

Preparing for an Interview

In Person | Video

Ok, you made it to the interview, now what. First, you need to understand what the interview is all about. Your winning resume, and the way your recruiter presented your abilities, character and background have gained you access into the potential Employer's office. The interviewer has already reviewed your resume in detail with us, so they are intimately knowledgeable about the hard facts of your employment history and skills. The actual interview is a subtler, more subjective aspect of the job-hunting process. During each interview, each person you meet will be forming an opinion of you and gauging your compatibility with the needs of the organization. More importantly, their ability to work with you within that role. Bottom line – You're trying to make a good impression!! You need to be sincere, polite, and enthusiastic about your knowledge of their company and the industry to secure the position. Your resume may well have shown examples of your skills as a team player, but now you need to convince them that you fit their team. To make the best impression you can you need to be prepared, know what to expect, and how to handle it if things don't go quite as you had planned.

Preparation for all interview types:

Research the company:

- Check out the company website. Know about their history and growth over the years.
- Check out other company profiles through websites like Hoovers or Dun/Bradstreet.
- Look for relevant press releases in major newspapers or trade publications.
- Read through any notes you have surrounding the interviewers you will meet. Try to understand their role within the organization and make sure you answer their questions with a bent toward their area of expertise.
- Re-read the job description so you can fit your background most effectively to their needs.
- Be ready with questions for each interviewer but focus on responsibility related issues not "what's in it for me" questions.

Presenting Yourself for an In Person Interview

General Rules for Presenting Yourself:

- Arrive early – **leave your cell phone in your car!**
- Bring extra copies of your resume, references, a notepad & pen.
- Be sure you know how to pronounce your interviewer's name correctly.
- Be polite to everyone you meet there. They all count.
- Be personable as well as professional.
- Do NOT chew gum, smoke, swear or use slang.
- Assume all questions are asked for a good reason and answer accordingly.
- Do not assume that your interviewer knows how to elicit the information he/she is looking for.
- Feel free to ask for clarification before answering a question.
- Take some time to formulate your answers before you speak.
- Answer all questions honestly, but in the best, most positive light.
- Do NOT bad mouth old employers.

Proper Attire for In Person Interviews and Video Interviews:

- First Impressions are extremely important. The way you present yourself can be as important as what you say.
 - For a woman: A suit or conservative dress is appropriate. Minimal amounts of jewelry and perfume. Stylish low heel shoes are best.
 - For a man: A conservative business suit, long-sleeved shirt and tie are still best. No jewelry other than a wedding ring and a watch, matching socks and polished shoes are the way to go.

Presenting Yourself for a Video Interview

Video Interview Tips

- Find a quiet, private, well-lit place, free from possible interruptions.
- Ensure your internet connection is stable.
- Check that your computer's audio is working.
- Test your computer's webcam.
- Close any unnecessary web browser tabs and applications.
- Dress professionally and avoid bright colors.
- Have a pen, notepad and copy of your resume on your desk.
- When listening, nod and smile to show you are engaged.
- Use hand gestures when appropriate.
- Place your phone in silent mode.

Video job interviews are an increasingly common part of the hiring process. These interviews can take several forms. If you have one coming up, it's a good idea to familiarize yourself with all the variables so you can be prepared. In this guide, we'll walk you through the types of video interviews, what you should wear, and helpful tips on body language and eye contact.

Video interview locations

In-office video interviews

Some video interviews will take place at your potential employer's office. This may happen if you're interviewing with someone at the company who is based in another location. In this situation, you'll want to follow the best practices for an in-person interview : prepare beforehand, dress appropriately, arrive early and be respectful of everyone you encounter.

When you arrive at the office, you'll typically be led to a room with all the equipment you'll need for your video interview. Ask the person who brought you to the room to help you set up the interview and make sure everything is working before they leave. You may also want to ask them how you can find them if your audio or video connection stops working at any point.

