



Ten Rules of Interviewing

Before stepping into an interview, be sure to practice, practice, practice. A job seeker going to a job interview without preparing is like an actor performing on opening night without rehearsing.

To help with the interview process, keep the following ten rules in mind:

- 1. Keep your answers brief and concise.**
Unless asked to give more detail, limit your answers to two to three minutes per question. Tape yourself and see how long it takes you to fully answer a question.
- 2. Include concrete, quantifiable data.**
Interviewees tend to talk in generalities. Unfortunately, generalities often fail to convince interviewers that the applicant has assets. Include measurable information and provide details about specific accomplishments when discussing your strengths.
- 3. Repeat your key strengths three times.**
It's essential that you comfortably and confidently articulate your strengths. Explain how the strengths relate to the company's or department's goals and how they might benefit the potential employer. If you repeat your strengths then they will be remembered and-if supported with quantifiable accomplishments-they will more likely be believed.
- 4. Prepare five or more success stories.**
In preparing for interviews, make a list of your skills and key assets. Then reflect on past jobs and pick out one or two instances when you used those skills successfully.
- 5. Put yourself on their team.**
Align yourself with the prospective employer by using the employer's name and products or services. For example, "As a member of _____, I would carefully analyze the _____ and _____." Show that you are thinking like a member of the team and will fit in with the existing environment. Be careful though not to say anything that would offend or be taken negatively. Your research will help you in this area.
- 6. Image is often as important as content.**
What you look like and how you say something are just as important as what you say. Studies have shown that 65 percent of the conveyed message is nonverbal; gestures, physical appearance and attire are highly influential during job interviews.
- 7. Ask questions.**
The types of questions you ask and the way you ask them can make a tremendous impression on the interviewer. Good questions require advance preparation. Just as you plan how you would answer an interviewer's questions, write out specific questions you want to ask. Then look for opportunities to ask them during the interview. Don't ask about benefits or salary. The interview process is a two-way street whereby you and the interviewer assess each other to determine if there is an appropriate match.

8. Maintain a conversational flow.

By consciously maintaining a conversational flow-a dialogue instead of a monologue-you will be perceived more positively. Use feedback questions at the end of your answers and use body language and voice intonation to create a conversational interchange between you and the interviewer.

9. Research the company, product lines and competitors.

Research will provide information to help you decide whether you're interested in the company and important data to refer to during the interview.

10. Keep an interview journal.

As soon as possible, write a brief summary of what happened. Note any follow-up action you should take and put it in your calendar. Review your presentation. Keep a journal of your attitude and the way you answered the questions. Did you ask questions to get the information you needed? What might you do differently next time? Prepare and send a brief, concise thank-you letter. Restate your skills and stress what you can do for the company.

In Summary

Because of its importance, interviewing requires advance preparation. Only you will be able to positively affect the outcome. You must be able to compete successfully with the competition for the job you want. In order to do that, be certain you have considered the kind of job you want, why you want it and how you qualify for it. You also must face reality: Is the job attainable?

In addition, recognize what it is employers want in their candidates. They want "can do" and "will do" employees. Recognize and use the following factors to your benefit as you develop your sales presentation. In evaluating candidates, employers consider the following factors:

- Ability
- Loyalty
- Personality
- Acceptance
- Recommendations
- Outside activities while in school character
- Initiative
- Communication skills
- Work record

What Happens During the Interview?

The interviewing process can be scary if you don't know what to expect. All interviews fit a general pattern. While each interview will be different, all will share three common characteristics: The beginning, the middle, and the conclusion.

The typical interview will last 30 minutes, although some may be longer. A typical structure is as follows:
Five minutes-small talk
Fifteen minutes- a mutual discussion of your background and credentials as they relate to the needs of the employer
Five minutes- asks you for questions
Five minutes- conclusion of interview

As you can see, there is not a lot of time to state your case. The employer may try to do most of the talking. When you do respond to questions or ask your own, your statements should be concise and organized without being too brief. You need to control more than half of the 15-minute personal discussion in order to make your key points.

It Starts Before you Even Say Hello

The typical interview starts before you even get into the inner sanctum. The recruiter begins to evaluate you the minute you are identified. You are expected to shake the recruiter's hand upon being introduced. Don't be afraid to extend your hand first. This shows assertiveness.

