

Job interviews are designed to assess:

- (1) Your professionalism (courteous, honest, no exaggerations or half-truths)
- (2) Your fit for the job (applicable skills/personality fit into the firm's culture)
- (3) Your interest in the job

Interview Tips

(1) **Prepare** (See the "More on Preparing" section below for additional details)

- a. Research the company and role you are interviewing for
- b. **KNOW YOUR RESUME:** dates, qualifications, experiences, and achievements. Practice out loud walking someone through your resume: the sequence of jobs/internships with relevant dates.
- c. Plan out your outfit a week in advance
- d. Plan the route to the interview and insure timeliness
- e. Bring several copies of your resume and a notepad IN A LEATHER FOLIO to the interview

(2) **Dress for success**

- a. Dress in a suit even if the dress code is business casual
- b. Wear professional accessories, not big jewelry or showy clothes
- c. Focus on hygiene: clean nails, neat hair, shower, not too much perfume/cologne, deodorant, and makeup that is appropriate

(3) **Punctuality**

- a. Be 5-10 minutes early (park 15 minutes before so you have time to go up the elevator, etc.)
- b. Timeliness for the interview is a predictor of timeliness for the job
- c. Stand up and greet the interviewer when you first meet (in the lobby)

(4) **Good Handshake**

- a. Firm, not limp, not bone-crushing, and definitely DRY handshake
- b. Ask for the interviewers BUSINESS CARD and provide one of yours.
- c. Ask for permission to take notes.
- d. **Often, your interview sheet with names and titles are provided in advance.** If this is provided, then research each person conducting interviews (if possible) and form a few questions unique to that person's position. If such a list is not provided, then, do (e) below:
- e. **Ask the first person interviewing you to provide an outline of your day, including the schedule and who will be interviewing you. This person could give you some good information which could help you interview well with some people on the schedule. Take notes. But, DON'T ask for advice; just let this person answer your question.**

(5) **Keep Good Eye Contact**

- a. Eye Contact reflects Honesty, Interest, Focus

Prepared by: Department of Economics & Economics Leadership Council

(6) Watch your Body Language

- a. 80% of communication is non-verbal
- b. Smile to connect with interviewer, when appropriate
- c. **TURN OFF YOUR PHONE OR LEAVE IT IN YOUR CAR.** If your cell phone rings, apologize and turn it off without looking at who is calling

(7) Sell Yourself

- a. CONFIDENT but HUMBLE

(8) Concise, Clear answers

- a. NO nervous rambling – preparation, practice and research will help

(9) Listen to the Interviewer

- a. Always listen, concentrate on what the interviewer is saying so you can give the answers that speak to their questions
- b. When answering a question that you do not understand, ask questions if necessary, but too many questions looks like you are avoiding answering their question.
- c. **When the interviewer asks if you have any questions, this is your opportunity to gain a significant edge. Organize specific questions targeted to each person who is interviewing you based on your research into their roles and responsibilities (assuming such a list has been provided in advance) WHAT WILL YOU ASK TO GET THE INTERVIEWER TALKING? Research the industry and competitors and products. Get the interviewer talking about the competition, new products, product direction, etc., that are SPECIFIC AND RELEVANT to the company. DO NOT just ask “how do you compete”. Do enough research that you know what to ask, and ask good questions that get the interviewer talking. Also ask follow-up questions without interrupting. NEVER INTERRUPT. Because they are talking and because you asked such good questions, it will give the interviewer the impression that you know a bit more than you do and set you apart from the competition. ALSO, PEOPLE ENJOY TALKING ABOUT THEMSELVES, SO THEY WILL REFLECT THAT YOU HAD A “GREAT” INTERVIEW IF THEY DID A LOT OF THE TALKING.**
- d. **NO DEAD SPACE: Not all interviewers are good communicators, so be ready to pick up the slack and ask another question if the interview seems to stall out. The impression of the interview and the energy of the interview will reflect on YOU no matter whose fault it was.**

****END WITH A SMILE, HANDSHAKE, AND ASK WHAT IS NEXT IN THE PROCESS****

Ask when is a good time to follow up and with whom.

