



Interview Prep Kit



WIN THE JOB YOU WANT!

Some people can go their entire career without finding their dream job. So, when you have the opportunity to land the perfect position, you have to be sure you're ready. You must excel at presenting your marketable skills and experience to potential employers. In other words, you have to be an effective interviewee.

There are proven ways to succeed in the typical interview and make yourself stand out from all the other candidates. And that's exactly what you'll learn from this guide.

We've put together our most valuable tips and guidelines to help you with the interview process. In addition, we've provided you with questions and worksheets to assist you in formulating your thoughts and interview strategy.

After years of experience with the sharpest candidates and the toughest clients, we have a very good idea of what works in an interview and what doesn't. Read on for all the information you'll need to prepare for and win the job you want!

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Preparation

Preparation is key

Think of your interview as a test – the person who is asking the questions certainly will. They will evaluate every answer you provide, so make each one count. Like with any exam, the key to passing is to do your homework and prepare ahead of time.

Do your homework on the company

Find out as much about the company as you can – know its history, its future goals, and where it stands today. Sources to use include:

- Your recruiter
- Company websites
- Social resources like LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook
- Annual reports
- Friends and business associates

Do your homework on the position

Have a thorough understanding of the position, the primary responsibilities, and what's expected. Be prepared to ask questions like:

- Who has been successful and why?
- Who has failed and why?
- Who does the position report to?

Do your homework on yourself

Assess your career history thoroughly:

- Review all dates, positions, responsibilities, and accomplishments.
- Make sure your presence on social networks like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn reflects positively on you.
- Know your strengths and weaknesses.
- Be prepared to cite specific examples of achievements and how these experiences can help the company solve some of their problems.
- Concentrate on your most recent positions, but make sure to highlight your progress throughout your career.
- Reflect on your successes so you can adequately impart your strengths when given the chance.

Remember, the prospective employer will make his or her hiring decision based on these key factors:

- Attitude and business poise
- Image, presentation, and communication skills

- Experience and skill set
- Education and certifications
- Transferable industry skills and technical background

Improve your social awareness

Social sites like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn are not just for connecting with old friends and posting pictures of family vacations; they are the platforms for your personal and professional brand. Today, companies are paying attention to your online presence like never before.

In fact, a 2009 study by Harris Interactive for CareerBuilder revealed that 45% of employers use social media to screen job candidates. In 2011, a similar study conducted by social media monitoring service Reppler, found that the number had skyrocketed to 90%.

So, before you step into the interviewer's office, you need to make sure your online brand is helping you put your best foot forward.

Here are some suggestions:

- Carefully set your privacy settings to ensure certain content is available only to intended audiences.
- Find the right balance of personality and professionalism to express your character without crossing a line.
- If you are debating posting a particular picture, link or message, err on the side of caution.
- Make your LinkedIn profile as comprehensive and engaging as possible, just like you would your resume.
- Participate in discussions on forums and professional networking sites like LinkedIn to demonstrate your knowledge.
- Review the people in your network and eliminate any connections that may paint you in an unfavourable light.
- Never say anything false or unsubstantiated, as it could come back to haunt you and hamper your credibility.
- Connect with the companies you want to work for through online groups and communities.
- Search for yourself and, if you don't like what you find, change the message by starting a blog or registering a website for your name and your portfolio.



Questions to ask

Rehearse your answers

Ask a friend, colleague, or even your recruiter to conduct a practice interview and provide constructive feedback.

Below are some questions you should expect, so be sure to have an answer prepared. There are no standard answers to these questions, but being able to provide quick, honest, direct, and positive responses can make your interview more memorable and ultimately, more successful. Where applicable, make sure to tie your answers into practical examples that demonstrate the potential positive impact you can bring to the employer.

