

Preparing for an Interview

Completing an application form:

1. Photocopy the application and fill out the copy neatly and completely in pencil.
2. Answer ALL items completely, especially the section on "Qualifications for the position". Give greater emphasis and detail on jobs you have had which are similar to the job you are applying for.
3. Check over the completed penciled copy very carefully for errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar. Make any changes that will improve the way it reads.
4. When you are sure your penciled copy is complete and reads the way you want it to, fill in the original form. It should be typed, if possible, or neatly printed in black ink. Keep the rough draft for future references.

It is important to remember that the application is a sample of your work.

What to Take to the Interview

Arrive a few minutes early and review a copy of your application or resume. This will refresh your memory on what you wrote and will help you to better organize and prepare for the interview.

Take along notes with the name of the person interviewing you, the name of the department, and the date and time of the interview. Make sure you write down all of the names and position title of any and all people you talk to.

Preparation Steps

1. Arrive at the interview on time with a pleasant and interested attitude.
2. Look the interviewer in the eyes and shake hands.
3. Encourage open communication with the interviewer. Look directly at him/her to show that you are interested.
4. Keep good EYE CONTACT with the interviewer. Look directly at him/her to show that you are interested.
5. Listen carefully and identify the skills needed for the job. You can't answer a question if you haven't heard it correctly.
6. Stress your qualifications for the job and your interest in it.
7. Avoid mention of your personal, domestic, and financial problems, but respond honestly and candidly to questions. Discuss only matters related to the job.
8. Watch personal mannerisms: gum chewing, smoking, fiddling with purse or jiggling coins in pocket - these are a few things NOT to do. Try to RELAX.
9. Have a definite understanding as to what is required of you.

Questions Frequently Asked During the Interview

Role play the interview situation, and practice how you will answer them. Remember, nothing beats proper preparation.

1. Why did you choose your particular field of work?
2. How do you plan to achieve your career goals?
3. Why do you think you would like this particular type of job?
4. What do you consider to be your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
5. How would you describe yourself?
6. What motivates you to put forth your greatest effort?
7. What related experience do you have for this position?

8. How will your skills contribute to our organization?
9. What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction? Why?
10. How would you describe the ideal job for you?
11. What interests you most about this position?
12. What major challenges have you encountered and how did you deal with them?

The following are a few basic questions which you may want to include with others that are tailored to the particular opening:

1. Would you describe the duties of the position for me? Could you show me how the position fits in the organization?
2. What qualities and skills do you find most effective in this position?
3. What are the primary results you would like to see me produce?
4. What is the career growth potential for this position?
5. You have obviously been successful at X, what do you attribute this to and what qualities would make me successful here as well?

General Philosophies of Interviewing

1. Interviewing is a selling situation, the most qualified candidate doesn't always get the job, it's the person who interviews best.
2. Do not leave any negatives or weaknesses unaddressed or without restating one of your positives.
3. Relate skills and experience as benefits for the new job. How you can help them.
4. Ask for an offer! As a professional you deserve candid feedback.

The Structured Interview

1. Opening:

Uncover the details of the company and the job. (What skills are important to the interviewer?)

A. Machine Gun Question: "While I am generally familiar with your company, I don't know much detail. Would you tell me about your company, its function (or product), the department, your future plans, and what was your background before you came here?"

B. Must Question: "What skills do you feel are important to be successful in this position?"

At this point, stop talking and listen. He/she will tell you everything you need to know to sell yourself for this position. That's right, I said sell yourself for this position! As already stated, the most qualified person does not always receive the job offer. The person who convinces the interviewer that he/she is qualified and interested, creates a sense of urgency to his decision making process and shows the most confidence, is the person who gets the job.

List in your mind the skills necessary to succeed. If he does not answer your questions, ask them again. Add to this list by asking "IS this skill (Specific strength) helpful in this position?"

2. "Sell" Cycle:

Relate your skills/experience to the key criteria. Remember to talk benefits to the interviewer, pretend you are part of the project team.

Example: "That is very interesting. Let me tell you about an experience/project that relates..."

Then, briefly describe your background, stating your responsibilities, computer tools used, skills attained, and accomplishments, relating this to what the interviewer is looking for. This description

of your background should take no more than five minutes. Don't talk about what you like or dislike, your boss, your company or personal life - just the facts. Talk net and always look the interviewer in the eye!

Use the following structure:

1. Summarize your background (Use lists of hardware, project functions, etc.).
2. Tell the interviewer how this will benefit him (Fast start, increased responsibility, independent work, proven track record).
3. Ask him/her what he/she would like to explore in detail?

To prepare yourself - make lists of your projects, technology, accomplishments, responsibilities, hardware, software, etc. Use these lists as summaries. Remember to clarify tough, general, vague questions so you can answer in a net fashion. Use the "answer a question with a question" technique. It brings you time to think.

Example: Mr. Interviewer, could you tell me specifically what you are interested in? I'm not sure what you are asking, could you rephrase it? How does that aspect relate to this position? Why is that skills important to the job?

Once the question is clarified, answer in net fashion.

On questions directed to your weaknesses, don't just answer but ask clarifying questions to determine its relative importance. This uses the "outweigh" technique.

Example: OUTWEIGH WEAKNESS

Question: How important is that skill to this job?

Answer: Mr. Interviewer, I don't have that specific background but I am bringing the following skills to the job (list your strengths). (Give an example of something you've done in the past that you did not have heavy experience with and tell how you were successful and why). Let's talk how you can help me in the one area I'm missing.

Alternative: How long would it take to learn that skill?

Again, your objective in taking this interview is to get the job! Now, be quiet and listen to his comments to see if you were effective in convincing the interviewer that you are both qualified and interested. Most of the time the people who do interviewing were never trained to interview, don't do it well, and are probably as nervous as you. Even if his description of the position doesn't sound attractive, sell yourself as though this was the only position available to you on earth. In addition to the fact that the interviewer may not explain the position effectively, the total complexion, scope, and pay range can change after you have convinced the interviewer that you are a person whom he must hire. In addition, there may be additional openings that you may be attracted to.

3. Closing the Interview:

Regardless of what has happened up to this point, you must conclude the interview. You want to know how you've done and what to expect.

Example: Based upon our meeting today, I know that I am both qualified and interested in your firm. What is the next step in the interview cycle?

Can you share with me any concerns about my background?

Is there any area which I may further clarify for you?

Resell and resolve any miscommunications. Put weaknesses in perspective.

Thank the interviewer for the opportunity to discuss this opportunity and establish a specific time when you hear from them or when you will call them back.

4. Salary Question: (always avoid if possible)

You can do everything we know that works up to this point and "blow" the interview now if you are not careful. If you are asked the question "How much will it take to hire you?", don't make a fatal mistake! Once you've given your answer, you cannot retract!

More people fail on interviews right here than at any other point. Don't be mistaken and think they love you and shoot for the moon. Here is an example you can use:

Example: (Preferred)

Mr. Interviewer, you must know my present salary (or the minimum salary I would consider). Rather than give you a specific amount, I would rather leave you with the thought that I am QUALIFIED and INTERESTED in the position we've been discussing. If you feel the same about me, make me the best offer that you feel comfortable with so I might consider a career with (company).

Listen to his response - he might make you an offer!!!