Send a thank you letter in the MAIL.

Before the Interview

PREPARE, PREPARE, PREPARE!

(1) Prepare:

- a. IF YOU WERE THE EMPLOYER, WHAT WOULD YOU BE LOOKING FOR IN AN EMPLOYEE?
- b. Consider prepping with a friend for a mock interview. Brainstorm on what questions might be asked and work to structure the best answers. Don't forget to THINK OUTSIDE the BOX. Companies like Google are known to throw out some head scratchers. See Interview Videos list at the end of this document.
- c. Learn about the company, what it does, how it competes, who it competes with, and how your desired job fits into this. You will use this research in answering typical interview questions such as: Tell me about yourself? Why should we hire you? Why do you want this job? Do you have any questions for us/me (about our company)?
- d. From this research, write down the company's mission, vision, core values, and relevant business practices.
- e. Determine the company's goals for the position
- f. Match your skill set with the job duties and articulate shared values
- g. Prepare and outline your answers to typical interview questions, especially the most difficult ones (listed below).
- h. REMEMBER: YOU ARE NOT ALONE! Do any professors, business contacts, friends or family know anything about this company, the industry the company is in? Primary research like this is also very valuable, but NOT a substitute for all the work listed above.

(2) Prepare your REFERENCES

- a. DO NOT write "references available upon request". Everyone knows they can ask for references.
- b. DO call your references and ask their permission to use them as a reference and discuss the position you are seeking.
- c. If a reference seems hesitant, thank them but do not use them as a reference because the potential employer will also pick up on this hesitance.
- d. RECONFIRM their preferred method of contact (office or cell), and their phone number, address, and email address. They will need to speak to your potential employer, so it needs to be a phone number.

(3) **Plan an outfit** (AND backup outfit) ONE WEEK PRIOR, so you have time to sew buttons or take clothes to the dry cleaner. Have a back-up outfit in your car in case the unexpected happens (spilled coffee, food, ink, ripping, etc)

(4) **Look at directions**, map the route to the office online, and plan your departure so you can arrive 10 minutes early. **If it's at a time or place where traffic can be hard to predict, plan to arrive at a nearby coffee shop an hour before and re-read your notes you have prepared for the interview.**

Prepare for Difficult Interview Questions

(1) Tell me about yourself

- a. MOST IMPORTANT: keep your answers to open-ended and vague questions CLEAR and CONCISE!
- b. Open with one sentence that says where I'm from as you never know how that might connect with the interviewee. Highlight anything extremely unique about you (ie I was raised in Korea, am the oldest of 9 children and started working fixing PCs at age 10.)
- c. Start with an overview of best qualifications matching the company's needs
- d. Run through jobs/internships/relevant volunteer work you have held, following the structure of your resume
- e. Give examples of achievements or skills you have gained that are relevant to the companies needs

(2) Why did you leave your last job?

- a. Focus on Positives: finished mission; needed to further career
- b. Do not badmouth previous job/employer

(3) What are your weaknesses?

- a. NEVER SAY: "I TRY/WORK TOO HARD" or "I DON'T HAVE ANY" (avoiding the question, somewhat dishonest, and not humble)
- b. Avoid personality flaws (they are hard to change)
- c. Be honest, pick something you have already improved on and discuss steps you have taken to improve it and how it has improved.
- d. EXAMPLE: I do not have much experience in team management, although I have managed small teams before, so I am excited by the opportunity to manage larger teams in this role.
- e. EXAMPLE: Although I have managed my personal portfolio for X years, and am very passionate about researching stocks, I know there is much more to managing money professionally, including reporting and daily pricing, and I look forward to gaining that experience.

(4) Why do you want the job? Why should we hire you?

- a. Research the company, its mission and values and business practices
- b. Articulate shared values
- c. Match your skill sets with job duties
- d. Communicate (verbally and non-verbally) motivation and interest
- e. THIS IS ABOUT HOW YOU CAN HELP THE COMPANY ACHIEVE ITS GOALS, NOT HOW THE COMPANY CAN HELP YOU ACHIEVE YOURS!

(5) What is your salary expectation?

