

Steps to Acing a Job Interview

Part I: Prepare

1. Know the company. Find out as much as you can about the position, the company and its needs, so you can show how your background meets those needs. Check out the company's web site, gather literature and other information, and if possible, get a copy of the company's annual report.
2. Know yourself. Mentally review the skills and character traits you have that will help the company's bottom line. Think in terms of the value you can add to the position and the company.
3. Know your job history. Mentally review your past achievements and be prepared to describe your work experience in detail. Gather letters of reference and samples of your work to present to the interviewer as proof of your past accomplishments. Practice describing your experience in terms of your responsibilities and accomplishments at each job.
4. Know the questions. You can almost bet on being asked, "Tell me about yourself." Approach this from the employer's point of view. Ask yourself, "If I were hiring someone for this position, what would I want to know?" Then answer those questions. And be ready for tough ones too. Think of the worst questions you could be asked about your experiences and abilities, then prepare positive responses.
5. Prepare questions of your own. Employers are as interested in your questions as they are in your answers. They will react favorably if you ask intelligent questions about the position, the company, and the industry.
6. Get the big picture. Visualize the entire interview, from start to finish. See yourself as performing with style and confidence. Be ready for any eventuality.

Part II: Make a good first impression

7. Be punctual. Do whatever it takes to arrive a few minutes early. If necessary, drive to the company the night before and time yourself. Allow extra time for traffic, parking, and slow elevators.
8. Dress appropriately in business attire. Suits with ties for men; suits with hose for women. Polish those shoes and iron that suit!
9. Be well groomed. Clean hair and fingernails are a must! Hair should be styled conservatively. Avoid excessive make-up, jewelry, or cologne. Less is more.

10. Shake hands firmly. Make eye contact when you shake.
11. Stand up straight. Good posture exudes confidence. When sitting, lean slightly forward as to indicate interest in what the interviewer is saying.

Part III: Conduct the interview

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7. Show your enthusiasm by making eye contact and keeping an interested expression. Nod and gesture in moderation; excessive body movement can distract and annoy the interviewer.
 8. Listen carefully and ask questions to probe deeper into what the interviewer is telling you.
 9. Good grammar and articulate speech are essential. If this is an area where you are weak, work on it. Practice with your family and friends, practice in front of a mirror, record your voice, take a course, etc. Do whatever it takes to become a more effective communicator.
 10. Never make negative statements about previous jobs or employers. Instead, be diplomatic. No matter how bad your last boss was, there was probably something good that you learned from the experience. Emphasize the positive – with a smile.

Part IV: Follow through

16. It is important that you write a thank you letter to every person you met at the company. Your most important letters should go to the interviewers. In your letter, be sure to summarize your conversation and re-emphasize the skills you would bring to the position. Thank them for their time and mention that you will call later in the week to see how their search for a candidate is going. That candidate may well be you!