

Interview Preparation Tips



Before the Interview:

(Updated: 14-Aug-09)

Prepare for the Interview

- Preparation is vital to a successful interview.
- Practice your response to typical interview questions
- Re-assess your resume. Make sure it is relevant to this job. Make sure you can speak about each accomplishment and job mentioned. Be prepared to discuss other experiences and examples that might be relevant to this employer.
- Research the company online; you can find information in the About Us and Press sections of most company websites.
- It is good to know about any new initiatives the company is launching especially if the job you are applying for would be involved with that new initiative.
- Prepare questions about the company or the position.

Remember, *"Failing to prepare is preparing to fail."* --- Ben Franklin

Dress Professionally

Be on time

Make sure you know the name of the person you are supposed to meet.

Bring:

- Have your list of references with you (name of reference, name of company they work for, phone number, email address) but only provide this list if they ask you for it.
- Additional copies of your resume.
- Questions you want to ask the interviewer.
- Pad of paper and pen (for taking notes)

During the Interview:

- Maintain eye contact
- Keep answers brief unless the interviewer asks you for more detail.
- Listen carefully to the interviewers questions

Your preparedness will be demonstrated by your ability to emphasize these traits:

- Be enthusiastic. By displaying a positive, upbeat attitude, you will demonstrate within the first few seconds that you are a "go-getter" who will be a positive asset to the company.
- Be likeable. People want to work with and hire people they like, who will get along with others easily.
- Be determined. It needs to be clear that you want this job more than anyone else does.
- Be informed. It is important that you know about the company, and what they are going to expect from you.

After the interview:

- Send any follow up information you promised.
- Send a thank you email or note to the interviewer.

Question	The Employer is looking for:	You might:
<p>1. Tell me about yourself</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your communication skills • Your ability to get to the point concisely • Whether you possess the key skills and experience s/he is looking for. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This should be a quick 2-3-minute snapshot of who you are and why you are the best person for the position. • Highlight what you think the employer is looking for and what you have done that meets those needs. • Use an example or two to back up why you are the best candidate ask if they would like more details (Always refer to an example when you have the chance) • Example: I am very interested in Sales. I have had a variety of experiences selling various products . I love interacting with customers and figuring out the right approach to take to convince them to make a purchase. I am very interested in using my skills at XYZ company because you are well respected and a growing company.
<p>2. What would you say are your strengths and weaknesses?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What you are really good at so that s/he knows if this is a good match. • What you may list as a weakness that could be a warning sign not to hire you. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on strengths and convert weaknesses into strengths or mention an area of improvement that you have already addressed in your career ; you always want to focus on the positive in the interview. • Example: My greatest weakness in the past has been delegation. I would take it upon myself to do too many smaller projects. I quickly realized that this was causing time delays and not efficient. It also was not helping to develop my team. If I assigned each person several of these small projects, clearly stated the expectations, and then followed up with them to monitor progress, I was able to manage much more efficiently and actually accomplish a greater amount of work. • Example (converting a weakness to a strength): People have often referred to me as quiet. But actually I like to listen to hear all of the points of view being expressed so that I have a good understanding of the issues before I express my own opinion and I find that this makes my opinions more valuable.

Question	The Employer is looking for:	You might:
<p>3. What major challenges did you face in your last job?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your problem solving skills Initiative – do you see situations that need to be changed and address them? The kind of contribution s/he can expect that you will make to the company. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Think of one or two concrete situations in which you faced challenges and developed a way to overcome the challenge. Example: We received a huge order that we did not expect to get and it needed very quick turnaround. Two of my co-workers had longstanding plans to be on vacation. I met with my team and went over what needed to be done to get the order out on time and whether we could get the work done and still be able to honor the two vacations. The team rose to the occasion, we all pitched in and worked nights for a week to meet the deadline. The two employees were very grateful (and are now even more loyal) to the team and we felt good about all being involved in solving the problem. I think I learned that open communication, clear directions, good planning, and trusting team members all produce both short and long-term positive effects. Our fast action resulted in this first time client placing subsequent orders with us.
<p>4. Why did you leave your last job?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employer is looking for any possible red flags about performance, ability to get along with people, ability to work well with supervisor Employers do understand though that there are times when there are issues at work that you cannot correct and can only deal with by moving on. Employers are looking for professionalism. Whatever you say about your previous employer, your employer will assume that you could say the same about him/her. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be honest but diplomatic and professional. It is never wise to blame other people or to disparage other companies. Present the circumstances in the most positive light. If you were terminated, mention a positive outcome of the termination, such as it provided time to return to school or to find work that is more suitable to your skill set.
<p>5. What would you do if...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How well the applicant listens, puts together all of the facts, thinks through solutions, How well the applicant can think on his or her feet. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make sure you understand the parameters You don't need a solution just a plan to get to a solution so you could say that you would interview so and so, gather all of the facts, and get back to whomever within x days. You could also discuss using the skills and resources of people who have had this experience. You could mention a time when you actually encountered this type of issue and what action you took. Be brief.

