

*Success is a state of mind. If you want success, start thinking of yourself as a success. (Dr. Joyce Brothers)*

## 4. INTERVIEWS

### OBJECTIVES

*The lessons in this chapter prepare you to:*

- Interview
- Take employment tests
- Present your 30-second commercial
- Prepare for interviews
- Dress appropriately for interviews
- Sharpen listening skills
- Interpret body language
- Answer questions
- Ask questions of the employer
- Evaluate the interviews
- Analyze a rejection subsequent to an interview

## 4.1 UNDERSTAND THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

### What to Know

The purpose of all interviews is to find the best person for the job. However, interviews can be conducted in different ways. Interviewing is a two-way process.

### The Interview

1. An individual interview is like an in-depth conversation. The interviewer may be the person who will be your supervisor. Hiring decisions are often made based on this type of interview. Count on discussing your skills, experience, training and how they all relate to the duties and opportunities of the job. There will usually be time for you to ask questions. You must sell your:
  - skills;
  - interest; and
  - enthusiasm;
  - understanding of the job.
2. A panel interview is frequently used by government agencies and companies filling a professional or managerial position. Usually three or more people sit on the board, and all candidates are asked the same questions. A selection board interview usually involves more structured questions than an individual interview, and generally does not include a discussion of salary and benefits. The process can be stressful because you have to answer questions from several people. Be sure to make eye contact with everyone on the panel. When answering a question, it is especially important to make eye contact with the person who asked the question.
3. The phone interview is another strategy that some employers use. In this situation, the hiring manager or selection committee interviews job applicants over the telephone as a screening technique. Phone interviews are used to make a first round of cuts to the applicant pool. If the employers are interested in candidates they will then schedule face-to-face interviews. Remember, as soon as you pick up the telephone you are making an impression. Be sure to review the telephone tips in section 2.
4. Stress interviews are another format that some employers, frequently law enforcement organizations, use to evaluate candidates. The interviewers' job is to intimidate you. They want to find out how you handle stress. The rationale behind the tactic is that if you're unable or unwilling to handle conditions of imposed stress, it's unlikely you'll have the ability to maintain your composure under conditions of real stress. In response to this tactic, it's important that you don't react defensively, but instead remain calm and respond appropriately.
5. The observational interview format may be used by an employer. In this format, the candidate is asked to demonstrate his/her abilities with some of the skills required for the position. This may include giving a demonstration of public speaking ability, answering telephone calls, or operating a piece of equipment while the interviewer observes your performance.

## Interview Stages

Most interviews break into four stages. The better you understand each stage, and what is expected of you, the better your chances of being selected.

### 1. Introductory Stage

The interviewer forms an initial impression that can contribute to acceptance or rejection. The decision to hire is not made at this stage, but it begins here. Remember, you never get a second chance to make a first impression!

### 2. Employer Questions

The interviewer tries to determine how well your attitude and skills fit with the company image and work culture. The interviewer is trying to match your specific skills and abilities to the job.

### 3. Applicant Questions

The interviewer is trying to determine your level of interest in the job and your degree of knowledge about the company. This is the time to clear up uncertainties.

### 4. Closing Stage

The interviewer will draw the session to a close. If you are sure you want the job, make your intentions clear at this time.

Following are some examples of how you may conclude an interview. As you read the examples, remember, assertive is okay, aggressive is not!

*“Mr. Brown, is there anything that I didn’t cover that you’d like me to?”*

*“After meeting with you, I’m even more convinced that I’d be a good fit for this position.”*

*“Ms. Jones, when do you plan to fill the position?”*

They will usually tell you. If so, you can politely suggest you will call that day.

*“If you don’t mind, I’d like to call you on that day to find out what my status is.”*

*“Would it be OK if I called then to check the status of the position?”*

Usually the hiring authorities for the position will confer before anyone is offered a job. So, do not expect a decision to be made about the position immediately.

## What to Do

Remember, interviews are about sharing information. Your responsibility is to focus the interview on a match between your skills, knowledge, and experience and the company’s needs.

## 4.2 TAKE EMPLOYMENT TESTS

### What to Know

Some companies give employment tests as part of the interview process. The tests usually are related to aptitude, basic skills, or attention to detail. Usually they have been normed against people who work in similar positions and have taken the test. The tests help the employer determine if you are likely to be a good fit with the company and the job.

Usually your test scores will be in points that are added into a total rating score that is based on your resume, cover letter, references and your interview. Examples are:

- Keyboarding
- Work Samples
- Physical Agility
- Personality

### What to Do

The following is a set of suggestions to use as you take employment tests. Read and consider each suggestion.

1. Read and/or listen to directions carefully.
2. Take the tests seriously.
3. Try to relax while taking the test.
4. Skim the entire test before you start to be sure you know what it is about.
5. Read each question carefully and completely before you begin to answer it.
6. Ask if there is a penalty for guessing answers you are not certain about. In general, if there is a penalty, do not guess unless you can narrow the answer to one of two possible choices.
7. If the test is timed—and many are—ask how the test is being scored to know if accuracy or completion is more important.
8. Write your answers clearly. You cannot get credit for anything that is not readable.
9. Use your time wisely. Do not linger too long on any one question. If you do not know the answer, skip to the next item.