- a. AVOID saying a specific number
- b. The role, responsibilities and being part of a team matter most to me, and I am sure my salary will be commensurate with the role and the skills I have.
- c. Because my past positions were internships/part-time while I was still seeking my undergraduate degree, my past salary history is not relevant to what I am seeking now.
- d. Understand that you do not want to eliminate yourself from the running by giving the employer the view that you are unattainable, or give an impression that you think that you should be paid more than they can pay, etc. The current environment is of scarce jobs and many job seekers. Be careful with your message!
- e. If really pushed, you can mention a past salary number, if its relevant to this current role. Try not to do this. Smile. Keep repeating varying versions of (b) above.

(6) Where do you see yourself in 5 years?

- a. Connect with the current role, the company's mission and values, and fast-forward 5 years (ie Senior Manager running a team, generating revenues/performance for the company, managing a portfolio, etc.).
- b. Do NOT say you want to leave the company and start your own company. Why hire you if you are already planning to leave?

(7) Do you have any questions (about us, the company)?

- a. The answer is NOT "no"
- b. Do not ask the interviewer personal questions (his/her salary)
- c. Questions should be positive, NOT how much travel, how many hours
- d. Your research will have led you to some questions that demonstrate your interest in the company and the fact that you spent time researching their business.

Illegal Interview Questions

(from www.jobinterviewquestions.org)

(Try answering by saying that you would rather keep the focus of the interview on the job, not your personal life)

Age

Age based inquiries should be avoided because state law prohibits discrimination against persons age 40 and older. An age inquiry may be made to ensure a person is “old enough” to work for the job being filled, or if the job is among the few where age discrimination is permitted such as physically dangerous or hazardous work or driving a school bus.

Example of Illegal Questions

How old are you?

When is your birthday?

In what year were you born?

In what year did you graduate from college/high school?

Possible Legal Alternatives

Are you over the age of 18?

Can you, after employment, provide proof of age?

Marital/ Family Status (often alludes to sexual orientation)

The purpose of these “family” inquiries is to explore what some employers believe is a common source of absenteeism and tardiness. Typically, these questions are asked only of women making the inquiry clearly unlawful. However, even if such inquiries are made of both men and women, the questions may still be suspect. Such information has been used to discriminate against women because of society’s general presumption that they are the primary care givers. If the employer’s concern is regular work attendance, a better question would be, “Is there anything that would interfere with regular attendance at work?”

Example of Illegal Questions

Are you married?

Do you have a permanent partner?

With whom do you live?

How many children do you have?

Are you pregnant?

Do you expect to become pregnant or to have a family? When? How many children will you have?

What are your child care arrangements?

Possible Legal Alternatives

Would you be willing to relocate if necessary?

Travel is an important part of the job. Do you have any restrictions on your ability to travel?

Do you have responsibilities or commitments that will prevent you from meeting specified work schedules?

Do you anticipate any absences from work on a regular basis? If so, please explain the circumstances.

Personal

Minimum height and weight requirements are unlawful if they screen out a disproportionate number of women or minorities. Unless the employer can show that a height or weight requirement is essential for job performance, such inquiries should be avoided.

Example of Illegal Questions

How tall are you?

How much do you weight?

(Questions about height and weight are always illegal unless it can be proven that there are minimum requirements to do the job.)

Possible Legal Alternatives

Are you able to lift a 50-pound weight and carry it 100 yards, as that is part of the job?

Disabilities

Inquiries about a person's disability, health or worker's compensation histories are unlawful if they imply or express a limitation based on disability. Under the federal Americans with Disabilities Act, any inquiry at the pre-employment stage, which would likely require an applicant to disclose a disability, is unlawful. Employers must avoid such inquiries or medical examinations before making a bona fide job offer.

However, an employer may inquire about an applicant's ability to perform certain job functions and, within certain limits, may conduct tests of all applicants to determine if they can perform essential job functions, with or without an accommodation.

Example of Illegal Questions

Do you have any disabilities?

Have you had any recent illness or operations?

Please complete this medical questionnaire.

What was the date of your last physical exam?

How's your family's health?

