



# Interview Strategies Guide

## Practice makes perfect.

Prepare ahead of time and practice in front of a mirror, with a friend, or record yourself and watch it back. Practicing answers and getting comfortable will help you on the day

### Checklist

- Multiple copies of your *resume* and *cover letter*
- Reference sheet*
- List of questions* to ask the employer
- Transcripts, portfolio, or any other sample items (if requested)
- Briefcase or professional folder to carry your documents
- Calendar or planner (either paper or digital format)
- Notebooks and pen
- Directions to the interview and parking fare

### Where to Research Employers

- The company/ organization website
- *Glassdoor.com*
- Searching for their company profile through **LinkedIn**
- Follow the organization on **Facebook** and **Twitter**

Your interview is ultimately what will "make or break" the employer's decision to hire you. Think of interviews as two-sided: you can highlight your strengths for a prospective employer while also learning more about if the position would be a good fit for you. Practicing and honing your interview skills and strategies can make all the difference in landing your dream job.

## 1. Before the interview

### Research the company

Find out about its history, products, services, mission, company culture, competitors, plans for growth, and opportunities for advancement.

- ▶ Have your interview outfit ready
- ▶ Review the job description
- ▶ Prepare for commonly asked questions
- ▶ Know your strengths, interests, and goals
- ▶ Prepare questions to ask the employer
- ▶ Prepare 5 or more success stories
- ▶ Practice aloud with someone
- ▶ Be prepared to discuss how your skills and background will benefit the organization

## 2. First Impressions

- ▶ Show up clean, well-groomed, hair trimmed
- ▶ Arrive early: 5 to 10 minutes before the interview
- ▶ Be courteous to everyone you meet, including receptionists
- ▶ Greet the employer by name with a firm handshake
- ▶ Show enthusiasm and confidence in your voice and posture
- ▶ Maintain good eye contact
- ▶ Avoid fidgeting
- ▶ Wait to be asked to be seated

## 3. During the Interview

- ▶ Listen attentively to the questions
- ▶ Ask for clarity if you did not understand the question
- ▶ Use professional language, not slang
- ▶ Use examples, statistics, and testimonials to support your claims
- ▶ Don't talk about a weakness unless specifically asked
- ▶ Speak loudly and clearly
- ▶ Don't criticize former employers
- ▶ Avoid mentioning personal problems

## 4. Concluding the Interview and afterwards...

- ▶ Ask insightful questions
- ▶ Reaffirm your interest in the position
- ▶ Thank the interviewer and ask about next steps
- ▶ Ask for a business card and send the employer a thank you email or note



*There are many different types of interviews that you will likely encounter in your job search.* While it's important to make your skills and qualifications clear to the interviewer(s) in every situation, you should be mindful of how you're being interviewed so you can adjust your communication and presentation style accordingly.

## Types of Interviews

**One-on-one** interviews are the most common type of interview in which the employer interviews a single candidate.

In a **committee or panel** interview, the applicant is interviewed by several people at the same time. Interviewers will usually take turns asking questions. Address your response to the person asking you the question at first, but also shift your eye contact to the other interviewers.

In a **group** interview, two or more applicants for the same position are interviewed at the same time. At times, you may be the first to respond to a question. Often the interviewers will be observing how you interact with others on a team and if you can lead as well as listen. However, if you are the last to respond, don't just reiterate what others have said – your response should be personal and unique so that it stands out from the others.

**Second round** interviews are commonly offered to applicants after an initial interview. You may be asked the same questions several times by various interviewers, so respond thoroughly and enthusiastically to each interviewer.

**Teleconferencing** is useful for interviewing with companies that are far away. Interviews are usually conducted via video chat on Skype or Google Plus. Be sure to be in a quiet room with ensured privacy and face the camera squarely.

In a **phone interview**, the employer interviews the applicant over the phone. You must communicate enthusiasm and friendliness completely through tone of voice since the interviewer cannot see your body language or facial expressions.

## Tips for Success in Teleconferencing and Phone Interviews

- ▶ **Act like it's a real, in-person interview:** dress appropriately (especially for teleconferencing), sit up straight, use gestures, express confidence, be upbeat, and smile (it will come through in your voice).
  - ▶ **Prepare notes to keep in front of you as a reminder of important talking points.** However, don't fully write out and read your answers to avoid sounding scripted.
  - ▶ There may be more than one person interviewing you over the phone – be sure to **listen carefully to their names at the beginning of the interview and write them down.** Address them by their names when you can.
  - ▶ If you need time before answering a question, be sure to let them know.
  - ▶ They will ask you mostly **open-ended questions**, so make sure to describe your past experiences as they relate to the position.
- Important traits to display:**
- ◆ Good communication skills
  - ◆ Knowledge of the company and position
  - ◆ Ability to think on your feet
  - ◆ Enthusiasm and friendliness (emphasize these in your tone of voice)
  - ◆ Relate your skills and experiences to the job