

INTERVIEWING BASICS

For nearly every job that you pursue, even your first job as a teenager, you will be required to participate in an interview. You may also be asked to participate in an interview as part of admittance to a specialized program in college or other post-high school opportunity, as part of a scholarship or grant, or other opportunity that may come your way. Understanding what interviews are, knowing what to expect, and being prepared will help ensure that you are able to present your best self in any interview.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Interviews are used to assess whether or not someone is a good candidate for the position or program they've applied for. The style and type of interview and questions asked will vary depending on the company or opportunity, but generally, they have a similar structure and require similar preparation.

What is an interview?

An interview is a formal meeting where a person is questioned, consulted, or evaluated by another person. You will be asked to answer questions that highlight your skills and knowledge, or qualifications for a particular job or position. Interviews are often conducted by one person, but it is not uncommon to meet with multiple interviewers at once. Interviews may take place in person, over the phone, via a video call, or even as part of a small group. You may also be asked to participate in multiple rounds of interviews to ensure you are the best candidate.

Before the Interview

Prior to an interview you will complete an application and, if you are up for consideration, you will be contacted by a representative, recruiter, or hiring manager. You will be asked to provide a resumé, cover letter, and possibly a portfolio or other supporting materials to be used as an initial evaluation of whether or not you are a good candidate for the position or opportunity.

If they determine you might be a good fit, you'll be asked to come in for a formal interview or for a phone or video call. If they ask to speak with you before inviting you in for an interview, this likely means that they want to know a bit more about you before moving forward. In this case, be prepared to answer general questions about your experience and background.



During the Interview

Every company and interview experience will be slightly different, but generally speaking, you can expect a similar process. When you arrive (10-15 minutes early) for your interview, check in with the secretary or reception desk. You will be asked to wait in a waiting room or reception area until the interviewer is ready to see you. It's a habit to pick up our phones when we are waiting, but you will want to avoid doing this so that you appear interested in the environment, the position, and focused on the interview.

Once the hiring manager or interviewer comes to greet you, they will likely lead you back to their office or the room where the interview will take place. Just before the interview begins, be sure that you are attentive and actively listening to everything they say, as they will likely provide an overview of the opportunity and the qualities they are looking for. You will want to be listening for things that align with your qualities and experiences so that you can talk to those points throughout the interview.



From here, questioning will begin and will include "general, behavioral, situational, and in-depth questions as they pertain to your industry" ("What to Expect in an Interview" par. 10) or the opportunity. Be prepared with responses regarding your experiences, skills, best qualities, and achievements. You will want to be sure to respond to questions fully and completely, but concisely. Try not to ramble on as that might indicate that you are not confident in your abilities.

Once the interviewer has finished asking their questions, they will ask if you have any questions. You should ALWAYS have questions! This is a chance to ask for clarification on something that came up in the interview or during your research on the position or company, ask for information that will help you make a decision if you're offered the position, and demonstrate your interest in the opportunity.

At the end of the interview, you may be given a tour of the workplace or be introduced to potential colleagues. Be sure to thank the interviewer for their time and the opportunity to interview as you are leaving.

After the Interview

After the interview, it's a good practice to email the interviewer and thank them again, in writing, for the opportunity. This should be simple and straightforward. While you're waiting to hear back, spend some time determining whether or not it is a good fit for you by considering the information you gained from your research and interview, whether or not you liked the workplace environment, and the general duties and expectations of the job. "As much as the interview process is an opportunity for them to determine your potential value to their company, it's also a great indicator for you to personally decide if this is a role you could see yourself in" ("What to Expect in an Interview" par. 15).

The interviewer will usually let you know how long it should take before you hear back from them, but generally a week or two is standard. You may not hear back unless they want to proceed with you. Be prepared for that. If you do hear back, they may make an offer or invite you into the next step of the process (likely more interviews). Even if you don't get an offer, the interview process is still a valuable learning experience and chance to practice.

TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

An interview format is the way an interview is organized so that candidates can be assessed on their skills, experience, and qualifications effectively. Many factors can influence how an interview is formatted including industry standards, job requirements, or company policies. These are the most common types of interview formats and some information about each one. When you are preparing for an interview, it will be helpful to research each of these formats a little more so that you have a better idea of what to expect.

- 1. Individual** - This is the format most people think of when they think of an interview. It takes place one-on-one with the interviewer and the candidate.
- 2. Group** - In a group interview, multiple candidates will interview with one or more interviewers at once. This format allows for evaluation among candidates and shows how candidates interact with others and apply interpersonal and communication skills.
- 3. Panel** - In this format, one candidate will be interviewed by a panel made up of several interviewers. These people may be managers, coworkers, team leads, etc.
- 4. Technical** - This format is designed specifically for technology and engineering positions and involves a series of technology-specific questions and usually some demonstration of knowledge and technical problem solving, like an exam.
- 5. Multiple-Round** - Typically, multiple-round interviews are conducted as individual interviews with many people in the company.
- 6. Phone / Video Screen** - Phone or video interviews will be used to screen many candidates before deciding who to bring in for an in-person interview. This type of interview tends to be very general.
- 7. Informational** - An informational interview is conducted by the job seeker and aims to gain information about working in a company that the job seeker wants to learn more about.

Learn more about [Types of Interview Formats and Styles](#) from Indeed.

HOW TO PREPARE FOR INTERVIEWS

Preparing for an interview is more than just practicing how you will answer interview questions. It's also important to consider a variety of ways you will set yourself up for success for your interview. Here are some suggestions on how to prepare.

