

PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

A potential employer has received your resumé and cover letter and has contacted you about scheduling an interview. Many employers choose to do a preliminary interview over the phone or using video. Others will want to meet face-to-face. Whether your interview is in person, over the phone, or video, the following guide will help you prepare for success.

ESSENTIAL INTERVIEW SKILLS

Do your research

You should know the job description, primary duties and responsibilities, and the organization in-depth. This is essential in order to tailor your message to the employer and articulate the key qualities about yourself that they are looking for. If you know the person(s) you will be meeting for your interview, do some research on them as well. At the very least, you should know how to properly pronounce their names.

Be Prepared to Talk About Yourself

This can be uncomfortable and difficult for some people, but you will be expected to discuss your past experience, education, training, and/or activities. Anything you included on your resumé is fair game. The following exercise will help you prepare to discuss your skills and qualities during an interview:

Answering Interview Questions

You may be asked to talk about a situation or specific actions you have taken. Keep your answers focused on your recent work experience and use examples whenever possible. Conducting the exercise described in this guide will help you to discuss outcomes, accomplishments, and lessons learned from your previous experience and/or education.

Dress for Success

Whether you are meeting via phone, video, or face-to-face, dress the part for the interview. This goes beyond just looks and making a good first impression. Experts say that if you are dressed professionally, you will speak professionally.

Be Professional

Arrive for your interview on time or even five minutes early.

Plan your route ahead of time and if you can, drive it the day

before your interview. Have a hard copy of your resumé and a pen and paper to take notes. You should come prepared with a list of questions. This shows that you have taken the time to research the position. During the interview, speak clearly, sit up straight, and make eye contact. Avoid using words like "um" or "like" or long pauses. Additionally, be courteous to everyone you meet, including the receptionist.

*If you are running late, call before your scheduled interview time and let someone know you are on your way.

Follow-up

Be sure to thank everyone for their time at the end of the interview in the last few seconds before you leave and while shaking hands. It is a good idea to send a thank you by email to each person who interviewed you immediately after you get home. Be sure to spell everyone's name correctly and use their proper titles. Handwritten thank you notes are also acceptable, but they can be delayed in the mail.

EXERCISE

On a sheet of paper write 10-15 skill areas (ie: leadership, teamwork, demonstrating initiative, customer service, problem solving, communication, coding, and other technical/non-technical skills.) Select five skill areas also represented in the job description, as well as soft skills and other skills applicable to your field/industry. For each of these skill areas, write 2-3 Challenge, Action, Results (CAR) stories. **Challenge** (what was the challenge you encountered), **Action** (what were the specific actions you took to address the challenge), and **Results** (what were the positive results). Keep your answers short. Rehearse your answers but do not memorize them. It can also be helpful to practice talking about these success stories with a friend, family member, or trusted advisor. *(Courtesy of the National Association of Colleges and Employers)*