

Interview Tips

- Think about your presentation. Avoid smoking, heavy perfume, loud make-up and big jewelry. Do not chew gum.
- Make a great first impression. Arrive 15 minutes early, smile, give a strong handshake. Turn your cell phone off and put it away. Avoid complaining about public transportation or directions. Interviewers are looking for prompt, upbeat and positive people to add to their teams!
- Show confident and professional body language. Sit up straight, leave your chair on the floor (no tipping backwards), and leave your bag on the floor next to you.
- Be positive. Speak positively about your previous jobs, managers and companies. Even if you've been laid off or had another unpleasant experience, find the silver lining.
- Know your resume. Almost all interviewers will ask about your past work experience. Make sure you know how to talk about the experiences on your resume, and add some color and examples to illustrate the great work you've done in the past.
- Avoid sharing too much information. Be honest about your challenges or gaps, but only give as much information as is necessary. For example, if you have a conviction history, say "Yes, I made a mistake in my past. But I am really proud to be moving forward. I am learning new skills and I'm excited to make a difference in a company like this one."
- Avoid talking about money. Wait until the interviewer brings up salary and benefit details. Don't ask about job perks in the first interview.
- Show your enthusiasm for the job. Let the interviewer know how excited you are to work for their company. But avoid begging for the job.
- Take your time to understand the interview question before you answer it. The absolute worst answer to any interview question is the response that shows you weren't really listening. When an interviewer asks a question that requires thought, take the time to think through the question and compose a thoughtful answer. A few minutes of silence in the room is ok – especially if you follow it with a great answer.
- Stay focused throughout the interview. Any interviewer will be able to tell when you've zoned out. If you're wondering whether the 5:40 train will get you home in time to watch the playoff game, the interviewer will spot it in your eyes.

Common Interview Questions

1. Tell me about yourself.

Approach this question as it relates to the job for which you are applying. Develop a 30-60 second personal branding statement that touches on your work history, your education, and briefly highlights your accomplishments. Practice this a bit – if you're going for a sales or client facing job, the employer wants to make sure you're more than just a capable communicator.

2. What Are Your Greatest Strengths?

For this particular question, you're going to want to provide tangible skills. Instead of "I'm really a great team player," or "I have excellent communication skills." Instead, describe hard skills and accomplishments. Here's an example, "While I was in an internship with ABC Company, I developed a new filing system that saved everybody in the office time." Or, "When I worked in maintenance, I was always happy to put in extra time for events or to get the job done right."

3. Tell Me About Your Weaknesses.

We all have weaknesses. The trick to this question is to provide a weakness that you are taking concrete steps to work on.

A good tactic is to talk about a weakness you had and show how it has since worked to your benefit, "There was a time when I was a bit impatient with co-workers who weren't able to complete their work by the required deadline. I have come to realize that my personal standards and expectations are different from my co-workers and it is no longer an issue for me." Or, "I have had a gap in my computer skills, but I am currently enrolled in classes to learn more Microsoft Office Skills. I have learned so many tricks and tips for formatting documents!"

4. What Are You Looking For In Terms Of Salary?

If you are in your first interview, you really don't have a clear sense of what the job entails. At this point, defer by saying, "I don't have enough information about the job yet; what are your expectations in the first 90 days? 6 months?" Another approach is to ask if the employer has a range in mind for the position. As a last resort, you may decide to give the employer a broad range based on past salary, bonuses, and other benefits.

5. Why Did You Leave Your Last Job?

There are all kinds of reasons for leaving a company; however, you really need to be truthful with your answer. That said, you should carefully craft your answer to ensure it is appropriate. If your company downsized, mention it. If you made it through seven rounds of downsizing and were one of the last to go, by all means mention that, too!

Maybe you did everything you set out to do with your company and there was no real room to grow. Then, "It was time for me to find a position where I could further hone my skills and continue to grow."

6. Why You? What Do You Bring To This Job That No One Else Does?

If you're a salesperson, this is the time to show what you've got. Formulate your answer as it relates to their job requirements and clearly demonstrate how your expertise is a perfect match for their every need.