Question	The Employer is looking for:	You might:
6. What do you know about our company?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whether you took the time to research the company, which shows real interest in getting the job. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research some information about the company before going on the interview You will need some key facts such as: I know that you (explain what they do) and mention a recent accomplishment or new initiative or positive fact about the company such as you are among the top 3 engineering firms in the country.
7. Why should we hire you?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confidence A summary of your key assets for this position – not in general 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relate your reasons to the goals of the company Have 3 of your strongest qualifications for the job ready Example: XYZ company prides itself on providing the best customer service in their field. I have 6 years of increasingly responsible experience with customers; I received 3 promotions within those 6 years because of the quality of my work; I have the personality, the skills, the dedication and the commitment to surpass your customer service goals.
8. What were you doing during this period of time? Explain a gap in work history).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Red flags – was there something keeping you from the workforce that will continue if the employer hires you and affect the quality of your work? The level of risk they face if they hire you. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be honest. If possible show that the time out of the workforce enhanced your skills or marketability in some way (for example, this may have been through course work at a college or volunteer work) Reassure the employer that the issue is over and dealt with and will not interfere with your work.
9. Why do you want to work here?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desire to work for this company in particular which would indicate loyalty, dedication. Knowledge of the company 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Similar to the ‘<i>why should we hire you</i>’ question, you want to relate your goals to the goals of the company and indicate that you are knowledgeable about the company.
10. What are your career goals or where do you see yourself in 1-3 – 5 years?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you can think long term If you are a planner If you are ambitious and anxious to further your career – which could be a sign that you are a hard worker, highly motivated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relate your answer to this company. The employer is not actually asking about long term personal goals. Mention that you want to gain additional experience in something or further develop your x skills and then move either up or over to a different department You want to continue to grow and learn with the company. The key is to focus on your attainable goals and indicate what you are planning to do to reach those goals, in a way that involves this company.

Question	The Employer is looking for:	You might:
<p>11. What are your salary requirements ?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of money you have made in your last few jobs; • This information will be verified with your current and previous employers during a reference check • Employer wants to know if your expectations are within the amount of money s/he is prepared to pay for this position. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideally, you would not discuss salary until the employer makes a job offer. • Tell the employer that your requirements are flexible and depend upon the entire compensation package. • Ask the employer/interviewer if they could tell you the salary range for the position. • You could provide a range of the salary level you are interested in and if asked your current salary, you need to provide that information honestly. • How you handle salary negotiations depends on your goals. You may be willing to take less money or to stay at your current rate of pay for the experience this job will provide, or you may want a pay increase.
<p>12. Do you have any questions for me?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your level of preparedness for the interview • Your level of professionalism • The types of things that concern you or that you are focusing on about the job or the company. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Come prepared with questions. Some of them may have been answered during the interview. Some categories of questions could include: • Questions you have about the specific job – who it reports to, where the previous person went. • Questions about what it is like to work for the company. • Follow up questions – to who should I send references (if they have asked you for them). When will you make a decision. When would you want the new person to start.

Interview Preparation Websites

All-encompassing Interview Preparation Sites

<http://www.best-interview-strategies.com/index.html>

<http://www.prejobinterview.com/>

<http://www.job-interview.net/>

http://www.quintcareers.com/job_interview_preparation.html

<http://www.jobinterviewquestions.org/questions/interview-questions.asp>

Potential Interview Questions

<http://www.collegegrad.com/jobsearch/Mastering-the-Interview/Ten-Tough-Interview-Questions-and-Ten-Great-Answers/>

(Ten Tough Interview Questions and Ten Great Answers)

<http://www.jobinterviewquestions.org/questions/interview-questions.asp>

(Numerous types of interview questions, specific types, and for specific jobs)

http://www.quintcareers.com/interview_questions.html

(Traditional Employment Interview Questions)

<http://www.employmentdigest.net/2009/03/common-job-interview-questions-and-the-best-answers/>

(Collection of several links for various types of questions that could be asked)

<http://jobsearch.about.com/od/interviewquestionsanswers/a/interviewquest.htm> - provides many interview questions, suggested responses and examples of responses.

Tips for Phone Interviews

<http://www.worktree.com/newsletter/telephone-interview-preparation.html>

(general tips)

http://www.quintcareers.com/phone_interview_etiquette.html

(Phone interview etiquette)

<http://publicspeaker.quickanddirtytips.com/Phone-Interviews-Tips-Mistakes.aspx>

(Six phone interview mistakes)

The Interview Follow-up Letter

http://www.prejobinterview.com/Thank_You_Note_after_Job_Interview.html

http://www.prejobinterview.com/Job_Interview_Letters.html