

Direct Hire Associates

Interview Guide

Interview Checklist

- Did you research the job, company, and industry for which you are interviewing?
- Did you practice answering questions about your professional qualities and past work experience?
- Did you print driving directions to your interview site?
- Do you have several extra copies of your resume prepared?
- Do you have a notebook, two pens, and a folder or small, professional bag?
- Do you have a short list of appropriate questions for your interviewer?
- Make sure you also have all the necessary information with you to completely fill out an application at the meeting, if requested.

Transform stress to success

It goes without saying that in the business world, there are few occasions as acutely stressful as an interview. However, this doesn't have to be the case!

The purpose of the interview

- Put a face to the company and bring life to their open opportunity.
- Gather information about the position and employer.
- Evaluate the work environment, and potential co-workers.
- Determine if position is suitable – “Do I want to work here?” Don't be too critical of any one individual in the organization. Try to have an eye for the overall meeting and the vibe that you get from the interview experience and the company in general.

Shift your paradigm

Negativity and misplaced expectations can make a challenging interview impossible. A successful interview starts with a positive outlook, realistic goals, and few expectations.

- Shift your mindset away from one that makes you afraid of making mistakes and into one that makes you proud to demonstrate who you are professionally.
- Imagine the interview as a conversation. People hire people they like and with whom they can communicate.
- Beyond the technical, the interviewer is trying to assess if you are someone that they want to work with on a daily basis and for the foreseeable future!

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Pre-interview work is the best way to reduce your interview stress and perform at your best. So take the time to prepare – with caution toward over preparation. You won't know everything, and that is ok; sometimes "I don't know" is a great answer.

Know yourself:

- Know your strengths. Find a professional quality that you want to emphasize throughout your interview and don't be afraid to mention it more than once.
- Know your goals. How does the position you are interviewing for help your overall career goals or current situation? Demonstrate how it logically fits who you are today.
- Know your resume and experience. Be prepared to discuss past work in a clear and positive manner. Do not speak in theory; speak from your specific experience.

Prepare yourself:

- Obtain a copy of the job description, if available. Take the time to understand and be able to articulate why and how you meet each of the requirements.
- Use the employer's website. Be able to discuss their industry and competitors broadly, but don't think you are an expert in their business from just reading their website.
- Research logistics: driving directions, commute time, and parking availability. Ask your contact at the company about particulars without being overly specific or anxious. Don't ask 300 questions when you only need the answers to a few and be ready to wing it, if you need to.
- Develop a list of appropriate questions that reflect your research and ask the ones that will help you decide if you want the job. You will be judged as much by the questions you ask as the things you say.

The night before:

- Call and confirm date, time, and location of interview.
- Trust your preparation, but focus on the presentation.
- Remind yourself that your interview is an opportunity, not an obstacle.

Your presentation is what the interviewer evaluates, so it must be the best you have. Your resume, credentials, and experience are nice, but in the interview you must speak for yourself. Right or wrong the interview is a performance, and there is only one take.

Pre-interview:

- Arrive only 5-10 minutes before your scheduled time; no more, no less.
- Be courteous and polite to every person you meet. You have no idea who you might bump into; this includes the parking lot, elevator, and lobby.
- Relax mentally and remember to breathe. Worrying at this point will not help you, you need to stay in the present and stay focused while interviewing.

During the interview:

- Be employer-centered when you answer questions. If you can appeal directly to the company's needs, you will seem more suited for the role. If you have experience that relates to their particular situation, take the time to highlight the similarities/parallels.
- Be aware of and control distracting verbal and nonverbal quirks (no pen twirling/clicking, no chair wiggling, or paper shuffling). Don't distract the interviewer.
- Follow your interviewer's lead. Be aware of body language, pacing, and attitude. Then, do your best to mirror the interviewer's manner. The best way to convince someone that you will fit with the company culture is to demonstrate that you are like them.
- If the interviewer asks a question, answer it. Give them what they want when they want it.
- Listen. If you are not actively trying to listen during an interview, you are more likely to dominate the conversation. You have two ears and one mouth, use them proportionately.

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Avoid Interview Pitfalls

There are too many easily avoidable reasons that people perform poorly in interviews. Take some time to make sure that you are not one of those who fail!

- Avoid an untidy personal appearance – avoid wrinkled attire, excess fragrance, uncombed hair, etc.
- Avoid unclear answers regarding salary history, reasons for leaving, or your ideal next position.
- Avoid a lack of genuine interest or enthusiasm in the position or the company itself.
- Avoid an unwillingness to start in a role that is considered a lateral move from your current position. If you're looking for a better job, *and* a raise, *and* a promotion – you might want to rethink your search.
- Avoid a negative attitude regarding your search or anything about your prior experience.
- Avoid a lack of eye contact – it will make the interviewer feel uncomfortable.
- Avoid an incomplete or sloppy application. If your handwriting is bad, take your time.
- Avoid being late for an interview. This is totally unacceptable. If you think for any reason that you are going to be late, you must call at least 10 to 15 minutes prior to your interview time.

Surviving Unconventional Interviews

Although we agree that anything but an in-person, one-on-one interview is less than ideal, sometimes a phone, group, or panel interview is a necessary evil and/or part of a particular organization's process. We really don't like these, and you won't either, but you need to embrace these as part of a process and don't ever let your discontentment show.

Telephone interviews

Due to their expediency, phone interviews can be an easy way for companies to assess your verbal communication skills. If you are asked to do a phone interview please remember that the goal is to get the in-person interview. Do not try too hard, or think you are going to get the job from a phone interview. This is merely the first step in the process. During the phone interview you should be on a landline, have a printed copy of your resume in front of you, and be in a quiet location where you will not be interrupted. Also, during your phone interview, stand up – it sounds weird, but trust us: you'll sound better.

Group interviews

Employers may interview several candidates at a time, or place candidates in a social setting with the other candidates to observe behavior. The purposes of a group interview is to expedite the interview process, to see how each candidate works in an team setting, and to see which candidates display leadership in group settings. For best results, keep in mind that the employer is always evaluating you on your ability to be a leader and a team player. Be careful not to confuse leadership with control. Just because you may come in personal contact with some of your competition, do not be intimidated by it. There will always be competition for any job opportunity that you interview for, whether or not you know it.

Panel interviews

A panel is the reverse of the group interview. A single candidate meets with several interviewers from the employer at the same time. For these, be sure to make strong eye contact with each interviewer and don't let the "outnumbered" feeling shake your poise when answering questions. Address the person who asked the question 80% of the time, and use the other 20% to connect with the other people in the room.