- What are your short-term and long-term objectives?
- What do you look for in a job?
- To you, what is the difference between a good position and an excellent one?
- Why are you leaving your current position?
- Can you explain any gaps in your employment history?
- Why did you choose to interview with my organization?
- What can you do for us that someone else cannot do?
- Why should we hire you?
- Do you work well under pressure, deadlines, etc.?
- What management style is most effective for you?
- How has your early career or background influenced your progression and/or current management style?
- How has your management style changed over the years?
- What are your five biggest accomplishments in your present or last job? In your career?

Rehearse your questions, too!

A good interview should be a free-flowing conversation, not a one-sided speech or a jarring question and answer session. Be sure to ask questions that can help you learn more about the position, make you look informed, and give you a better idea of where you stand with the interviewer.

Here are some questions you could consider asking:

- How do you feel your major competitors stack up against you in terms of product, market share, marketing strategies, strengths, and weaknesses?
- Tell me about the history/growth of the company.
- In the recent history of the company, what has been the biggest advance and what has been the biggest setback?
- What is your highest priority in the next six months and how could someone like me help?
- Can you give me an idea of what a typical day would be like if I were to get the position?
- What characteristics do your best employees have in common?
- Where do you see your company going in the next several years?
- What are three main qualities you are looking for in a candidate?
- What does your interview process entail?
- Could I have an opportunity to meet some of the people with whom I would be working with?
- What are your personal satisfactions and disappointments since you have been with the company?



Salary

The salary discussion

The question of compensation can be very sensitive and often requires extended negotiations to reach a figure that is fair and acceptable to both the company and the individual.

You should never start discussions about salary during your interview. However, at times, the interviewer will bring up the topic. If they do, here are some points to consider:

Most companies want to make a fair offer. They want to bring new employees on board at a salary level that provides incentive to change jobs and excel, while remaining consistent with their existing salary structure for that position.

Manage your expectations. The recession has forced many organizations to keep a close eye on salaries. The salary figures that were common a decade ago may be hard to come by in today's climate. Speak with your recruiter or utilize resources like our compensation guide to get an accurate understanding of what the position should earn in your specific location.

The position is the single most important element of your decision. No amount of money will make a poor fit – whether it's the company, the job, or the environment – a good one for you. A quality position and the opportunity to work with people in a dynamic work environment offers many rewards that money cannot buy.

Get the whole picture. A compensation package includes more than just a salary – it also can consist of bonuses, benefits, and more. These elements can be arranged and rearranged – sometimes very creatively – to satisfy both the individual and the company.

Keep your recruiter involved. Part of our job is to handle sensitive negotiations professionally and to help both parties come to an agreement on a fair and acceptable compensation package.

Salary discussions. If you are asked directly what salary you are looking for, try to avoid quoting a specific figure. Instead, offer this response: "I am very interested in the opportunity and I feel I can make a meaningful contribution. I am currently earning \$_____ per year. I would be open to a competitive offer."

It is best not to name a figure if at all possible. You don't want to over-or-under price yourself, so remember to discuss all relevant salary and benefits issues with your recruiter. If you are asked again later in the process, you may want to restate what you are earning, cite your research, and ask what a person with your experience level is worth in their company.



Dress for success

Dress for success

Now that you're prepared to say all the right things, it's important to wear the right things. Here are some suggested dress tips for men and women. We recommend that you do not deviate from these suggestions without first speaking with your recruiter.



For women:

- A business suit in a subdued color is best for first interviews
- Dress in today's styles, but keep the hemline close to the knee-length and keep blouses modest
- Shoes should be freshly polished and heel height should be moderate and comfortable
- Jewelry should be minimal and in good taste
- Nails should be well manicured and polished in clear or light conservative colors
- No matter what hairstyle you have, be sure to keep it neat
- Makeup should be lightly applied
- A conservative dress or suit is fine for additional interviews



For men:

- Wear a conservative dark blue or dark gray suite with a long-sleeved white shirt and tie
- Your tie should be conservative, but stylish
- Make sure you shine your shoes and wear dark socks
- Jewelry should be limited to a wristwatch and wedding ring
- Fingernails should be clean and trimmed
- Facial hair should be well groomed

Video interviews

Video interviews are becoming increasingly prominent as companies seek to make talent decisions faster and in the most cost-effective way possible. In fact, some of the most successful organizations in the world conduct video interviews with potential candidates.