It's a good idea to arrive at the placement office at least 15 minutes early. This will give you a chance to mentally practice your introduction and possibly size up your competition.

You can also use the time to relax. It gets easier later. It may mean counting to ten slowly or wiping your hands on a handkerchief to keep them dry.

How's Your small talk Vocabulary?

Many recruiters will begin the interview with some small talk. Topics may range from the weather to sports and will rarely focus on anything that brings out your skills. Nonetheless, you are still being evaluated. First impressions often are the most important so this phase of the interview can be very critical.

Even though the small talk seems informal and relaxed, it has a definite purpose. Recruiters are trained to evaluate candidates on many different points. They may be judging how well you communicate on an informal basis. This means you must do more than smile and nod.

The Recruiter Has the Floor

The main part of the interview starts when the recruiter begins discussing the organization. He/she may spend a great deal of time talking about the position and the organization, while discussing your background. Or it may work the other way. Be prepared for either scenario.

If the recruiter discusses vague generalities about the position and you want more specific information, ask questions.

Don't be afraid to ask questions during this part of the interview. Don't interrupt the recruiter in mid-sentence, but ask your question at the first opportunity.

When the recruiter begins talking about your resume or asking for clarification, it's time to emphasize your positive traits. Your background may not be typical and the recruiter may be puzzled about your qualifications. You should indicate through thoughtful answers why you are an excellent candidate for the position.

You may have points in your background that could be construed as negative; i.e., low grade point average, no participation in outside activities, no related work experience. It's up to you to convince the recruiter these points are not negative, but positive attributes. Admit your shortcomings, then point out three quick hard-hitting strengths (even if unrelated to your weakness) that are relevant to the job opening.

Many times recruiters will ask you why you chose the major you did or what your career goals are. These questions are designed to determine your goal direction.

Employers seek people who have direction and motivation. This can be demonstrated by your answers to these innocent-sounding questions.

It's Your Turn to Ask Questions

When the recruiter asks, "Now do you have any questions?" The best way to blow the interview is to say, "No, you've answered everything I need to know." There is little chance the two of you could have covered everything. You should be able to ask at least five or six questions at this point.

Dr. C. Randall Powell, author of [Career Planning Today](#), suggests some excellent strategies for dealing with this issue. He says questions should elicit positive responses from the employer. Also, the questions should bring out your interest in and knowledge of the organization.

By asking intelligent, well-thought-out questions you show the employer you are serious about the organization and need more information. It also indicates to the recruiter that you have done your homework.

Don't ask questions simply to impress the recruiter and make the interview run over. Ask a few questions and indicate that you still have some things you'd like clarified, but you realize time is almost up. The recruiter may suggest a meeting later in the day or writing for more information. The important thing is to be aware of time constraints on the employer and allow the recruiter to decide whether to extend the interview.

The Close Counts, Too

The interview isn't over until you walk out the door. The conclusion of the interview usually lasts five minutes and is very important. During this time the recruiter may be assessing your overall performance as well as how you handle yourself during the last few minutes.

It is important to remain enthusiastic and courteous. Often the conclusion of the interview is indicated when the recruiter stands up. However, if you feel the interview has reached its conclusion, feel free to stand up first.

Shake the recruiter's hand and thank him or her for considering you. Being forthright is a quality that most employers will respect, indicating that you feel you have presented your case and the decision is now up to the employer.

Expect the Unexpected

During the interview, you may be asked some unusual questions. Don't be too surprised. Many times questions are asked simply to see how you react.

For example, surprise questions could range from, "Tell me a joke" to "What time period would you like to have lived in." These are not the kind of questions for which you can prepare in advance. Your reaction time and the response you give will be evaluated by the employer, but there's no way to anticipate questions like these. While these questions are not always used, they are intended to force you to react under some stress and pressure. The best advice is to think and give a natural response.