*Don't get screened out! Employers generally use applications to make the first cut in screening applicants.*

# 4.3 30-SECOND COMMERCIAL

## What to Know

The 30-second commercial is a statement to describe the skills and services that you have to offer an employer. It is essentially a brief monologue that sells your professional abilities and reflects your ideal job profile.

## What to Do

Choose a combination of the following components that will comprise your pitch:

- Greeting** .....include your first and your last name
- Experience** .....accumulated experience in your specific industry and jobs
- Areas of Expertise**.....your major job functions and skill categories
- Strengths** .....specific skills that you possess
- Accomplishments** .....specific accomplishments that emphasize your strengths
- Professional Style** .....traits and characteristics that describe how you perform your job
- Job Search Strategy** ..what you want to do with your experience

Examples of these components:

- Greeting** *Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_.*
- Experience** *I'm an experienced \_\_\_\_\_.*
- Areas of Expertise** *Or I have \_\_\_ years of experience in the \_\_\_\_\_ industry with expertise in \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.*
- Strengths** *My strengths are \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.*
- Accomplishments** *I have been recognized for \_\_\_\_\_.*
- Professional Style** *I'm \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.*
- Job Search Strategy** *I am interested in expanding my experience into \_\_\_\_\_.*

My 30-second commercial:

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## 4.4 PREPARE FOR INTERVIEWS

### What to Know

- A successful interview begins with homework and preparation.
- Your responsibility is to know as much about yourself and the company before you walk into the interview.
- Research the company as much as you can before your interview. Some ways that you can get information about the company include the Internet, asking family and friends who are familiar with the company, asking someone who works there, and researching trade publications.
- Planning and preparation makes you confident and will help you perform in the interview.
- Practice, practice, practice your answers to common interview questions.
- Some questions that you may be asked include:

*Why did you leave the military?*

*What are your strengths as an employee?*

*Why did you leave your last job?*

*Where do you see yourself in 5 years?*

*What are you looking for in a job?*

*Why are you interested in our company?*

### What to Do

Your chances of getting the job are zero if you don't know what you want. You must also know a few things about the company before the interview. Use the guidelines on the following page to prepare for the interview.

*A successful job interview requires preparation. Practice, practice, practice!*

## GUIDELINES FOR INTERVIEWS

### Be Prepared

- Anticipate possible questions and practice answers to each of them.
- Research the company before the interview.
- Prepare questions to ask in the interview.
- Do a dry run going to the interview location before the day of your interview.
- Get a good night's sleep before the interview. Review your research.
- Get up in time to shower and dress carefully.
- Know the name(s) of the interviewer(s) and how to pronounce them correctly.
- Leave for the interview with plenty of time to spare. Make sure you know how to get there, where to park, and how much time to allow for traffic.

### Look Good

- Go to the interview neat and clean.
- Dress conservatively and comfortably.
- Avoid heavy makeup and trendy or flashy clothes or jewelry.

### Be Punctual

- Arrive 15 minutes ahead of schedule.

### Be Aware of Body Language

- Turn off electronic devices (cell phone, pager, etc.).
- Offer a firm handshake.
- Stand or sit erect but comfortably.
- Sit down only after offered a chair.
- Lean forward in your chair and relax.
- Don't fidget.
- Use eye contact, but don't stare.

### Carry A Portfolio

- Show the interviewer that you planned ahead.
- Bring all necessary information:
  - pad and pen
  - a calendar
  - the completed Master Application Worksheet
  - several copies of your resume
  - a copy of the application form
  - letters of recommendation
  - samples of work (if appropriate)
  - your notes on the company
  - your questions to ask the interviewer
  - any correspondence from the company
  - reference list/letters of reference

### Be Enthusiastic

- Have a positive attitude in the interview.
- Be friendly, but not casual.
- Be professional and courteous to everyone.
- Don't be negative about anything!
- Sell yourself – the difference between bragging and self-confidence is enthusiasm.
- Use eye contact and voice expression to your benefit.

### Say Thank You

- At the end of the interview, thank the interviewer for the time.
- Follow-up with a brief thank you note that:
  - reviews points brought up in the interview, and
  - adds ideas you forgot to mention.

### Smile

- Do not grin, but smile as you would in any conversation.

## PHONE CALL FOR AN INTERVIEW (CHECKLIST)

Remember, this is your first chance to make a good impression. Your interview begins here. When you receive a call for an interview, be sure to find out the following information.

Company name: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Position you are interviewing for: \_\_\_\_\_

Name and title of person conducting the interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Where and when to report: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Anything special to bring to the interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Who is calling: \_\_\_\_\_

Position of caller: \_\_\_\_\_

Return phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Additional information: \_\_\_\_\_

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## 4.5 DRESS FOR SUCCESS

### What to Know

You should look your best when you go to a job interview. Dress one step above the dress required for the job. You only get one chance to make a first impression, so make it a good one. Remember, first impressions are formed when the interviewer first sees and greets you. You need to look professional, confident, and competent.

To help you decide what to wear to an interview, visit the company and notice what people are wearing. Make sure your interview clothes are appropriate for the job you are applying for and for the location of the interview. Do not wear a suit to an interview at a construction site, and do not wear jeans and a sport shirt to an office setting. You will find differences in the way people dress depending on the industry they work in. It is always better to find yourself over-dressed than under-dressed for an interview.