Remote video interviews

Some video interviews take place outside of the potential employer's office. In this case, you'll be responsible for finding a quiet location with a good internet connection and a computer or laptop with a webcam. Specifically, you'll need:

- An internet connection with bandwidth speed of at least 1 megabits per second.
- A laptop or desktop computer with a webcam. In some cases, a tablet or smartphone may also be an option.
- Headphones with a built-in microphone or headphones and a separate microphone.
- A quiet, private and well-lit place where you won't be interrupted by other people, pets or noises. Position your webcam so that you have a neutral background that's free from distractions. Avoid coffee shops and other communal spaces.

If you don't have these resources already, you may want to consider the following:

- Explore the resources available at the public library in your area. Some libraries have private rooms you can reserve and may be able to loan you the equipment you need.
- Ask friends if you can borrow equipment.
- Rent equipment.

Live vs. pre-recorded video interviews

- Some interviews will be live, meaning that you might join a video conference from a link that the employer shares with you, or you might receive a call via Skype, Google Hangouts or another video conference provider. Once connected, you'll be able to see and speak with an interviewer on the other end.

If you're using a personal Skype or Google account, make sure that you have a professional username and check your privacy settings. If you have any concern about whether your username is professional enough, you may want to set up a new account for your video interviews just in case.

There are times when an employer may use pre-recorded video interviews. In this format, the employer will give you instructions on how to join the interview. Instead of being connected with a person, you'll be prompted to answer interview questions that have been pre-recorded or appear in writing on the screen. You'll record your answer to each question and the employer will review the recording later. There is often a time limit for your answers, and you may be given more than one chance to record each answer.

The pre-recorded format can feel unnatural to some people. Try to imagine that you are having a live conversation. Your preparation for the interview will be especially useful in this setting—be sure you have your answers at the ready.

Whether your video interview is live or pre-recorded, make sure that you've closed other apps or windows on your computer that could interrupt the conversation or slow the internet connection. Set your phone to silent before you begin the conference.

What to wear for a video interview

- For your video interview, you should dress professionally—the same way you would for an in-person interview. Research the company culture before your interview so you have a good idea of what's appropriate.
- To look your best on camera, avoid bright colors and patterns and opt for softer colors instead. If you are wearing a tie, wear a solid color rather than a patterned one. If you wear glasses, adjust the lighting in the room to reduce glare from the lenses.
- Position the camera so that you are looking up slightly and centered on the screen. While it's likely that the interviewer will only see your upper half, it's still a good idea to wear professional pants or a skirt in case you need to stand up for any reason.

Video interview body language

- Eye contact is very important during an in-person interview, and you want to convey that same level of connection during a video interview. Here's how: Avoid the instinct to look directly at your interviewer on the screen while you're answering a question. Instead, when you speak, you want to direct your gaze at the webcam. When you do this, your eyes are more likely to align with the interviewer's eyes on the other end. When you're listening, you can look back at the screen.
- Throughout the interview, keep your mood upbeat and convey optimism with your body language. One way to achieve this is to have good posture. Sit in your chair with your back straight and your shoulders open. Feet can be planted on the floor and arms can rest in your lap or on the desk.
- When you're listening, nod and smile when appropriate to communicate that you're giving them your full attention. Use hand gestures when it feels appropriate and keep your movements close to your body. Avoid fidgeting or letting your gaze drift away from the device.
- Practice and tech set up
- To get used to the technology and the body language of a video interview, it's useful to do some practice video calls with friends or family members. Ask them to give you candid feedback about your appearance and eye contact. Run through it a few times until things start to feel natural.
- This practice can make all the difference in your interviews. Set aside time in your schedule in the weeks and days leading up to your interview—you'll find your confidence growing as you become more comfortable in front of the camera.

On the day of your interview, review this checklist as you're setting up:

- Ensure that you won't be interrupted, either by locking the door or by alerting others that you can't be disturbed (a note on the door of the room as well as the door to the outside may be helpful).
- Clear the desk space, except for a notepad and pen/pencil for you to take notes.
- Have a copy of your resume and any other notes ready for you to reference.
- Set out a glass or bottle of water for yourself.
- Check that your webcam is working.
- Check that your audio is working.

- Close any windows, tabs or applications on your computer that you're not using.
- Check your internet connection and make sure you're not downloading anything in the background.
- Set your phone to silent.
- Check that the background behind you is neutral and free from clutter.
- Adjust the lights in the room. If things appear dark or dim, you may want to bring in an extra desk lamp to brighten the space.