Video interviews can take the place of traditional in-person interviews, or may be used as an initial screening mechanism in place of telephone pre-screens. There are two distinct types of video interviews: interactive and on-demand.

Interactive interviews function much like a traditional interview, in that questions and answers are spontaneous. On-demand interviews, on the other hand, involve a series of previously recorded questions and all answers are recorded for review and comparison to other candidates.

Regardless of the timing or type of video interview, it's important to be prepared to face the camera. Here are some things to keep in mind:

BEFORE the video interview

Prepare the environment:

- **Straighten up.** Clean off the area where you will be conducting the interview.
- **Redecorate.** Remove posters, inappropriate artwork, and equipment from the interview area.
- **Eliminate distractions.** Close your windows and turn off ceiling fans along with any other potentially annoying electronics. Tell members of your household not to create distractions or noise and put your pets in a different room or outside.
- **Go off the air.** Turn off your smartphone, television, and radio.

Prepare your equipment:

- **Review all instructions.** Thoroughly review any directions so you are comfortable using your webcam, computer, software, etc.
- **Test everything.** Turn on your computer and verify that your Internet connection is working and the interview program is running as it should. Test your webcam, speakers, and microphone as well. Turn off any virus or maintenance scans that may be scheduled in order to avoid delays.

- **Be anti-social.** Disconnect from chat programs, Facebook, and Twitter for the duration of the interview. This will eliminate lag and jarring notification sounds.
- **Prepare your lighting.** Have ample lighting in the room to ensure a good picture quality. The light source should come from behind the webcam (shining onto your face), not from behind you. Open windows can wash out your picture, so close your blinds if you can.
- **Get the right view.** Make sure your webcam has a clear, unobstructed view, and that your head and shoulders are in the frame. It is better for the webcam to be pointing down at you than looking up at your chin.

DURING the video interview

- **Look comfortable.** Make eye contact at all times, watch your body language, and avoid displaying signs of fatigue or nervousness.
- **Speak naturally.** Be mindful of your tone, speak clearly, and be sure to project confidence. Be enthusiastic and engaging and deliver your key point with emphasis.
- **Don't panic over technical difficulties.** If something goes wrong, let the interviewer know and ask for assistance. Whatever you do, remain calm and poised; after all, the interviewer wants to see how you act under pressure.

AFTER the video interview

- Shut off your camera.
- Send a thank you follow-up email, just like you would after an in-person interview.

Video interviews

Follow through & follow-up

Just as important as making a good first impression is leaving a lasting positive impression. If the interviewer has failed to elicit some important information about you, make that information known before you leave. Lastly, always find out what the next steps will be and when they are likely to occur.

Even after you've shaken hands and said goodbye, the interview process is not over. Instead, you must continue to sell yourself and reinforce your qualifications.

Sending a thank you follow-up email is a great way to remind the interviewer about your skills and may be your last chance to communicate things you forgot to say during your discussion. These days, a follow-up email is more than a courtesy, it is an imperative. Choosing not to send one will likely lead to someone else getting the position you worked so hard to attain.

Here are a few points to consider:

- **Send the follow-up email as soon as possible.** This allows you to convey a sense of urgency and a high interest level in the opportunity. Ideally, your email should go out the next day.
- **Be as brief as possible.** It demonstrates respect for the interviewer's time.

Within the body of the email, make sure to:

1. Thank the interviewer for their time.
2. Reiterate your interest and enthusiasm in the company and position.
3. Highlight your experiences and accomplishments.
4. Ask what you can do to proceed to the next step.

Have someone carefully proofread your email, and be sure to send it to your recruiter for a final review. Together, we'll make sure that your follow-up email represents you and everything you have to offer.