Try to think ahead to the interview. If there is a possibility you will be required to perform a task, make sure you are prepared. For instance, if you are applying for a job as a welder, you may be asked to demonstrate your skills on the spot. You should have your work clothes and tools available at the interview.

### Guidelines

#### Dress For Men

Use the following list to check yourself prior to an interview. You may want to seek an opinion from someone in the field in which you are interviewing.

- Hair should be trimmed, neat, and clean. Have a clean shave. If you wear a beard or a mustache, be sure to trim neatly.
- Wear glasses with up-to-date frames and clear lenses. Do not wear sunglasses with dark tints or mirrors.
- Wear no more than one ring on each hand and a watch. Do not wear any other jewelry such as bracelets, necklaces or earrings. Cover or remove any body piercings.
- Depending on the position you are applying for wear:
  - A navy blue or gray suit, single breasted; white or pinstripe dress shirt and a matching silk tie; or
  - Navy blue or gray jacket; coordinated gray, tan, or charcoal slacks; white or pinstripe dress shirt and coordinating silk tie; or
  - White, pastel, or pinstripe dress shirt and conservative tie; coordinated navy blue, gray, charcoal, or brown dress pants; or
  - Plain sports shirt; coordinated navy blue, gray, charcoal, or brown slacks; or
  - Clean sports shirt and clean casual pants.
- Tip of the tie should come to the center of belt buckle.
- Belt should show no signs of wear or weight gain/loss; should match shoes.
- Nails should be cut short, filed and clean.
- Clean and polished conservative dress shoes with dark socks. Work boots may be appropriate for some job interviews. No loafers or tennis shoes.

- Minimal or no aftershave, perfume or cologne, no strong smelling deodorants, and no smoking.
- No gum, candy, or other objects in your mouth.
- Carry a good leather or leather-like portfolio or slim briefcase.

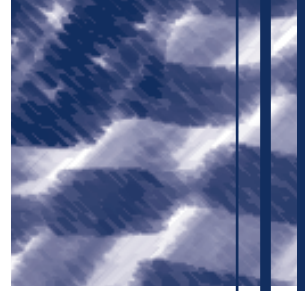
## Guidelines

### Dress For Women

Use the following list to check yourself prior to an interview. You may even want to seek an opinion from someone in the field in which you are interviewing.

- Clean hair, short or tied back and professional.
- Makeup should be simple. Avoid bright colors or too heavy an application.
- Wear glasses with up-to-date frames and clear lenses. Do not wear sunglasses with dark tints or mirrors.
- Simple earrings, not dangling; a pin or a necklace and a watch; no more than one ring per hand; no more than one bracelet.
- Job experts and employers are split on the notion of pantsuits, so a skirted suit is a safer choice.
- Depending on the position you are applying for, wear:
  - A seasonal business suit in solid color or conservative pattern with tailored or pleated skirt; blouse in a complimentary solid color such as white, cream or pastel; skirt should come to the knee; or
  - Jacket in solid color or conservative pattern; coordinating blouse and tailored or pleated skirt in appropriate length; or
  - Tailored blouse, preferably with long sleeves, in white, cream or pastel; coordinating tailored or pleated skirt in solid color or conservative print or pattern and appropriate length.
- Nails should be short to medium length; manicured with light or clear polish.
- Medium heel pumps, no open toes or backs; no scuffs or nicks in heels; do not wear flats.
- Stockings or pantyhose should be flawless (no runs) and conservative in color. Wear them even in the summer.
- Minimal perfume or cologne, no strong-smelling deodorant, and no smoking.
- No gum, candy, or other objects in your mouth.
- Carry either a good leather or leather-like portfolio or purse—not both.

*A great pleasure in life is doing what people say you cannot do. (Walter Bagehot)*



## 4.6 SHARPEN LISTENING SKILLS

### What to Know

Listening to the interviewer is as essential as talking honestly and openly about your skills and abilities. Concentrate on what is being said and how it is said, rather than on how you are doing. By listening to the interviewer's statements, comments, and questions, you can get a better understanding of the organization and what it would be like to work there. Moreover, in some interview situations, especially managerial interviews, you will be evaluated on your listening skills.

The phrase *listening skills* sometimes surprises people because most people view listening as a natural process rather than a skill. People with this opinion unfortunately have confused the word hearing (a passive activity) with listening (an intentional act that requires skill). Following are some techniques and guidelines that you can use to become a better listener.

### What to Do

1. If distractions are a problem in an interview, you can control them in the following ways:
  - If the distraction is external, control it by focusing your concentration.
  - If the distraction is internal (inside your head), control it by reminding yourself to pay attention and try to relax.
2. Paraphrase the interviewer's comments by restating the main idea or content to:
  - check and clarify accuracy;
  - let the interviewer know you understand; and
  - encourage more discussion.
3. Focus on key words, main ideas, and examples to help you retain important points.
4. Ask questions if you do not understand what the interviewer is saying or asking. Do not pretend to understand if you do not understand.
5. Take notes only if it will not distract you from the conversation. Write them in a list or outline form. Always ask the interviewer's permission before taking notes.
6. Make sure you understand what you are being asked.