Evaluations Made by Recruiters

The employer will be observing and evaluating you during the interview. Erwin S. Stanton, author of [Successful Personnel Recruiting and Selection](#), indicates some evaluations made by the employer during the interview include:

1. How mentally alert and responsive is the job candidate?
2. Is the applicant able to draw proper inferences and conclusions during the course of the interview?
3. Does the applicant demonstrate a degree of intellectual depth when communicating or is his/her thinking shallow and lacking depth?
4. Has the candidate used good judgement and common sense regarding life planning up to this point?
5. What is the applicant's capacity for problem-solving activities?
6. How well does the candidate respond to stress and pressure?

THE JOB INTERVIEW

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Company and Position

1. What do you know about our company?
2. Why do you think you might want to work for our company?
3. What type of position are you most interested in?
4. What job in our company do you want to work toward?
5. What job in our company would you choose if you were entirely free to do so?
6. What interests you about our product or service?
7. What qualifications do you have that make you feel that you will be successful with this company?

Education and Campus Activities

8. Why did you choose your college major?
9. Why did you select your college or university?
10. What subject did you like least? Why?
11. What subject did you like best? Why?
12. If you were starting college all over again, what courses would you take?
13. What percentage of your college expenses did you earn? How?
14. Do you have plans for continued study? An advanced degree?
15. Do you think that your grades are a good indication of your academic achievement?
16. How has your college experience prepared you for a business career?
17. In what school activities have you participated? Why? Which did you enjoy most?
18. What extracurricular offices have you held?
19. What have you learned from participation in extracurricular activities?

Personal

20. What are your long-range and short-range goals and objectives?
21. What do you really want to do in life?
22. What are your major strengths? Weaknesses?
23. What kind of work interests you?
24. What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction? Why?
25. How would you describe yourself?
26. What are your salary expectations?
27. What qualifications do you have that make you feel that you will be successful in your field?
28. What personal characteristics are necessary for success in your chosen field?
29. How do you determine or evaluate success?
30. What qualities should a successful manager possess?
31. Do you have any specific geographic location? Why?
32. Are you willing to relocate? Does relocation bother you?
33. How do you spend your spare time? What are your hobbies?
34. What motivates you to put forth your greatest effort?
35. How much money do you hope to earn at age 35? 40?

Work Experiences

36. What jobs have you held? How were they obtained and why did you leave?
37. What did you learn about yourself from some of the jobs you have held?
38. What jobs did you enjoy most? Least?
39. Do you prefer working with others or by yourself?
40. Can you get recommendations from previous employers?
41. Do you feel your work experience is representative of your abilities?

Dress For Success

WOMEN

Suit

- Cut: Two piece, long sleeve, skirted professional suit
- Fabric: 100% wool for winter, polyester blend for spring/summer
- Color: Navy, dark gray, black, winter green, plum
- Skirt: Skirt length: at knee or 1" below the knee

Blouse

- Color: White or variety of colors that blend in with skin tone
- Style: Button-down, criss-cross or a variety of other styles
- Fabric: Silk or polyester blends

Binder/Briefcase

- Binder: Dark color
- Briefcase: Not recommended

Jewelry/Accessories

- Necklace: Pearls, single strand; gold or silver
- Earrings: Small and close to the ear
- Handbag: Small, conservative style
- Accessories: Conservative scarves, pins, handkerchiefs

Cosmetics

- Perfume: No perfume
- Makeup: Light application
- Hair: Neatly groomed
- Nails: Clear or neutral color

Hose/Shoes

- Hose: Taupe or a natural tone
- Shoe style: Closed toe, closed heel, dress pump or flat heel

MEN

Suit

- Cut: Two piece traditional cut
- Fabric: 100% worsted gabardine or wool blend
- Texture: Matching color, texture, pattern
- Color: Navy, dark gray, or pinstripe (navy, dark gray or black)

Belt

- Color: Black
- Material: Leather

Jewelry

- Jewelry: Analog watch and leather band

Shirt

- Color: White
- Style: Button-down, long sleeve
- Fabric: 100% cotton or cotton-polyester blend

Tie

- Color: Burgundy, deep greens, paisley, stripes, geometric patterns

Socks/Shoes

- Socks: Black, navy blue over the calf (no white socks)
- Shoe style: Tie shoe, all leather, wing-tips preferred or all leather dress slip-ons
- Shoe color: black

Binder/Briefcase

- Binder: Dark color
- Briefcase: Not recommended

Grooming

- Cologne: No cologne or aftershave
- Hair: Neatly groomed (professional cut)

The Site Visit/ Interview: One Step Closer

While on-campus screening interviews are important, on-site visits are where jobs are won or lost. After an on-campus interview, strong candidates are usually invited to visit the employer's facility. Work with the employer to schedule the on-site visit at a mutually convenient time. Sometimes employers will try to arrange site visits for several candidates to take place at the same time, so there may not be much flexibility... but you'll never know if the employer is flexible unless you ask.

