

Job Interview Tips: How to Make a Great Impression

You have your job interview scheduled—congratulations! Now it's time to prepare, and we've got you covered. In this article you'll learn:

- How to practise your answers to interview questions
- Prepare your own questions for employers
- Make a great first impression
- What to bring to the interview
- Tips on good manners and body language
- How to win them over with your authenticity and positivity

Practise strong answers

In the days before your job interview, set aside time to do the following:

1. Research the company so you can go into your interview with a solid understanding of the requirements of the job and how your background makes you a great fit. Read company reviews to learn more about the company culture and what others are saying about this employer.
2. Prepare your answer to the common question: "Tell me about yourself, and why are you interested in this role with our company?". The idea is to quickly communicate who you are and what value you will bring to the company and the role.
3. Re-read the job description. You may want to print it out and begin underlining specific skills the employer is looking for. Think about examples from your past and current work that align with these requirements. Prepare to be asked about times in the past when you used a specific skill and to tell stories with a clear **S**ituation, **T**ask, **A**ction and **R**esult. Writing out a few examples before the interview can help you respond with good quality answers.
4. Practise! Actually practising your answers out loud is an incredibly effective way to prepare. Say them to yourself or ask a friend to help run through questions and answers. Ask your

friend for feedback in your answers. You'll find you gain confidence as you get used to saying the words.

Prepare smart questions

Interviews are a two-way street. Employers expect you to ask questions: they want to know that you're thinking seriously about what it would be like to work there. Here are some questions you may want to consider asking your interviewers:

1. "Can you explain some of the day-to-day responsibilities for this job?"
2. "How would you describe the characteristics of someone who would succeed in this role?"
3. "If I were in this position, how would my performance be measured? How often?"
4. "What departments does this team work with regularly? How do these departments typically collaborate? What does that process look like?"
5. "What are the challenges you're currently facing in your role?"

Think about first impressions

1. Dress for the job you want. If you're speaking to a recruiter before the interview, you can ask them about the dress code in the workplace and choose your outfit accordingly. If you don't have someone to ask, research the company to learn what's appropriate.
2. Don't forget the little things. Shine your shoes, make sure your nails are clean and tidy, and check your clothes for holes, stains, pet hair and loose threads. Brush your teeth and use floss.
3. Plan your schedule so that you can arrive 10–15 minutes early. Map out your route to the interview location so you can be sure to arrive on time. Consider doing a trial run. If you're taking public transportation, identify a backup plan if there are delays or closures.

Pro-tip: When you arrive early, use the extra minutes to observe the workplace dynamics.

What to bring to the interview

Set aside time before your interview to get the following items together.

1. At least five copies of your printed CV on paper. While the hiring manager has likely seen your CV, they may not have read every line. Or you might be speaking with someone new. In either case, you might want to highlight specific accomplishments on your copy that you can discuss.
2. A pen and a small notebook. Prepare to take notes, but not on your smartphone or any other electronic device. Write information down so that you can refer to these details in your follow-up thank you notes. Maintain eye contact as much as possible.
3. A written version of the prepared questions for your interviewers.
4. A single bag for all your materials. It's easy to mistake nervous for disorganised, so keep all your documents in a single, multi-use messenger bag or portfolio. Make sure that it's professional and appropriate to the corporate culture as well as your own style.

Remember good manners and body language

Non-verbal communication can be just as important as anything you say in the interview.

1. Use confident, accessible body language. Smile frequently. Make eye contact when you're speaking. Sit or stand tall with your shoulders back. Before the interview, take a deep breath and exhale slowly. This will help you manage any feelings of anxiety and will encourage greater self-confidence.
2. Treat every single person you encounter with respect. This includes people on the road and in the parking lot, security personnel and front desk staff. Treat everyone you don't know as though they're the hiring manager. Even if they aren't, your potential employer might ask for their feedback.
3. Nail the handshake. During a job interview, the hiring manager (or person in seniority) should extend their hand first to initiate

the handshake. Stand, look the person in the eye and smile. A good handshake should be firm but not crush the other person's fingers.

4. Send personalised thank you notes to each interviewer. You may want to ask for the business card of each person you speak with during the interview process so that you can follow up individually with a separate thank you email—if they don't have a business card, you could ask for their email address and make a note of it. If you interviewed in the morning, send your follow-up emails the same day. If you are interviewed in the afternoon, the next morning is fine. Make certain that each email is distinct from the others, using the notes you took during the conversations.

Be authentic, concise and positive

1. Respond truthfully to the questions you're asked. Tie your answers back to your skills and accomplishments by providing examples of solutions and results you've achieved. If you cannot immediately think of an appropriate answer, say "Let me think of the best example to share," pause as you collect your thoughts and then respond.
2. Keep your answers short and focused, making sure that you actually answer the question you've been asked. Your time with each interviewer is limited so be mindful of rambling. Let your interviewer lead the conversation.
3. Don't speak negatively about current and former employers or colleagues. Companies want to hire problem solvers who overcome tough situations. If you're feeling discouraged about your current job, focus on talking about what you've gained from that experience and what you want to do next.