

Interview Preparation Checklist

Preparing for an interview can be a nerve-wracking experience, but with the right preparation, you can confidently showcase your skills and make a strong impression. This checklist of interview tips is designed to help you navigate the process with ease, from researching the company to crafting thoughtful responses. By following these guidelines, you'll be equipped to demonstrate your qualifications, professionalism, and enthusiasm, ultimately increasing your chances of success.

Pre-work:

Research the Company:

- Understand the company's mission, values, products/services, and recent news.
- Familiarize yourself with the company's culture through its website and social media.

Review the Job Description:

- Be clear on the role's responsibilities and required skills.
- Identify key qualifications that you possess and how they align with the position.

Your Attire:

- A navy blue, dark gray, or black suit is appropriate for most positions. Be sure it is clean and pressed. A quiet tie with a subtle design is appropriate for a first interview. Avoid loud colors and busy designs.
- Shoes that are black and freshly polished are a safe choice.
- Socks should be black or blue and worn over the calf. Ladies, avoid open-toed shoes.
- Fingernails should be short, clean, and freshly manicured, if possible. Ladies, choose subtle colors over bright colors.
- Hair should be well groomed and freshly trimmed.
- Jewelry should be limited and subtle.
- Avoid cologne or perfume.
- Do not leave your cell phone turned on during the interview. Ladies, avoid oversized purses, if possible.

Your Arrival:

- Arrive no earlier than 15 minutes, but no later than 5 minutes, prior to the interview.
- Do not chew gum or mints during the interview.
- Allow adequate time for traffic, parking, and a last-minute appearance check.
- Treat everyone you meet as if they are the decision-maker, including the receptionist.

What To Bring:

- Printed directions to the interview as well as the Recruiter's phone number in case you are running late.
- A pad of paper and a pen, preferably a folio.
- Three copies of your resume.
- Samples of your work, if relevant and appropriate. Never discuss or show proprietary information.
- Your prepared questions for the interviewer.

Preparing for a Virtual Interview:

- Test your computer, camera, microphone, and speakers ahead of time to ensure they are working properly.
- Make sure your video conferencing platform (Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Google Meet, etc.) is up to date.
- Use a reliable Internet connection.
- Have a backup plan, such as a phone number to reach the interviewer or an alternative platform ready to go if technical difficulties arise.
- Log in at least 10-15 minutes before the scheduled interview to troubleshoot any last-minute issues.
- Choose a quiet location where you will not be interrupted.
- Position yourself facing a light source (natural light works best). Avoid having a window or bright light behind you as it will create a silhouette effect.
- Use a professional virtual background or ensure that there is a simple and tidy background behind you.
- Mute your phone, close unnecessary tabs on your computer, and silence any notifications.
- While you may only be visible from the waist up, dressing fully will help get you into the right mindset and appear professional.
- Maintain good posture and look engaged and confident.
- When speaking, try to look at the camera rather than the screen.
- Keep your hands visible but avoid excessive movement or distracting gestures.
- Virtual interviews can feel more awkward than in-person interviews, but it is important to stay calm, be yourself, and engage with the interviewer like you would in-person.

During the Interview:

- Try to maintain a 50/50 balance between speaking and listening.
- Be aware of body language; maintain good posture, lean forward slightly to indicate interest, and maintain eye contact.
- Avoid nervous habits like fidgeting or crossing your arms.
- With any open-ended question, reframe to understand what specifically the interviewer would like for you to cover. For example, if the question is, "Tell me about yourself.", your response could be, "I'd love to! Is there a specific area you'd like me to start?"
- With any confusing or multi-angled questions, reframe to clarify if you are responding with the type of information that are looking for.
- If you are even slightly unsure about a specific question, or need time to formulate and process your response, ask for clarification. "Can you be more specific? I want to make sure I respond accurately to what you are asking for."
- Summarize what you have learned about the role based on the job description, your own research, and interview. Ask the hiring manager to confirm your understanding or to elaborate on areas that have not yet been shared.
- Be conscious of the length of your answers to questions. Factual questions such as, "Where did you obtain your degree?" should be answered in about 30 seconds. Introductory questions such as, "Why do you want to work here?" should be answered in 30-90 seconds. Behavioral or situational questions such as, "Describe a time you faced a significant challenge at work." should be answered in 2-4 minutes.

Avoid:

- Speaking negatively about your current situation, boss, or working environment.
- Asking questions about or sharing information regarding current or expected compensation.

Closing:

- Unless you are absolutely certain you would not like to move forward in the interview process, close for the next steps. Ask how they perceive you fitting into the organization and if there are any areas that haven't been covered that are important to the hiring decision.

Following the Meeting:

- Call me at 704-815-0450 and we will discuss what you liked, what questions you may still have, what questions you perceive they may still have about you, and your interest in the next steps.
- Send a handwritten card or an email to each person with whom you interviewed, thanking them for their time. Site specifics from the meeting and any further areas you think may need supplementation.

Example Questions to Ask During Interview:

- How do you measure success in your company? Tell me about the best person you ever had in this position and what made them unique.
- What are some of the common denominators that exist with the more successful employees of this company?
- What are the biggest challenges one will face in this role?
- What are the most important problems that need to be addressed/corrected in the first six months by the person in this position?
- What are the key responsibilities of this position, and which are most important?
- What results are expected of this position? What are some examples of the best results produced by those in this role?
- Why did my predecessor leave this position?
- Tell me about your background and what attracted you to this company.
- What advancement can be expected, in this company and in the industry at large, after doing well in this job?
- What are some of the company's short and long-term objectives?
- In what areas does the company excel? In what areas does the company have some limitations?
- How will I be evaluated, and how often?

Think Through:

List your accomplishments and achievements since holding your role or being with the company and then list the strategy, implementation, and development processes used to bring about these results. Review your list in preparation for the interview.

- Did you help increase sales, productivity, or efficiency? What was the percentage or dollar contribution? How did you do this? Did you have a unique approach or different results than others?
- Did you institute any new systems or changes? What was the situation that led to the change? Why was

this system selected over the other? What was the result?

- Were you ever promoted? Why were you promoted? How long between promotions? Did you do something outstanding? How much more responsibility? Did you get to manage people? How many?
- Did you train anyone? Did you develop a training technique? Is your technique being used by others?
- Did you help establish any new goals or objectives for your company? Did you convince management that they should adopt these goals or objectives?
- Did you change the nature or scope of your job? Why or how did you redefine the position? Have others with similar positions had their positions redefined because of you?
- Did you ever undertake a project that was not part of your responsibility because you liked the problem?