## 4.7 INTERPRET BODY LANGUAGE

### What to Know

In a job interview, the interviewer will judge you on how you look and how you act, not just on what you say. Your actions, manner, and appearance add up to your body language. They give nonverbal information about your work-related skills, attitudes, and values. In fact, often nonverbal cues are just as important as verbal information in determining who gets hired. After all, everyone the company interviews will probably be qualified for the job. You want to appear to be more qualified than everyone else.

Below are a number of critical nonverbal issues. Familiarize yourself with the positive actions and appearances and use each to your best advantage.

### What to Do

1. Dress for success by following the preceding guidelines. The way you look is the first nonverbal message you send.
2. Offer a firm, warm, whole-hand handshake. Shake hands with both men and women the same way. You wouldn't give men and women different salutes, so don't shake hands differently. Practice your handshake before the interview.
3. Make eye contact with the interviewer(s). Your eyes are your most powerful communication tool. Many interviewers use your eye contact to look for enthusiasm, sincerity, and for possible inconsistencies in your responses. If you use natural eye contact, the interview will become more like a conversation between acquaintances, and you will get over some of your nervousness.
4. Sit up straight, but not stiff, and lean forward toward the interviewer, ever-so-slightly. Good posture will help you listen and make you look interested.
5. Use natural gestures. If you normally use your hands to gesture as you talk, do so in the interview. Gestures help you relax, convey enthusiasm and release nervous energy. One caution here: Avoid nervous gestures such as drumming your fingers, playing with a pencil or cup of coffee, jingling the change in your pocket, tapping your foot, swiveling in your chair, etc.
6. Speak clearly, and not too fast. Expression is a powerful way to show enthusiasm. Do not speak in a monotone voice. Allow your volume to rise and fall and pronounce words clearly. Use good grammar and think before you speak. The interviewer will assess your communication skills based on how clearly you express yourself.
7. Your face conveys your attitude, and reinforces what you say. Avoid frowning. Frowns are an intimidation factor—you don't want to intimidate the interviewer. Smile naturally.

8. Remain attentive and eager to listen. Reinforce the interviewer's comments with nods just as he or she does with you.
9. Notice the nonverbal cues of the interviewer. The interviewer's facial expressions will let you know how well they are listening. If the interviewer seems not to be paying attention, shorten your answers, use an example, or ask a question. If the interviewer gives indications that the interview is almost over, help bring the session to an end.

According to researchers, 65% of the meaning in an interaction is conveyed nonverbally.

*Birdwhistell, R. (1955) Background to Kinesics. ETC., 13, 10-18.*



*Body language is just as important as verbal communication.*

## 4.8 ANSWER QUESTIONS

### What to Know

Most interviewers ask similar questions during job interviews. These questions relate to how your skills, knowledge, training, and work experience fit the job opening in the company. Unfortunately, many job hunters do not expect the questions, and do not practice their answers before an interview. As a result, applicants may not present their strongest assets. It is difficult to give good answers to questions on the spur of the moment. If unprepared, the simplest question can throw you off balance.

You can improve your chances for success if you practice answering questions. Read the following questions, write down your own personal answers, and practice your answers out loud. Then, when an interviewer asks one of the questions, you'll be ready.

As you read the questions and begin to develop your own answers, use the following ideas:

1. Keep your answers brief, but be certain you answer the questions thoroughly.
2. Use evidence, examples, data and anecdotes to illustrate your points.
3. Think about your answer before you start to speak. It is okay to pause and collect your thoughts, and then give your answer. Try to relate your response to the position for which you are applying.
4. Remember, most questions have more than one purpose. As you develop your answers, think about the match between your skills and the company's needs.
5. Every chance you get, explain how you would go about doing a job rather than just saying you can do it. Do not volunteer information you are not asked for—you might talk yourself out of a job.

*Be nice to people...nice gets nice, and all things being equal, courtesy can be very persuasive.*

## TOUGH QUESTIONS AND TOUGH ANSWERS

The following list of questions and answers may help you prepare for your interview.

### 1. Tell me about yourself.

Be thorough, but brief. Talk for no more than two minutes. Be logical. Be positive. Discuss your education and professional achievements and goals. Then briefly describe your qualifications for the job and the contributions you could make to the organization. Refer to the 30-second commercial in section 4.4.

### 2. Why did you leave the military?

This can be a difficult question. “I achieved my goals in the military and I’m now looking for a new challenge.” You could then explain what your goals were, how you met them, and where you see yourself going now.

### 3. Why are you leaving your current position?

This is a critical question. Do not bad-mouth previous employers. Don’t sound too opportunistic. It is good to state after long personal consideration you wanted an opportunity to expand your background/knowledge. You feel your chance to make a contribution at this time is very low due to company restructuring. Still attempt to score points.

### 4. What do you consider your most significant accomplishment?

This can get you the job. Prepare extensively. Tell a brief story, which includes details and your professional involvement. The problem, action, resolution organization works well here. Describe a situation that presented a problem, detail what actions you took to resolve it, and discuss what the resolution was. This should be an accomplishment that was truly worth achieving. Some aspects that you could discuss include: hard work, deadlines, overcoming obstacles, important company issues and relations with coworkers.