When did you lose your eyesight/ leg/ hearing/ etc.?

Possible Legal Alternatives

Are you able to perform the essential functions of this job with or without reasonable accommodations? (Legal if the interviewer thoroughly described the job.)

Will you be able to carry out in a safe manner all job assignments necessary for this position?

Are you able to lift a 50-pound weight and carry it 100 yards, as that is part of the job?

NB: Medical exams are legal AFTER an offer has been extended; results should be held strictly confidential except for reasons of safety.

National Origin/ Citizenship

Inquiries about a person's citizenship or country of birth are unlawful and imply discrimination on the basis of national origin. A lawfully immigrated alien may not be discriminated against on the basis of citizenship. The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 require employers to verify the legal status and right to work of all new hires. Employers should not ask applicants to state their national origin, but should ask if they have a legal right to work in America, and explain that verification of that right must be submitted after the decision to hire has been made. To satisfy verification requirements, employers should ask all new hires for documents establishing both identity and work authorization.

Example of Illegal Questions

Where were you/your parents born?

What is your native language?

What is your country of citizenship?

Are you a US citizen?

Possible Legal Alternatives

Do you have any language abilities that would be helpful in doing this job? (Legal if language ability is directly relevant to job performance.)

Are you authorized to work in the United States?

Arrest Record

There are laws that prohibits inquiries about past arrest records but permits consideration of a current arrest. If an applicant is under arrest for an offense that is substantially related to the job, an employer may suspend judgment until the case is resolved, advises the applicant to reapply when the charge is resolved, or refuse to employ the applicant. A current employee who is arrested may be suspended if the charge is substantially related to the job.

An employer may not refuse to employ or discharge a person with a conviction record unless the circumstances of the conviction substantially relate to the circumstances of the job. If an inquiry about convictions is made, the employer should add a clarifier, "A conviction will not necessarily disqualify you from employment. It will be considered only as it may relate to the job you are seeking". Anyone who evaluates conviction record information should be knowledgeable about how such data may be used.

Example of Illegal Questions

Have you ever been arrested?

Possible Legal Alternatives

Have you ever been convicted of ___ crime? (Legal if the crime is reasonably relevant to the job; e.g. embezzlement for a banking job.)

Military Service

It is unlawful to discriminate against someone because of membership in the National Guard, a state defense force or another state or Federal Reserve unit. Questions relevant to experience or training received in the military or to determine eligibility for any veteran's preference required by law are acceptable.

Example of Illegal Questions

What type of discharge did you receive?

Possible Legal Alternatives

In what branch of the Armed Forces did you serve?

What type of training or education did you receive in the military?

Affiliations

Example of Illegal Questions

What clubs or social organizations do you belong to?

Do you go to church?

Possible Legal Alternatives

List any professional or trade groups or other organizations that you belong to that you consider relevant to your ability to perform this job.

Race/Color/Religion

This question may discourage an applicant whose religion prohibits Saturday or Sunday work. If a question about weekend work is asked, the employer should indicate that a reasonable effort is made to accommodate religious beliefs or practices. An employer not required to make an accommodation if doing so would create an undue hardship on the business.

Example of Illegal Questions

All questions are illegal.

Possible Legal Alternatives

Are you available for work on Saturday and Sunday?

Interview Videos

12 Top Tips for Successful Interview:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XvuZY3DWtIY>

Top 10 Interview Tips (Part 1 of 3):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YPXE4RqdqqM>

Top 10 Interview Tips (Part 2 of 3):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eR6qrTyqLNk&feature=related>

Top 10 Interview Tips (Part 3 of 3):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mGxETcWsILY&feature=related>

Interviews Do's and Don'ts:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S1ucmfPOBV8>

5 Mistakes to Avoid:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=opYjNr_4A5k&feature=related

Off the Wall Actual Interview Questions asked at Google to help you think creatively:

<http://www.businessinsider.com/15-google-interview-questions-that-will-make-you-feel-stupid-2009-11#how-many-golf-balls-can-fit-in-a-school-bus-1>

Recommended Reading

How to Win Friends and Influence People by Dale Carnegie (Paperback - Apr 27, 2010)