of these skills.

WILL: Identify at least 3 traits that successful people in this occupation have. Prepare examples that illustrate that you possess these same traits.

HOW MUCH: Do your homework to determine what people in this occupation earn, especially at the company in question. Know what you are worth and what you are willing to accept. Don't be in the position of having to make that decision for the first time when the question is asked during the interview!

Assemble your materials

Organize the materials you'll be taking with you.

Use a clean folder for:

- Résumés - Have enough copies for the interviewer or interview team, plus one for yourself (even if you submitted your résumé electronically)
- Letters of recommendation/references
- Copies of your completed Sample Employment Application (see the **JobSearch Guide *Completed Sample Employment Application***).
- List of questions you want to ask

Memo pad

Business cards - You can print your own business cards using your computer. Office supply stores have blank business cards on which you can print your name, address, telephone number and e-mail address.

- Portfolio, if one is necessary for the job
- A pencil and two pens



Internet resources



www.themuse.com/advice/the-ultimate-interview-guide-30-prep-tips-for-job-interview-success-- Tips on preparing for the job interview.

www.job-hunt.org/recruiters/smart-job-interview-answers.shtml-- How to answer interview questions.

www.resumagic.com/interviews_preparation.html -- Information on how to prepare for the job interview

www.money-zine.com/Career-Development/Finding-a-job/Preparing-for-a-Job-Interview -- Six steps you should take to prepare for a job interview.