

First Impressions

Make the First 7 Seconds Count



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The Interview

AT THE END OF THE INTERVIEW, ALWAYS ASK QUESTIONS

Always bring questions for the interviewer; it's okay to bring a list. Questions show you have a great level of interest. It shows that you want this to be a great fit for you because it implies you're looking for not just a job but a long term career.

Here are some questions you could ask:

- "If hired, would I be filling a newly created position, or would I be replacing someone?"
- "Why is this position vacant?"
- "Are you satisfied with the way the position/ department/group has been functioning? If so, why? If not, why?"

- "How many people have held this position in the past five years?"
- "What have they moved on to?"
- "What makes someone successful in this organization?"
- "What is your strategic plan for this position?"
- "What are the organization's expectations for this position?"

Close the interview by summarizing the reasons you would be a value/benefit to the company and make it clear that you understand the job requirements and responsibilities. Lastly, do not forget to ask what the next steps are.

FREQUENTLY Asked INTERVIEW Questions

What is your major weakness?

Going into the interview, be prepared with one or two weaknesses. Avoid the standard, "I work too hard" answer. It is overused and not original. Instead, provide an authentic response that highlights your thought processes.

What are your best skills?

Not even a second of hesitation can take place when answering this question. You must be prepared to rattle-off your top key skill assets one after another with confidence and clarity. After which, continue on with examples of how you have demonstrated some of your skills on the job. And, of course, all the while, your answers should work in sync with what you know to be the company's core values.

What are your career goals and future plans?

The interviewer wants to know if your plans and the company's goals are compatible. Be sure to infer that you are ambitious and proactive, but most importantly ANSWER THE QUESTION. If you beat around the bush it will be perceived as confusing, hence, you will be perceived as being unsure of what you want. After you answer the question, talk about your ongoing desire to continually learn, grow and improve upon your value and job performance. Lastly, be specific as possible about how you plan to act on meeting your goals.

What salary are you expecting?

This is a question you must use a great deal of care in answering, because you only get one chance to set the stage on what you cost. The rule of thumb is to defer the question back to the interviewer, for example, "I would first like to know what you plan on paying the best candidate?" Let the employer make the first offer. Incidentally, it is vital that going into the interview you be prepared with what the current salary range is for the position/ profession at hand. Research online, inquire around and peruse job postings to see what comparable positions are paying. Also be aware of the types of benefits, vacation time, etc. you deserve, given your experience and the job level you are seeking.

Always Include A Cover Letter With Your Resume

Unlike your resume, this is where you communicate your interest in the company and why you should be hired, in a detailed manner. This is your chance to describe how you would contribute to the strength of the company. This is NOT a letter explaining why the job would be beneficial for you; but rather why you would be an asset to the company.

Know your History

Get to know as much as you can about the company. Do not use your introductory paragraph as a means of restating your resume. Your cover letter should show curiosity, personality and an interest in the field you are applying to work in.

Keep it Short

Summarize your experience into three bullet points. Pick three desired qualities or qualifications from the job description and organize your thoughts around them. This shows the employer that you have research the position.

Send your cover letter as PDF

Virtually every computer is able to read a PDF file without any conversions; the same is not true for .docx or .pages files. File conversions are harmful for two reasons:

- 1) The employer is likely to move on to the next applicant without considering your application.
- 2) Conversions can also result in formatting errors.

Finish Strong:

Quickly mention the benefits your experiences would bring to their company. Request an interview. State when and how you will follow up. It is imperative that you stick to whatever date and/or time you state here. The rule is to follow-up in five business days or less. If you are unsuccessful in reaching the person, make sure you leave a message that you were in touch and let them know when you plan to contact them again. This step in the process can get your resume noticed among a stack of other resumes. End your cover letter with your phone number and when you can be reached.

DO

- **DO** keep your cover letter brief and to the point
- **DO** be sure it is error-free
- **DO** accentuate what you can offer the company not what you hope to gain from them.
- **DO** make sure your phone number and address are on your cover letter just in case it gets separated from your resume.
- **DO** check the watermark by holding the paper up to the light facing forward so it is readable on the same side as the text, and right side up.
- **DO** sign your cover letter (or type your name if you are sending it electronically). Your letter and signature should only be printed and/or written in black or blue ink.

DON'T

- **DON'T** just repeat information verbatim from your resume.
- **DON'T** overuse the personal pronoun "I".
- **DON'T** send a generic cover letter – show your personal knowledge of, and interest in, that particular company or organization.

You Only Have One Chance to Make a First Impression

The image you present to a potential employer is the first thing they are going to notice about you – so, dress in appropriate, professional attire and you will certainly portray yourself as a person who respects the interview process and the culture of the company in which you are seeking employment.

Before you begin to set up interviews, make sure:

- You have the appropriate clothes, shoes and carrying case.
- Everything fits you correctly.
- There are no missing buttons or visible signs of lint.
- All external tags and/or tracking stitches from new clothes have been removed.
- Shoes are polished and soles & heels cared for.
- Interview attire is freshly pressed or dry cleaned, ready for you at a moment's notice, if need be.
- Make sure what you wear on the interview covers any tattoos.

For the interview, don't forget:

- Accurate directions to the interview so you can be on time (arriving minutes early is preferred).
- Copies of your resume.
- A prepared presentation (optional).
- Two pens.
- A professional looking note pad.
- Breath mints to use just before entering the building for your interview.
- DO NOT bring coffee, soda, gum, candy, cigarettes, iPods, laptops or an iPad to an interview.

Your Body Language Speaks for You... So:

- Smile. Facial expression is so important when it comes to making a good impression. You need to make sure your expression is saying more about you than words could in a split second.
- Shake their hands. The handshake is the universally accepted signal of professionalism, politeness and confidence. A good handshake is a fine art; a tricky balance between a tight squeeze and a limp stroke.
- Maintain eye contact. People perceive you as shifty, nervous or rude when you don't make eye contact. Therefore, to make a good first impression make sure you lock eyes with the interviewer as soon as you enter the room and maintain it whilst you shake hands and introduce yourself.
- Sit down only when invited to do so. After you have shaken all of their hands and formally introduced yourself the natural next step is to sit down. However, it is polite to wait until the interviewer invites you to.

BASIC GUIDELINES

MEN

- Necktie should be silk with a conservative pattern
- Dark shoes; dark socks
- Conservative leather belt (same color as shoes)
- Neatly trimmed nails and limit the aftershave
- Get a haircut (short hair is always best)
- Beards & mustaches are possible negatives, but if you must, make sure they are neat and trimmed
- No rings other than wedding ring or college ring
- No earring(s)

WOMEN

- Always wear a suit (not a dress with a jacket)
- Your suit skirt should be at least knee length or longer so you can sit down comfortably
- No open toe shoes (pumps preferred)
- Conservative hosiery at skin tone
- Nail polish should be clear or a conservative color
- Minimal use of makeup (it should not be too noticeable)
- No more than one ring on each hand
- One set of earrings
- Don't overdue the perfume