### 5. Why do you believe you are qualified for this position? Why should I hire you?

Pick two or three main factors about the job and about you that are most relevant. Discuss for two minutes, with specific details. Select a technical skill, a specific management skill (organizing, staffing, planning) and a personal success story.

### 6. Have you ever accomplished something you did not think you could?

Show you are goal-orientated, have a strong work ethic, personal commitment and integrity. Provide a good example where you overcame numerous difficulties to succeed. Prove you are not a quitter and you’ll get going when the going gets tough.

### 7. What do you like/dislike about your current position?

Interviewer may be trying to determine your compatibility with the open position. Stating you dislike overtime or dislike specific details, or that you dislike “management” can cost you the position. There is nothing wrong with liking challenges, pressure situations, opportunity to grow, or disliking bureaucracy.

### 8. How do you handle pressure? Do you like or dislike these situations?

High achievers tend to perform well in high pressure situations. Conversely, this question also could imply that the position is pressure-packed. If you perform well under stress, provide a good example with details, giving an overview of the stress situation. Try to relay the situation as a challenge rather than focusing on your ability to handle pressure. The interviewer will see you turn a negative into a positive situation.

**9. Good employees can take the initiative and get the job done. Can you describe yourself in terms of this statement?**

A proactive, results-oriented person does not need constant supervision. To convince the interviewer you know how to take initiative you must describe a situation in which you were self-motivated. Try to discuss at least one example in depth. Demonstrate a strong work ethic and creativity.

**10. What is the worst or most embarrassing aspect about your career? How would you have done things differently now with 20/20 hindsight?**

This is a question to find out if you are introspective and if you learn from your mistakes. The right answer indicates an open, flexible personality. Do not be afraid to talk about negative results or problem issues, particularly if you have learned from them. Dynamic, high-performance individuals learn from mistakes. End your story on a positive note.

**11. How have you grown or changed over the past few years?**

To discuss this effectively is indicative of a well balanced, intelligent individual. Maturation, increased technical skills, or increased self-confidence are important aspects of human development. Overcoming personal obstacles, or recognizing manageable weaknesses can make you an approachable and desirable employee.

**12. What do you consider your most significant strengths?**

Know four or five key strengths. Be able to discuss each with a specific example. Select those attributes that are most compatible with the job opening. Most people mention management ability or good interpersonal skills in response to this question. If you can not describe the specific characteristics of management, such as planning, organizing, budgeting, staffing, etc., do not say you have strong management skills. If you mention interpersonal skills you should be able to clearly explain what you mean.

**13. What do you consider your most significant weakness?**

Show by specific example how a weakness can be turned into a strength. Balance any negative with a positive statement. Example: "I tend to be a workaholic, but have learned to better manage my time."

**14. Deadlines, frustration, difficult people and silly rules can make a job difficult. How do you handle these types of things?**

If you can't deal with petty frustrations you'll be seen as a problem. You certainly can state your displeasure at the petty side of these issues, but how you overcome them is more important. Diplomacy, perseverance and common sense can often prevail even in difficult circumstances. This is part of corporate America and you must be able to deal with it on a regular basis.

## ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

**15. What kind of work are you looking for?**

**16. What do you know about our company?** (This is your opportunity to shine with the amount of research that you've done. If you have contacts in the company this is a good time to do some name dropping.)

15. What can you do for us that someone else cannot?
16. What things about your previous jobs have you disliked?
17. What goals have you set recently?
18. Where do you expect to be in five years?
19. What do you think of your supervisor?
20. What does your supervisor think of you?
21. What do your subordinates think of you?
22. How did previous employers treat you?
23. What is your management style (democratic, team player, etc.)?
24. Would you describe a few situations in which your work was criticized?
25. What are your two biggest accomplishments in:
  - a. your present or last job;
  - b. your career so far?
26. How long would it take you to make a contribution to our company?
27. What do you expect as a starting salary?
28. Tell me about yourself:
  - a. Are you creative? Give an example.
  - b. Are you analytical? Give an example.
  - c. Are you a good manager? Give an example.
  - d. Are you a leader? Give an example.
29. I have interviewed several people with more experience. Why should I hire you instead of them?
30. What jobs have you held? How did you get them and why did you leave?
31. Why did you choose your field of work?
32. How do you spend your spare time?
33. What personal characteristics do you feel are necessary for success in your chosen field?
34. Do you prefer working with others or by yourself?
35. What kind of boss do you prefer?
36. Can you take criticism without getting upset?

