

Interviewing

The goal of the interview process is to determine if you are a good fit for the position.

Interviewers are looking for a fit in a few main areas: skills, personality, company culture, and work ethic. It is also your responsibility to see if you need to ascertain the same for yourself. In a way, they're trying to impress you as much as you are them. Use the interview and your research to learn whether the job is right for you.

PREPARE

Figure out the details: What format will the interview be - phone, in-person, Skype? Where will it take place? Who will be contacting whom? Exchange relevant contact info.

Prepare a list of relevant examples: Almost every question during the interview requires an example of a time you demonstrated a relevant skill. If you get asked a question that you weren't anticipating, at least you have practiced an example that demonstrates the skill.

Bring multiple copies of your resume: Bring a document including your references as well.

Know how to get there: Figure out how you will arrive (MBTA, car, taxi etc) and map your route beforehand.

Get your outfit ready: It's fine to be more dressed up than the interviewer. When in doubt, wear business formal. Consider covering up any tattoos and piercings (besides earrings).

RESEARCH

In a competitive job market, lack of research can be interpreted as lack of interest.

Know the company: Learn as much as you can about the organization. Talk to current employees about company culture, goals, and problems. Know what the company's mission is and consider how your department fits to contribute to that goal.

Know the position: Analyze the job posting. Understand the basic job duties.

Find the salary range for that position/location: You may not be asked about your salary expectations at first, but you should know the ranges for that position, that location, and your experience. In general it is best to delay this conversation until you are offered the job.

Know your contact: Who will be interviewing you? Look them up. Understand their role in the organization, find some background info.

Know your skills: Review your resume. Know why you're interested in the job. Be prepared to talk about yourself.

Remember details: Have specifics for each of these mini-stories about yourself. Come up with engaging (true) ways to convey them.

PRACTICE

If you are invited for an interview, the hiring manager has already determined that you are qualified and now are trying to assess if you would be a good fit. It's just as important to be genuine, authentic and engaged in addition to having the necessary experience for the position.

Tell stories: Most questions will require short but elaborated answers to see how you communicate and problem solve. Each question they ask should include a short example explained using the "STAR Method."

STAR Method:

The idea is that past experience is the best indicator of future success. It's used in behavioral interviewing. With STAR, describe the:

Situation

What was the context and problem? Who were you working with? What role did you have?

Task

Explain how the situation had changed, and how you were expected to address the change.

Action

Clarify the steps you took to address the task. What did you do to resolve the problem? How did you contribute?

Result

Explain how your actions contributed to the final product. What was the outcome? What did you learn? How did the situation end? Quantify the results if possible.

During the interview

Be on time

Arrive between 15-30 minutes early.

Be polite to everyone you meet

Stand up when the interviewer comes to meet you, shake hands firmly, smile, maintain eye contact. Avoid filler words (um, uh, you know, like, well). Don't cross your arms, slouch, or fidget.

Bring copies of your resume

Don't assume that your interviewer remembers it, has a copy of it, or has read it. Bring one copy for each person you are interviewing and a few extras. Also, bring a pen and paper to take notes about the position and what you might want to include in your thank you note.

Be clean and well groomed

No gum or mint chewing during the interview. Don't smell like smoke or drugs.

Listen & pay attention

Respond to the question at hand. Be engaged, ask questions, show interest.

Be positive and confident

Don't bad-talk any former employers, co-workers, or supervisors.

After the interview

Reflect on the interview

What went well? What could you improve upon? What surprised you? What did you learn? What did you forget to mention? How do you feel about the position now? Would you take the job if it were offered?

Send a thank you note within 24 hours

Keep it short and sweet. If you forgot to mention one or two things, feel free to include it here. Thank them for the interview. Address something that was mentioned.

Follow up promptly

If you promised to provide references, samples, or further information by a certain date, make sure it's on time.

Tell your references that someone might be in touch

Provide the name of the company, position, and interviewer. It also helps to let your reference know what skills to highlight that will show you are a good fit.