- 1. Review the job description:** Read it carefully and completely and be sure that you understand exactly what they are looking for. The more you can present yourself in alignment with the details of the job description, the more your interviewer will view you as qualified for the job. For each of the requirements of the job, is there a way that you can highlight yourself as the best candidate?
- 2. Consider why you're applying:** Hopefully, if you've applied for a position, you are interested in the position and it's a role you'd like to have. Spend some time thinking about why you want this job and why you're a good fit for the position. You will likely be asked this in your interview.
- 3. Practice answering questions:** Find and review some commonly asked interview questions, and think through your responses to them. This will help give you an idea of how you will construct your responses and make the best case for yourself. The following resources go over some popular interview questions and common responses to help you prepare and practice:
 - [27 Most Common Job Interview Questions and Answers](#), Inc.com
 - [125 Common Interview Questions and Answers \(with Tips\)](#), Indeed
 - [How to Ace the Most Common Interview Questions](#), Forbes
- 4. Do your research:** This is a critical step that so many people skip - don't make that same mistake! Research the company you're interviewing with. Make sure you have an understanding of their key initiatives, missions, or programs, their company culture, and anything else that is interesting to you. This will help set you apart from other candidates and will show that you are interested in the company.
- 5. Practice personal presentation:** This includes your speaking voice, mannerisms, and body language. Remember that this will all be a part of the first impression you make and you want that to be positive and strong. Practice looking and speaking confidently. Avoid any fidgeting or nervous mannerisms and be sure to show that you are listening and paying attention.



- 6. Think of questions to ask the interviewer:** Be sure to prepare insightful questions for the interviewer based on your research, clarity around the job description, or company culture and workplace environment. It's a good suggestion to have around 3-5 questions prepared.
- 7. Practice! Practice! Practice:** Ask someone to help you practice your interview ahead of time. The more you are able to practice, the more prepared you will feel. It's also a good idea to practice your responses to questions out loud to yourself so you can hear how they sound and make adjustments if needed. It's also a good idea to have someone supportive give you feedback on your responses and overall personal presentation. You can also practice your mannerisms and body language in the mirror.
- 8. Print your resume:** It is likely that you've already provided your resume to your point of contact or with your application. However, it is always wise to print multiple copies of your resume and take them with you to your interview to show that you are prepared, especially if you know that you are interviewing with more than one person.
- 9. Make a plan for getting there:** Figure out how you will travel to the interview location and map out a route that takes into consideration your mode(s) of transportation. Be sure to leave plenty of time to arrive early and take into account any potential traffic. You will want to arrive no more than 15 minutes early for your interview, 10 minutes would be plenty early to show that you are punctual. Have the address on hand in case you need it. Additionally, make sure you have the contact information for the interviewer so that you are able to contact them if something out of your control happens on your way. If you plan to drive, and you are able to, it's a good idea to visit the location ahead of time so you can figure out parking and traffic in the area.
- 10. Pick out your clothes:** You will want to select an outfit that matches the culture and dress code of the company you're interviewing for and dress one level above what will be expected in daily attire. For example, if the workplace is casual or uniformed, wear something that's business casual. If you are unsure what the dress code is, start by doing your own research to see if you can find out. Otherwise, reach out to your contact there and ask them prior to your interview. Once you know the type of clothing you'll need, make sure it's in your closet or that you have time to purchase an outfit. Try it on to be sure it all fits and looks clean and tidy. Gather all the pieces of your outfit together the night before and have it all ready to go to help save time on the day of your interview.



STRATEGIES FOR GOOD INTERVIEWS

1. Maintain a positive attitude.

Show up with a smile on your face and a pleasant demeanor. Demonstrate that you are willing to learn, able to listen, trustworthy, reliable, and punctual.

2. Know yourself.

The more self-aware you are, the better you will understand yourself and the better you will be able to present yourself to interviewers. Make lists of your top strengths, your best skills, your biggest achievements, your hobbies. When you're done ask family, friends, trusted adults for their thoughts on your lists and see if they have any insights to share. This will help build your confidence and get you comfortable talking about yourself to others.

3. Research! Research! Research!

Make sure you are really familiar with all of the details of the job description and that you've done research on the company or organization you're interviewing with. In this case, you can't know too much about them. The more you know the more you'll be able to decide if it will be a good fit for you and the better you will look to the interviewer when you show that you have some knowledge about their company.

4. Put your phone on Do Not Disturb or airplane mode.

Do not use your phone once you step foot into the building. Scrolling while you wait could be seen as a signal that you aren't interested in the job or are not taking the interview seriously. And you don't want to receive messages or calls while you are in the interview. You may even consider leaving your phone at home or in a secure place in the car.

5. Be authentic.

Yes, you should definitely present your best self during an interview, however, don't try to be someone or something you're not. If you are able to be true to yourself and express your true personality during the interview, you will come across as real and natural. It may also be helpful to match the communication style of the interviewer by mirroring their tone and manner. When they are serious and business-like, respond in a serious and business-like manner. Respond more casually, humorously or light-hearted when they take a more casual approach.

6. Be humble and honest.

Be honest if you don't know the answer to something and humble enough to own that. If you are asked a question that you don't know the answer to, responding with "I don't know, but here's what I would do to figure it out," and then outlining what you would do to learn or figure it out shows that you are honest, humble, and know how to solve problems and find answers.

7. Show appreciation.

Be respectful of everyone you meet and interact with throughout the whole interview process (before, during, and after). Show your gratitude for the opportunity to interview by thanking each person in the room at the start of the interview, thanking the person who walks you out, and sending a follow-up email to thank them again for their time and the chance to interview.