1. An invitation to an on-site interview, often referred to as the "plant trip," is NOT a guarantee of a job offer. It is a chance to examine whether or not you will be a good match for the job and for the organization.
2. Notification of a plant trip may be by telephone or mail. Respond promptly if you are sincerely interested in this employer. Decline politely if you are not. Never go on a plant trip for the sake of the trip. Document the name and phone number of the person coordinating your trip. Verify who will be handling trip expenses. Most medium and large-size companies (as well as many smaller ones) will pay your expenses, but others will not. This is very important, because expenses are handled in various ways: 1) the employer may handle all expenses and travel arrangements; 2) you handle your expenses and arrangements (the employer may assist with this), and the employer will reimburse you later; 3) the employer may offer an on-site interview, but will not pay for your interview.
3. Know yourself and the type of job you are seeking with this employer. Don't say, "I am willing to consider anything you have."
4. Thoroughly research the potential employer. Read annual reports, newspaper articles, trade journals, etc. Many companies have home pages, where you can read their mission statements, find out about long-term goals, read recent press releases, and view corporate photos. Don't limit your research only to company-controlled information. The World Wide Web can be a valuable investigative tool. You may uncover key information that may influence-positively or negatively-your decision to pursue employment with a given organization.
5. Bring extra copies of your resume; copies of any paperwork you may have forwarded to the employer; names, addresses, phone numbers and e-mail addresses of your references; an updated college transcript; a copy of your best paper as a writing sample; a notebook; a black and/or blue pen for filling out forms and applications; and names and addresses of past employers.
6. Bring extra money and a change of clothes. Also, have the names and phone numbers of those who may be meeting you in case your plans change unexpectedly. Anything can happen and you need to be ready for emergencies.
7. Your role at the interview is to respond to questions, to ask your own questions and to observe. Be ready to meet people who are not part of your formal agenda. Be courteous to everyone regardless of his or her position; you never know who might be watching you and your actions once you arrive in town.

8. Don't forget your table manners. Plant trips may include several meals or attendance at a reception the night before your "big day." When ordering food at a restaurant, follow the lead of the employer host. For example, don't order the three-pound lobster if everyone else is having a more moderately priced entree. If you have the "dining jitters," some authorities suggest ordering food that is easy to handle, such as a boneless fish fillet or chicken breast.
9. Many employers have a set salary range for entry-level positions and others are more negotiable. Though salary should not be brought up until an offer is extended, it is wise to know your worth in advance. Contact your campus career center to obtain more information on salaries. According to a manager of university relations for a major corporation, "Students have been working on perfecting their product for a number of years and should know what kind of product they've created and what the company is willing to buy."
10. Soon after the site visit, record your impressions of your performance. Review the business cards of those you met or write the information in your notebook before leaving the facility. You should have the names, titles, addresses and phone numbers of everyone who was involved in your interview so you can determine which individuals you may want to contact with additional questions or follow-up information. A thank-you letter should be written to the person(s) who will be making the hiring decision. Stay in touch with the employer if you want to pursue a career with them.

Take note of how the employees interact, and also assess the physical work environment.

A site visit is a two-way street. You are there to evaluate the employer and to determine if your expectations are met for job content, company culture and values, organizational structure, and lifestyles (both at work and leisure). Take note of how the employees interact, and also assess the physical work environment.

Just as any good salesperson would never leave a customer without attempting to close the sale, you should never leave an interview without some sort of closure. If you decide that the job is right for you, don't be afraid to tell the employer that you feel that there is a good fit and you are eager to join their team. The employer is interested in hiring people who want to be associated with them and they will never know of your interest if you don't voice your opinion. Keep in mind that although the employer has the final power to offer a job, your demeanor during the entire interviewing process-both on and off campus-also gives you a great deal of power.