

Preparing for an Interview

There are many things you will need to prepare before going to an interview.

- Pick out a professional outfit to wear (no hats, sandals, jeans, or shorts)
- Get directions to the company ahead of time
- Review the job duties of the position and learn as much as you can about the company
- Arrive 10 minutes early

At the interview:

- Do not chew gum
- Introduce yourself with a smile and a firm handshake
- Make eye contact with the interviewer when answering questions
- Speak confidently about the things you can do and are good at
- Speak slowly and make sure to breathe

12 Typical Questions and Answers for a Successful Interview

1. What can you tell me about yourself?

This should be a short answer. Include significant qualities such as: what year in school you're in, work and volunteer experience, things you are passionate about, and why you're looking for a job.

2. Why do you want to work here?

Be prepared to tell the interviewer what you have learned about the company. Tell them what you can do for them.

3. What training and experience have prepared you for this job?

This information should be based off of what you have put on your resume or application. Give specific examples of work, projects, volunteer experience, or extracurricular activities that relate to the position.

4. What are your strengths? What are your weaknesses?

Only talk about one work-related weakness and mention how you are working to improve it. It is more important to talk positively about your strengths.

5. What can you bring to this company?

This question is really asking, "What sets you apart from others being interviewed?" Focus on your skills and abilities that you can bring to the position.

6. Where do you see yourself in five years?

The interviewer wants to make sure that you have goals for the future, so try to give some general information about future career goals.

7. How well do you work with other people?

Focus on positive team experiences or times where you have had to work with different types of people. Try to give some examples when possible.

8. How well do you work under pressure?

Many jobs require that you handle multiple tasks. Try to give examples where you multi-tasked or when you effectively made a deadline.

9. What are your hobbies?

Well-roundedness is another aspect that they interviewer is looking at when asking this question. Your hobbies don't have to revolve completely around the position that you are applying for, so be honest.

10. Why are you leaving your present company?

Try to focus on the positive. "I'm looking for something that falls more in line with my interests." "I want to learn more about ____." "I want to work full-time and my position is only part-time." Do not mention pay, supervisors, or coworkers.

11. Why should I hire you?

The interviewer wants to know why they should pick you over the other people they are interviewing and why you are a good fit for the position. Emphasize your skills, motivation, enthusiasm, and any other abilities that apply to the position

12. When are you available to start? What days and hours can you work?

Be honest about when you are able and willing to work. If you know getting to work by a certain time will be a close squeeze at times, it's better to play on the safe side and start a half hour later. Repeated tardiness may lose you your job.

Some Popular Behavior and Situation-Based Questions:

Tell me about a time when you...

- worked effectively under pressure
- handled a difficult situation with a co-worker
- were creative in solving a problem
- were unable to complete a project on time
- anticipated potential problems and developed preventative measures
- were tolerant of an opinion that was different from yours
- were disappointed in your behavior
- had to deal with an angry customer

Keep It Positive

Make sure that you answers are as positive (but truthful) as possible. Even in the case of negative situations, try to end it with a positive twist (ex: "I learned my lesson and didn't make the mistake again"). Describe problems as challenges and focus on solutions instead of the difficulties

At the end of the interview:

- Ask a good question. The interviewer will most likely ask you if you have any questions at the end of the interview. Make sure that you ask at least one question, as it shows that you are sincerely interested in the position. Questions you can ask are: "What have you enjoyed most about working here?" "Where do you see the company in 5 years?" "What do you consider an excellent employee?"
- If they do not already tell you, ask when they will be making their final hiring decision
- Thank the employer for the interview and tell them that you look forward to hearing back from him or her
- Shake their hand again before you leave, preferably while you're thanking them
- Send them a thank you letter for their time. This will help them to remember you