## ILLEGAL INTERVIEWING QUESTIONS

Inquiry Area	Illegal Question	Legal Question
National Origin/Citizenship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are you a U.S. citizen?</li> <li>• Where were you/your parents born?</li> <li>• What is your “native tongue?”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are you authorized to work in the United States?</li> <li>• What languages do you read/speak/write fluently? (This is okay only if this ability is relevant to the job.)</li> </ul>
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How old are you?</li> <li>• When did you graduate?</li> <li>• What’s your date of birth?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are you over the age of 18?</li> </ul>
Marital/Family Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What’s your marital status?</li> <li>• Whom do you live with?</li> <li>• Do you plan to have a family? When?</li> <li>• How many kids do you have?</li> <li>• What are your child-care arrangements?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would you be willing to relocate if necessary?</li> <li>• Would you be able and willing to travel as needed by the job? (This is okay if it is asked of all applicants.)</li> <li>• Would you be able and willing to work overtime as necessary? (Again, this is okay only if it is asked of all applicants.)</li> </ul>
Affiliations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What clubs or social organizations do you belong to?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• List any professional or trade groups or other organizations that you consider relevant to your ability to perform this job.</li> </ul>
Personal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How tall are you? How much do you weigh? (Questions about height/weight are not acceptable unless minimum standards are essential to job performance.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are you able to lift a 50-pound weight and carry it 100 yards, as that is part of the job?</li> </ul>
Disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you have any disabilities?</li> <li>• Please complete the following medical history.</li> <li>• Have you had any recent or past illnesses or operations? If yes, list them and give dates when these occurred.</li> <li>• What was the date of your last physical exam?</li> <li>• How’s your family’s health?</li> <li>• When did you lose your eyesight? How?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are you able to perform the essential functions of this job? (This question is okay if the interviewer has thoroughly described the job.)</li> <li>• Can you demonstrate how you would perform the following job-related functions?</li> </ul>

Inquiry Area	Illegal Question	Legal Question
Disabilities (cont.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do you need an accommodation to perform the job? (This question can only be asked after a job offer has been made.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As part of the hiring process, after a job offer has been made, you will be required to undergo a medical exam. (Exam results must be kept strictly confidential, except medical/safety personnel may be informed if emergency medical treatment is required, and supervisors may be informed about necessary job accommodations, based on exam results.)</li> </ul>
Arrest Record	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have you ever been arrested?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have you ever been convicted of _____? (The crime named should be reasonably related to the performance of the job in question.)</li> </ul>
Military	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If you've been in the military, were you honorably discharged?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In what branch of the Armed Forces did you serve?</li> <li>What type of training or education did you receive in the military?</li> </ul>

*Taken from: "Handling Illegal Questions." Kaplan, Rochelle. Planning Job Choices, 1998. National Association of Colleges and Employers, 1998, pp. E61-2.*



*Worrying about what is right is always more important than worrying about who is right.*

## Situational Questions

You also need to think about “What if . . .” questions. These can be difficult to answer. For instance:

*“What would you do if your supervisor told you to do something illegal?”*

Use common sense. These types of questions need answers based on your knowledge, experience and personal values. Consider what the employer wants to hear. A calm approach is best. Don’t rush into an answer. It is better to cushion your answer. For example: *“One thing I might consider doing, would be . . .”* If the interviewer does not like your solution, you can consider a different approach.

Another situational question might ask for an example of how you had to deal with a difficult situation. The interviewer might ask you to describe a time when you had to deal with a difficult supervisor, co-worker, or customer. You should highlight your contributions and keep your answer relevant to the job you are interviewing for.

Another area of difficult questions may concern your family responsibilities, age, health or other personal information. They are not always fair questions and may be illegal, but you need to be prepared to deal with them. Refer to the application section that deals with inappropriate questions. You may choose to deal with these type questions by refusing to answer, in which case you will probably not be hired. Another response could be: *“If you can tell me how that relates to the position, I would be happy to answer the question.”* You must make the decision about how to answer based on how much you want the job.

An interviewer will form opinions about whether you are:

- Mature
- An initiator
- Emotionally stable/even-tempered
- Thorough
- A team worker
- Self-confident
- Tactful
- Assertive
- Adaptable
- Conscientious
- Tough minded
- A hard worker
- Self-disciplined
- Honest and sincere

## Guidelines for Salary Questions

1. Do not mention money or benefits until the interviewer brings it up, or until an offer has been made.
2. Give the amount as a range, for example \$20,000 to \$23,000 rather than saying \$21,000. A range gives room to negotiate.
3. You can find out a realistic salary from researching the occupation. Check the Internet for salary information. Another resource for information might be the local state job service.
4. Sometimes an employer will bring up salary early in an interview. If you are not ready to discuss this question simply say:

*“Before I can give an answer to the salary question, I would like to know more about the position.”*

5. The best time to discuss the salary and benefits package is after you have a job offer, when you are in a much better bargaining position.
6. Remember, there are many benefits to a job besides salary, such as:
  - opportunities for advancement and training
  - benefits, i.e. parking, transportation, tuition reimbursement, childcare onsite, fitness center, health insurance, etc.
  - good working conditions
  - good hours, flexible scheduling, etc.
7. If possible, wait until you find out about the benefits and are offered the job before you answer questions about salary.
8. If an employer asks you about the minimum salary you will accept, don't give a figure you think will either be too high or too low.

If you are too high, they'll think that you won't take the job at a lower salary and might offer it to someone else.

If you are too low, you might get the job at a much lower salary than you could have gotten. This little mistake could cost you thousands of dollars!

9. Here are some ways you can answer the question about minimum salary:

*“I'm really interested in long-term growth and advancement. Right now, I'm willing to consider whatever your company pays people with my skills.”*

*“I don't have a particular amount in mind. I'm interested in a career with your company, not just a job.”*

## 4.9 ASK QUESTIONS DURING INTERVIEWS

### What to Know

During a job interview, you will be asked questions about your work experience, education, and goals. Your answers and the nonverbal messages you send determine the impression you make. However, interviewers also learn about you, and remember you, by the questions you ask. They often judge your thinking skills based on the kinds of questions you ask. Interviewers respect candidates who think about their choices carefully, and they appreciate knowing you have done your homework.