Here is a sample thank you follow-up email template you can use. Remember, make it about you!

Dear Mr. Smith:

I appreciate the time spent with you discussing XYZ Company and the _____ position. It was a pleasure meeting with you, _____, and _____. I feel my qualifications and skill set in _____, _____, and _____ reflect those necessary to be successful at XYZ Company.

At ABC Corporation, I successfully installed a state-of-the-art _____ system on-time and under-budget, as well as managed a staff of up to fifteen professionals. I am confident that I have the experience and drive to successfully manage the _____ Department.

I feel an even greater excitement level about the opportunity because it will allow me to attain my goals of _____, _____, and _____.

I look forward to our next meeting to discuss this opportunity in greater detail.

Sincerely,

Your Name

The follow-up

Resignations

While resigning from your current position can be emotional and stressful, there are several things you can do to make the process go smoothly.

Put it in writing

- Handing your boss a resignation letter is the most effective way to avoid escalating an already uncomfortable situation.
- Written resignations are formal and will become part of your permanent record. This is for your own protection.
- It will help you keep the focus on the positive aspects of your career move, rather than any negative aspects of your old situation.
- It relieves the pressure of having to speak first.

The sooner you leave the company, the better

When you resign, you should give fair notice, but there are a number of reasons to also ask to be relieved as soon as possible, including:

- You are in a lame duck position.
- The company will get by without you.
- You should invest your time and energy into getting ready and rested for your new opportunity.

Here is a sample resignation letter:

Former Manager's Name
Title
Company

Dear (Former Manager's Name):

It is with mixed emotions, yet with firm conviction, that I write this letter of resignation from (Company Name).

My association during the past (#) years with this excellent company and its many fine people has been a wonderful part of my professional and personal life.

Please understand that I have made my decision after considerable deliberation. An outstanding opportunity presented itself that will significantly enhance my career and assist me in achieving my goals.

I am therefore resigning from (Company Name) effective (date). This will allow sufficient time to complete current commitments prior to commencing with my new employer on (date). In the interim, I will work with you and the staff to provide a smooth transfer of my current duties.

I hope that you will understand and accept my position. I will support you in making this change as easy as possible for the staff and department.

Sincerely,

Your Name

Resignations



Counter offers

No counter offers

Though it may seem like a good idea. There are many significant reasons for not accepting a counter offer. Check out this excerpt from The Wall Street Journal.

Ten Reasons for Not Accepting a Counter Offer:

1. What kind of company are you working for if you have to threaten to resign before they pay you what you are worth?
2. Where is the money for the counter offer coming from? Is it your next raise early? All companies have strict wage and salary guidelines which must be followed. Are they going to make your increase retroactive in order to compensate for underpaying you over the last several years?
3. Your company may immediately start looking for a new person at a cheaper price. In many cases, you could end up training your replacement.
4. You have now made your employer aware that you are unhappy. From this day on, your loyalty will always be in question.
5. When promotion time comes around, your employer will remember who was loyal and who was not.
6. When times get tough, your employer will begin cutbacks with you.
7. The same circumstances that now cause you to consider a change will repeat themselves in the future even if you accept a counter offer. Things about your position and company rarely change.
8. Statistics show that if you accept a counter offer, the probability of voluntarily leaving in six months, or being let go within one year, is extremely high – 85% of people who accept a counter offer are gone in six months, and 90% of people who accept are gone in twelve months.
9. Accepting a counter offer is an insult to your intelligence and a blow to your personal pride, knowing that you were bought.
10. Once the word gets out, the relationship that you now enjoy with your coworkers will never be the same. You will lose the personal satisfaction of peer group acceptance.