Interview Questions

The Opening Question

Usually, the first question asked during an interview is “**tell me about yourself**” or “walk me through your resume.” This question is essentially asking for a one-minute elevator pitch. Include in your answer a short summary of your past experience, why you are a good fit for the job/internship, and, if possible, show some of your personality in the response. Consider what skills the employer is looking for and what experiences you have that demonstrate those skills. Also, don't forget to include why you are excited to work for the organization you are applying for.

Typical Interview Questions

BEHAVIORAL QUESTIONS:

- Tell me about the most difficult customer you've ever dealt with.
- What is the most challenging team you've ever been part of? What was your role?
- Describe a situation in which you persuaded someone to see things your way.
- Give me an example of a team project you completed.
- What would your marketing plan be for xxx product?
- Tell me about a time you were given an impossible deadline. How did you handle that?
- Give us an example of when you've shown your leadership skills.
- Describe a time you had to think on your feet to extricate yourself from a difficult situation.
- Tell me about a time you failed.
- Describe a time you used good judgment and logic to solve a problem.
- Tell me about a decision you had to make quickly and without much information.
- Describe a specific instance that you conformed to a policy with which you did not agree.
- Tell me about an important goal you set in the past and how you attained it.
- What would you do if you saw a co-worker doing something unethical?
- Describe a creative solution you applied to a problem.

Typical Interview Questions (continued)

- Tell me about a time you went above what was expected of you to get the job done.
- Give me an example of a time when you were able to communicate successfully with another person even with that individual might not have liked you (or vice versa).

General Questions:

- What job-related skills have you developed?
- Give an example of a situation in which you worked through a problem to find a solution.
- How do you think a former supervisor would describe your work and attitude?
- What kind of supervision gets the best results from you?
- What motivates you to put forth your greatest effort?
- Do you prefer working alone or with others?
- Describe your experience using specific software/ equipment.
- Are you able to work on several assignments at once?

CAREER GOALS:

- What other types of positions are you considering?
- How do you feel about the possibility of relocating?
- Where do you see yourself in five years? Ten?
- What are your career goals—both short and long-term?
- How long do you think you'll be in this position? Can you commit to two years?

PERSONAL:

- Tell me something about yourself that is not on your resume.
- How did you hear about this organization and why do you want to work here?
- What distinguishes you from other candidates?
- What do you consider to be your greatest strengths?
- What would a close friend say is your greatest weakness?
- Define success. Failure.
- Describe how you handle stress. Give an example.
- How do you keep up with trends in the field? What's the most recent article you read?
- Describe your personality in three words.

ILLEGAL QUESTIONS:

Interviewers are not allowed to ask about race, ethnicity, religion, marital status, disabilities, age, arrest records, military discharge, sexual orientation, or citizenship. These questions are unlikely to come up, but if they do, either try to find out the underlying cause of the question and respond to that part or politely decline to answer them.


Questions to ask the interviewer

- What is a typical day like in this position?
- What kinds of assignments might I expect in the first six months on the job?
- To whom would I report to in this position? Who would my co-workers be?
- Is this job an addition to the staff or a replacement of a past employee?
- Tell me about the types of projects past employees/ interns have participated in.
- Tell me about immediate projects the person coming into the job will be responsible for.
- What distinguishes a great candidate from a good candidate for this position?
- What is the company culture like?
- What are the metrics you use to measure performance?
- How do you define success?
- What do you like best about your job/company?
- What attracted you (the interviewer) to this organization?
- What are your growth projects for the next year?
- What exciting or challenging directions do you anticipate over the next few years?
- What challenges are currently facing your organization/industry? What will be the role of the person you hire in facing these challenges?
- What is the next step? When should I expect to hear from you? Or should I contact you?
- When will you make your selection?

DO NOT ASK

- What does your company do?
- What can your company do for me? (focus on what you can do for them)
- What is the salary? (this will come up later)
- What types of benefits do you offer?
- How much time do I get for vacation?
- How much is the signing bonus?

Tools to practice

- Use  **biginterview** in the resources section of Handshake to practice mock interview questions
- Make an appointment through Handshake for a mock interview
- Make a list of examples where you demonstrated skills relevant to the position you are applying for