



Making the most of your interview

The interview is your opportunity to reveal the experience behind your resume. While many people get nervous about interviews, remember that the interview isn't a "test" that you need to pass—it's an opportunity for the hiring manager to get to know you, and for you to determine your interest in the position and the company.

Before the interview, thoroughly research the company. Investigate their Web site for information about their products and services, mission and/or vision statements, and recent press releases. Use search engines to find news about the organization, their customers, and their competition. Knowledge of the company demonstrates your interest, shows that you've done your homework, and may provide insights that allow you to better respond to interview questions.

Your resume will be the roadmap for the interview, so prepare in advance to verbally expand upon the skills and experiences listed in your resume.

Be ready to describe scenarios where you have had positive professional impact, and how these successes are evidence of your value to the new organization.

Interview basics

While many interviewees worry about not being able to answer tough questions, it's often the little details that undermine an interview. Be mindful of these items:

Punctuality

Arrive early. If you're unsure of the office location, drive there a day or two beforehand to ensure your timing is correct. Being late, searching for an address, and struggling to find parking adds unwanted stress to the situation.

Presentation

Dress conservatively, in clean, professional clothes. Even if you know that the company has a casual clothing policy, look sharp. You want to be remembered for what you said, not for what you wore.

Preparation

Know your interviewer's name, title, spelling, and pronunciation. Because you may be interviewing with two or more people, have extra copies of all relevant documents, including extra resumes, reference lists, portfolio material, and whatever else you may need.

The interview is a conversation

An interview isn't an examination with right and wrong answers—it's a conversation. Some candidates get so concerned about their own answers that they forget several important aspects of good conversations:

Answer the question asked

If you don't understand the question, ask for clarification. Talking at length about the wrong topic may give the impression you are trying to dodge the question.

Listen

Many candidates focus so much on themselves that they fail to pay attention to the interviewer. Make sure you listen closely—sometimes what is not said is just as important as what is said.

Ask questions

You are interviewing the company as much as they are interviewing you. Thoughtful questions demonstrate your interest in the company or job.

Behavior-based interviews

A common technique among hiring managers is asking behavior-based questions—also called situation, action, or result questions—during interviews. For example, the interviewer might ask, "Tell me about a difficult situation you've experienced on the job during the past year. Was it resolved? How?" Your task is to demonstrate that you have not only experienced such a dilemma, but you've successfully fulfilled your duties.