What to do

Here are 20 quick tips for a quality interview:

- 1. Arrive early.** We recommend you get there 15 minutes early.
- 2. Fill out all applications neatly and completely.** Provide all required information. Use your resume for reference if you need to.
- 3. Bring several copies of your resume.** You may meet more than one interviewer, so have enough copies to go around.
- 4. Be enthusiastic about the position and the company.** Show your interviewer that you really want the job.
- 5. Ask specific questions.** Do your homework so you're qualified to ask clever and engaging questions.
- 6. Avoid discussing salary or benefit packages.** Remain open. Let your recruiter handle these sensitive negotiations.
- 7. Let your personality shine during the interview.** Ask for the position – be proactive at the end of the interview.

8. Practice makes perfect. Review potential questions and rehearse your answers. Conduct a mock interview with a friend, family member, or your recruiter.

9. Organize your answers. Consider ways to give your answer structure, either by organizing your response chronologically or organizing your points in order of their importance.

10. Elaborate on all answers. Avoid “yes” or “no” responses and sell yourself by using examples to paint a clear picture of where, when, how, what, and why you did it.

11. Stress your achievements and accomplishments. Let your interviewer know that you have a history of making a positive impact.

12. Answer all questions clearly and succinctly. Respond positively to the interviewer's questions whenever possible. Do not ramble on. An interview is supposed to be a dialogue, not a monologue. If you think you're going on too long, cut your answer short.

13. Do not speak negatively about other companies. Doing so can make you look petty or difficult to work with.

14. Be positive about your reason for leaving your current job. The key word to remember is “more”. You want more challenges, more responsibilities, more opportunities, etc.

15. Quantify the confidence other employers have placed in you. Stress specific facts, figures, and measurable accomplishments.

16. Always represent yourself honestly. You want to be hired for what you can do, not for what you think the interviewer wants to hear. A lie will reflect poorly on you and could land you on the unemployment line.

17. Mitigate your negatives. If you have to discuss negative experiences, point out what you learned from them and why you won't make the same mistakes again.

18. Answer every question, even the tough ones. You should not intentionally ignore a question by answering a different question or asking a question in return. If you are unsure about the question or need some time to think, ask the interviewer to repeat it.

19. Make the job you're interviewing for your chief objective. Frame your answers so that you let the interviewer know that you see this job as a means to achieving your ultimate career goals.

20. Remember, your recruiter is here for you! Our job is to help you get your next job. If you need help conducting a mock interview, preparing answers to questions or have concerns about what to wear, don't hesitate to contact your recruiter. After your interview, call to let us know how it went so we can facilitate any next steps.

THE INTERVIEW IS JUST ONE PART OF THE JOB SEARCH, WE CAN HELP YOU EVERY STEP OF THE WAY.

From resume writing tips to career advice and free online training, Adecco Professional is ready to help take your job search to the next level.

What to avoid

A recent survey of companies who were questioned as to why they did not hire a qualified applicant resulted in the following answers:

- Poor personal appearance
- Lack of interest and enthusiasm
- Overemphasis on money
- Criticism of past employers
- Failure to maintain good eye contact with interviewer
- Limp, "dead fish" handshake
- Late for the interview
- Failure to express appreciation for interviewer's time
- Did not ask enough detailed questions about the position
- Lacked sufficient detail when responding to questions
- Overbearing, overaggressive, conceited, "know-it-all" complex
- Inability to express oneself clearly
- Lack of planning for career; no purpose or goals
- Lack of confidence
- Lack of factual information
- Lack of manners, courtesy
- Lack of maturity
- Lack of vitality
- Indecisive
- Merely shopping around
- Cynical
- Lack of a strong work ethic
- Intolerant
- Inability to take criticism/not open to being mentored
- High-pressure type



DO YOU WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT BEING AN EFFECTIVE INTERVIEWEE?

Your Adecco Professional representative can help you develop your interview strategy, giving you a tremendous advantage over other candidates and putting you on the path to landing your dream job. Contact us today.

LET'S GET TO WORK!



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We seek to completely understand the short- and long-term goals of our clients and candidates, allowing us to consistently act in their best interests. Through our job market insight and niche industry expertise, we help job seekers and employers find their best fit.

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