



# ACING JOB INTERVIEWS

## Prevent Stress by Being Prepared

Studies show that you only have 30 seconds to make an excellent first impression with an interviewer. Make the most of that time by being prepared before you walk through the door!

Having an impressive resume and dressing to look professional will only get you so far in your job search. You must also behave like a professional to really make an impact on employers. Making a positive impression begins from your first contact with an employer. Whether you make an employment inquiry by email or in person, it is crucial to present yourself in a professional manner.

An interview is your best opportunity to market yourself, so focus on your strengths and attributes without sounding boastful or arrogant. Be confident and clear that you want the job, and the reasons why you are a strong fit for the position and the company. Show your interest in the company by asking the interviewer questions. The homework you do ahead of time should help direct the questions you ask. Be positive, even if you discover that the role is different from your expectations.

## BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

**Research the Company & Position:** Researching the company and the position shows you take an interest. Organizations want to hire people who are passionate about their company's work and mission. Visit their company website and read recent articles about the organization. Be sure to know basic information such as what the company does and what qualifications the position requires.

**Prepare 3 to 5 Questions to Ask the Interviewer:** You will be asked the majority of the questions, but to show that you are engaged in the company ask the person interviewing you a few questions about the position and company.

**Practice Responding to the Most Common Interview Questions:** Having answers will keep you focused and your answers will flow with ease.

**Arrive Early:** It goes without saying that being early is much better than being late. Arrive 10 minutes early in case there is additional paperwork for you to fill out or you have issues finding parking. You can also use that time to mentally prepare for the interview. Get directions to the company well in advance of your interview to prevent getting lost and showing up late!

## **Be sure to bring the following with you to interviews:**

- ❑ **Employer Research:** Bring any notes on your research of the position and company.
- ❑ **Questions to Ask:** Have key questions prepared to ask that express your interest in the position.
- ❑ **Resume, Application, Personal Data Sheet:** Use these as references during your interview or to fill out any required paperwork.
- ❑ **Portfolio & Work Samples:** Bring a few samples that demonstrate your best work and abilities.
- ❑ **Letters of Recommendation & List of References:** Have these available if requested by the employer.
- ❑ **Notebook & Pen:** Use to jot down key points you'd like to address in a follow-up note or phone call.
- ❑ **Social Security Card, Driver's License/State Photo Identification, Certificates/Diplomas:** You may be asked to show your license/identification, driving record, social security card, or certifications/diplomas.
- ❑ **Extra Money:** Be prepared for unexpected expenses like gas, bus fare, or parking fees.
- ❑ **Confidence & Smile:** Interviews can be stressful. Try to relax, be confident, and smile!

## **DURING THE INTERVIEW**

**Make Appropriate Gestures & Eye Contact:** Have positive body language and good posture. Greet your interviewer with a warm smile and a firm handshake. Your posture, body language and eye contact can say a lot about your confidence and interest in the position. If you have difficulty making eye contact, especially in uncomfortable situations, practice your interview questions in a mirror and purposefully make eye contact with yourself.

**Keep Your Responses Relative:** Talking about a situation that doesn't relate to work or the position you're applying for can be distracting for both yourself and the Interviewer. Talk thoughtfully and practice your responses. If needed, take a couple of seconds to gather your thoughts after each question. An Interviewer will appreciate your clear response.

**Avoid Speaking Negatively about Previous Employers:** Criticizing a past employer, boss or co-worker can give the wrong impression to the Interviewer that you are negative and possibly a difficult employee. When speaking about a situation at your previous employer, spin negative situations into positives by focusing on your actions that made a positive difference.



## ENDING THE INTERVIEW

You've asked all the right questions, and provided strong answers. Now it's time to conclude the interview like a professional:

- Reiterate your interest in the position & company.
- Summarize your strengths & competencies in relation to the job requirements.
- Ask for your interviewer's business card so you can follow-up with them later.
- Thank the interviewer for his or her time and consideration.  
Be sure to smile & give a firm handshake.

## AFTER THE INTERVIEW

**Send a Follow-Up Letter:** Sending a note to thank the interviewer for taking their time to talk with you demonstrates you are considerate and genuinely interested in the position. Regardless if you email or send a handwritten note, follow-up letters always go a long way with interviewers and could differentiate you from competing candidates. Be sure to send it within 1-2 days of the interview.

### SAMPLE FOLLOW-UP LETTER

*Dear Jim,*

*Thank you for taking the time to meet with me and discuss your need for a Store Manager. I appreciate the opportunity to learn more about Shopper's Corner, and hear details about your goals for improving customer service. I am confident my skills and experience are an ideal match for the position, and look forward to the chance to join your team.*

*Best regards,*

*Marilyn Monroe*

*Marilyn Monroe*

# Most Common Interview Questions

Review these questions & write down your answers. Study the questions & your answers. Have someone else ask you the questions & practice answering them aloud. The more you practice answering these questions, the more confident you will feel during an interview!

- Tell me about yourself. (Keep it professional. They don't need to know about your personal life. Discuss your education, your skills & qualifications, what interests you about the industry you work in, why you chose to study a specific topic, what accomplishments are you most proud of, etc.)
  - What interests you about this position? Why do you want to work for our company?
  - What do you know about our company?
  - Why did you leave your last job? Why are you thinking about leaving your current job?
  - Tell me about your experience at \_\_\_\_\_. (Fill in previous employer or past position.)
  - What experience do you have doing \_\_\_\_? (Fill in the major responsibilities of the job.)
  - Tell me about your strengths. What are your weaknesses?
  - Tell me about a time when \_\_\_\_\_. (Fill in with situations relevant to the position. For instance: Tell me about when you had to take initiative ... you had to deal with a difficult customer ... you had to respond to a crisis ... you had to give difficult feedback to an employee...)
  - What salary are you looking for? (Give them a range. \$15-\$17/hour; \$42,000-\$44,000/year)
  - What questions do you have for me?
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## Questions You Should Ask

Select 3-5 questions to ask when talking with hiring managers:

- What will be the start date for this position?
- Is this a new position or will I be replacing someone?
- When do you plan to make a hiring decision?
- What are the work hours for the position? Do you have a set schedule or will the schedule vary from week-to-week?
- Who would I report to in this position? Who will be my supervisor?
- What potential is there for advancement in this role?
- How would you describe a typical day in this role?
- How many employees work here?
- What do you like about working here?
- Thinking back to the person you've seen do this job best, what made their performance so outstanding?
- Are there any reservations you have about my fit for the position?