During the interview you will also be deciding if the company is a good place to work. Based on the answers to your questions, you will learn about the employer. Look for a match between the company and your goals, needs, and attitudes.

It is a good idea to write out five or six questions before the interview. Revise the questions for each interview based on your research. If a question gets answered before you ask it, choose another question from your list.

Your questions should do two things. They should get the information you want to know about the company. They should also reflect your knowledge of the company. Use the information you learned while doing research on the company to write your questions.

### What to Do

Following is a list of suggested questions. Many of these questions could have been answered during research of the company. Do not bother to ask something you already know. Add some questions of your own.

1. I feel I have a clear picture of the job, but could you please give me a few more details?
2. How would you describe a typical day on the job?
3. What are the promotion possibilities?
4. Where does the job fit into the organization?
5. To whom would I report?
6. What other positions would I interface with while performing my duties?
7. How would you describe the work environment?
8. Do your employees work individually or as a team?

9. Where is the job located?
10. What career opportunities exist in the company?
11. What further education or training does the company consider important for my future progress?
12. How are performance reviews done?
13. What is the general management style with regard to customer service, products, or employees?
14. Is this a newly-created position or am I replacing someone?
15. How would I be trained or introduced to the job?
16. What are the department's goals for the year?
17. When will you make a decision?
18. Does the company have a promote-from-within policy?
19. What kind of work schedule does the company have?
20. Does the company require employees to relocate, and if so, how is that done?
21. Does the job require travel and, if so, how much?

The best questions show that you have done research about the company and, at the same time, get you information you really want to know. The following are three examples of this type of question. Of course, you will tailor each question to the company information and the job opening.

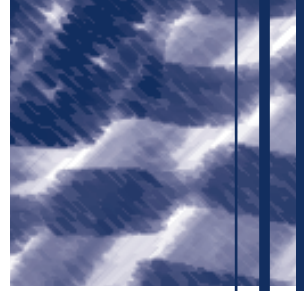
1. What opportunities might I have to work in the \_\_\_\_\_ area?
2. Your company literature indicated that the company actively encourages continuing education. What opportunities are there?
3. In your Annual Report, the company president talked about a new fiber optics division. What are the research goals of that division and how would it relate to the division where I am applying?

Good questions can use information the interviewer shared with you earlier in the interview. For example, if the interviewer mentioned that the company plans to develop new products, you might ask how those plans will affect the job you are seeking.

Some questions are not appropriate for the first interview. Salary and benefits are important, but save those questions until an offer has been made unless the interviewer brings them up.

Finally, pay attention to the time left in the interview. Usually, the interviewer will invite you to ask questions during the last five to eight minutes of a one hour interview. So, when you have an interview scheduled, write out at least six questions you want to ask to help you get the information you need. Ask only the most important questions. If time is short, say something like: I had hoped to ask you several things, but as our time is short, let me ask the two questions that are most important to me.

If you think that there are any questions on the interviewer's mind that might work against your being considered for the position, you can address these questions yourself. Remember, issues are situationally dependent. Some employer concerns might be military spouse issues, commuting, relocation, military stereotypes, disabilities, etc. You might say "I realize that my home is 40 miles from the office, but I enjoy the time I spend commuting, that wouldn't be a deterrent for me." "I realize that many people believe that someone with a military background might be rigid, but I pride myself on being innovative. I enjoy change" or "I realize that accepting this job would mean relocating to another state, but my family and I have already discussed it and agree that it would be a great opportunity for us." Another way that you can address these issues is by asking the interviewer if there are any questions that you haven't answered to his/her satisfaction. DON'T address limitations that the interviewers aren't already aware of or that won't interfere with your ability to do the job.



*Keep away from people who try to belittle your ambitions. Small people always do that, but the really great make you feel that you, too, can become great.(Mark Twain)*

## 4.10 FOLLOW UP AFTER INTERVIEWS

### What to Know

Every interview is an opportunity to improve your interviewing skills. You can also maximize your potential for success in every interview. To help you learn from your experience and to increase your chances for success, do two things at the end of each interview:

1. Send a thank you note or letter to the interviewer.
2. Take a few notes about how you did.

### What to Do

Do these two things right after each interview. Your notes will be most useful if you make them while the interview is still fresh in your mind. Use the Post Interview Checklist on the following page. The notes will help you in two ways:

1. If you are called for a second interview, you can easily review what went on in the first. If you note what you wore you can dress appropriately for the second interview as well.
2. If you do not get the job, you can review your interview performance and improve it for the next time.

Only about 5% of those looking for jobs actually send thank you letters. Write a thank you letter soon after the interview, the same day is best. Be sure to check spelling, grammar, and punctuation. You can type or hand write this letter. You should tailor your letter to the culture of the company and the relationship you established with the interviewer. Send a formal business letter if you feel the interviewer and the company call for that. If you established a good rapport with the interviewer, send a handwritten note. As for e-mailing thank you notes, career experts and employers are not in total agreement, but the company's culture should guide you. If people in the company rely heavily on e-mail, your e-mailed thank you will seem appropriate. It is also a fast solution if you know the company will be making its hiring decision quickly. It is still a good idea to follow up your e-mailed thank you with a hard-copy version. The thank you letter is a good way to add anything you forgot, or wish you had said in the interview. You can reinforce important information that you provided in the interview. You can state your interest in the job, or you can let the employer know that you appreciate their time. If you were interviewed by a panel, it is best to send a thank you letter to each of the interviewers. Be sure to vary the letters by a few sentences in case they compare them.

