

Job interview preparation tips

Learn how being prepared for a job interview will help you be successful in your job search.

Job Interview Tips

Here are two simple rules to follow to make your job interview go well - be prepared, and be relaxed. When you go on a job interview, you want to be well-prepared to handle the interview successfully. If you are well-prepared, it is much easier for you to relax. If you are relaxed, you present yourself better and put your interviewers at ease, too.

Be Prepared

If you put some effort into preparing for the interview, the interview is much easier.

Find out about the company you'll be interviewing with - visit their website. Sometimes you know someone who works there. Find out the kind of business the company does, how big it is, and how it has been performing. Understanding the company helps you understand the job you are interviewing for. Use this background information to ask better questions when you're interviewing.

Review your resume. If you're interviewing for a job that requires a skill that you haven't used in a few years, take a few minutes and brush up your knowledge.

Get a friend to do some practice interviewing with you. Show her the ad, and have her ask you some questions based on the ad. Also run through some commonly asked questions like:

- Why are you interested in this job?
- Why are you interested in this company?
- What are your strengths and weakness?
- Why are you leaving your current job?
- Where do you see yourself in five years?

Don't worry if your practice answers are a little confused - that's why you're practicing. After you've answered a question, take a minute to see if there's a way you could improve your answer. Typically, you want to relay important information early in the answer, and phrase things in a positive way. Interviewing is something you get better at when you do more of it. You can do practice interviewing with several people.

Get ready for the interview ahead of time. Do things at the last minute leaves you stressed out - not a good way to interview. Decide you're going to wear (make sure it's clean!), get any materials you need together, and plan how you're going to get to the interview location.

Interview clothes cause a lot of anxiety. The rule of thumb is you should dress slightly more formally than you think people dress at the job, especially if you are unsure what the dress code is. For men, this usually means a minimum of a dress shirt, tie, and nice slacks. Women may choose either a dress or nice-looking slacks with a sweater or shirt. You may need to dress more formally for some jobs or may choose a more eclectic style for jobs in a more creative setting. Regardless of what you choose, be sure it's clean and looks neat. Research shows many people make up their minds about others in the first eight seconds. So make your first impression a good one. One other point on clothing - try to wear relatively comfortable clothes so you're not thinking about how tight your shoes are in the middle of an interview.

Get together anything you must bring with you. Bring extra copies of your resume, as interviewers often misplace theirs. You may want to bring a pad to jot notes about what you learn, and if appropriate to the job, samples of previous work. Bring some questions you've prepared based on your research of the company.

Make sure you know how to get to the interview, leaving yourself lots of extra time for delays. Do this before the day of the interview. Some people even make a trial run to get there, especially if they get lost easily. Your goal is to minimize stress on the day of the interview.

Be Relaxed

You've done all your preparation, and you're ready to go to your interview. Here's the important thing to keep in mind - be relaxed. People don't believe you can be relaxed at an interview, but you can. You've done the preparation that you need. Now you've got two simple goals - tell them about your skills, and find out if this is the right job for you. That's right - you're checking them out too! Doesn't that change things? It is easy to forget in the anxiety of the job search that while interviewers are assessing you, you're assessing the job.

Being relaxed isn't about being over-friendly or casual, it's about feeling comfortable and confident. You've done everything you can to get ready, so let go of your concerns and focus on talking with your interviewers. When you meet the interviewer, relax, give her a warm smile, and shake hands. Listen to the questions asked, and answer them thoughtfully. You don't have to race to get your answers out - speak in a normal conversational tone.

If you seem relaxed, the interviewer will probably relax too, making it easier to have a conversation. People don't realize that many interviewers are nervous too. They are afraid they won't come up with good questions, feel uncomfortable about judging someone, or just plain don't like having to do interviews.

Often at the end of the interview, you are asked, "Do you have any questions?" You may ask about something discussed during the interview, but be sure to have a couple of questions prepared ahead of time. That's why you did your research. Don't forget you're trying to learn about the job and the group. When you're done, thank the interviewer for taking the time to meet with you.



By being prepared and relaxed, you'll make a good impression. You'll also walk away with more information about the job. Even if the interview doesn't result in a job, think about what you've learned from the interview, and use it to help you be even better prepared the next time.