## POST INTERVIEW CHECKLIST

Company Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date to Call Back: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Decision: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Was I on time? Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_

2. Did I dress appropriately? Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_

3. Do I need to send additional information?

- resume or application Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_
- reference list/letters of reference Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_
- work samples Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_

4. Did I give a positive indication of my interest in the job? Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_

5. Did I mention who referred me? Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_

6. What was the interviewer's general impression of my resume? \_\_\_\_\_

7. What was discussed the most? \_\_\_\_\_

8. What did the employer seem particularly interested in? \_\_\_\_\_

9. What questions did I have the most difficulty answering? \_\_\_\_\_

10. What questions did I answer most effectively? \_\_\_\_\_

11. What further information did I obtain about the company by asking questions? \_\_\_\_\_

12. What can I do to improve my effort? \_\_\_\_\_

13. Did I send a thank you letter? \_\_\_\_\_

*Sample Thank You Letter***Thank You Letter**

The reasons for sending a thank you letter are to remind the interviewer of your interest, to say thank you for the interview, and to add anything you forgot to mention. Two sample thank you letters that you can use as models follow.

February 2, 20XX

Mr. William Thomas, President  
Washington National Bank  
1111 Washington Street  
Los Angeles, CA 12345

Dear Mr. Thomas:

Thank you for the opportunity to interview yesterday. The information you shared with me about the Washington National Bank was most interesting, and I am excited about the possibility of applying my education and experience in the position of loan officer for your bank. The expansion and public lending plans are especially intriguing, and I look forward to helping the bank enter the new market.

If I can provide you with any additional information, please let me know. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

*Charles Henderson*

Charles Henderson  
1111 E. Hollywood Boulevard  
Los Angeles, CA 12345  
(123) 456-7890

*Thank You*

*Front of Card*

February 2, 20XX

Dear Ms. Anderson:

Thank you for the interview this afternoon. I appreciated the time and consideration you gave me.

The Cable Installer position we discussed definitely sounds interesting to me. I feel that I could make a valuable contribution to WCC.

I look forward to hearing from you next Thursday.

Sincerely,

Judy R. Smith

*Inside of Card*

## 4.11 ANALYZE WHY YOU DID NOT GET A JOB

### What to Know

There are many factors that can prevent you from getting a job, such as:

- Sometimes the company decides not to hire anyone, or hires someone with more experience;
- Sometimes they hire from within the company;
- Sometimes your style does not fit the style they want; or
- Sometimes you are overqualified and the interviewer believes you will not stay with the company.

Rejections are part of the process and you should not get discouraged. Don't take it personally—sometimes the company's decision has nothing to do with you. But you should learn from every interview how to improve your interview skills. In that way, you can keep your self-esteem and improve your chances for success.

Look at the following list of factors, and think about how many of them are in your control. Start now, and work on the ones that you can get under control as you prepare for your interview.



*A turn in the road is not the end of the road unless you fail to make the turn.*

WHAT WENT WRONG	WAYS TO IMPROVE
1. Poor manner and self-presentation, ranging from being arrogant to a poor handshake.	1. Follow guidelines for verbal and nonverbal interaction and for listening.
2. Poor personal appearance and careless dress.	2. Follow appearance guidelines.
3. Lack of enthusiasm and interest or no evidence of initiative.	3. Use voice expression and nonverbal cues.
4. Lack of clear goals or ambition.	4. Link skills to position, emphasize your career.
5. Poor speech habits or inability to express self.	5. Practice answers so you use good grammar and improve your oral presentation.
6. Lack of preparation. Failure to research the company. Inability to ask intelligent questions or make intelligent comments.	6. Research the company, practice answering questions. Ask informed questions about the job and the company.
7. Failure to look at interviewer or demonstrate interest.	7. Use body language guidelines.
8. Unrealistic salary demands or more interest in salary than opportunity.	8. Research and emphasize a realistic salary.
9. Inability to relate skills and knowledge to job or indefinite responses to questions.	9. Prepare and practice answers to anticipated questions. Emphasize your transferable skills.
10. Negative comments about previous employers or exhibiting friction with various types of authority.	10. Consider and practice answers about work experience and your relationship to supervisors and organizations.
11. Lack of interest in company/industry.	11. Research company/industry.
12. Weak excuses or hedging about unfavorable information in background.	12. Better prepare yourself to deal with prior problems. Acknowledge mistakes, talk about learning from them, present a positive picture.
13. Unwillingness to start where needed and working your way up.	13. Emphasize that you want the job and are willing to make a commitment.
14. Lack of knowledge in specialized areas.	14. Practice answers to anticipated questions so you can reveal your specialized knowledge.
15. Poor attitude as illustrated by lack of courtesy, cynicism, strong prejudices or low moral standards.	15. Reconsider how you present yourself. Think before you speak.