If things go wrong

With technology, there's always a chance thing could go wrong. Here are some backup plans to have ready just in case.

- If your video or audio stops working
- Before the interview, ask the interviewer for a phone number where you can reach them if you experience technical difficulties. If the video cuts out, call them at that number. Ask if you can continue the interview by phone or if you can reschedule.
- If noise interrupts the conversation
If noises (sirens, construction, etc.) interrupt your video interview, apologize for the interruption and ask for a few moments until the noise has subsided. You may want to mute the microphone if the noise is severe.
- If someone enters the room unexpectedly
If family members, housemates or pets enter the room while you're interviewing, apologize to the interviewer, ask for a few moments, mute your microphone and turn off your camera, and then step away to deal with the interruption. Make sure that the room is secure before beginning the interview again.

As with any job interview, you should conclude by thanking the interviewer for their time. Send a follow-up thank you email later that day (or the next day if your interview was in the evening). This message may help build a stronger connection with your potential employer and help you progress to the next step.

The Interview Trap: "Tell Me About Yourself."

Howard Cattie, "The Coach"

Your answer demonstrates your ability to communicate on your feet when you're thrown a question, your ability to focus, and your ability to clarify your personal interest and agenda.

One of the most common, yet most frequently fumbled interview questions is the question **"Tell me about yourself?"** And yet, this should be the easiest answer for someone to present in an interview. The question often arises because the hiring manager hasn't really reviewed the resume in a lot of detail. So, while he or she are coming up to speed, they throw out a pop quiz question by asking you, **"So, tell me about yourself"**.

This question is an open-ended question and the answer is a free form essay which can easily lead to all kinds of perilous responses. **Yet, answered correctly, it can present a huge advantage.** You have a gift---an opportunity of stating 2 or 3 of your strongest points and then controlling where the conversation goes next with a question at the end.

Your answer demonstrates your ability to communicate on your feet when you're thrown a question, your ability to focus, and your ability to clarify your personal interest and agenda.

This common job interview question should be answered similar to an **"elevator pitch"** with an answer that is **clear**, contains concise, **bullet-points** of information, and is **relevant to the opportunity**. It should be easy to understand and should not generate more questions than answers. It should also be less than 2 minutes.

So, the key to handling this question in the interview is to prepare the answer before the interview.

The hiring manager really doesn't want to hear about your life history, the things that are of personal interest to you, a long and boring sequence of your job history, or any irrelevant fluff. You will miss the opportunity this question presents if, instead of answering the question directly, you pause, hesitate, are confused, or ask "what would you like to hear?"

What the hiring manager really wants to hear is a focused summary of relevant bullet-points that can benefit the company and help them solve a problem. So how do we structure this answer?

Let's create a 5-sentence response, followed by a *steering* question. Here's how we might structure it.

1. If you've prepared properly for the job interview, you've identified **relevant keywords** for products, industries, technologies, tasks and titles that can easily be used to create the bullets in this summary.
2. The *first 3-4 sentences* can list some of these **keywords** and expand them with length of experience (years) or with breadth of experience (for tasks or titles).
3. Then **add some results** and these **keywords** have now become **"bullet-point" accomplishments**. Do not try to cover the entire job description. Focus on the 3 major strengths you feel you bring to the table, based on the keywords.

Sentences 4 and 5 should be oriented toward benefits to the manager and areas of possible mutual interest (complementing their agenda) which are to be explored in today's meeting. Focus on what you are able to bring to the table. For example, some of the biggest benefits you can bring to a company and to a manager are:

- someone who can solve the immediate problem
- someone that would help the manager achieve their personal agenda
- the ability to start fast based on proven expertise
- an independent worker which requires less management time
- someone who can take on more responsibilities over time
- someone who is a low risk hire or has potential for high results.

Then we end with the **appropriate steering question** to move the job interview towards our preferred direction which is usually the TARGET QUESTION.

Tell me about Yourself (Example 1)

1. **TITLE sentence:** Sure. Be happy to. I have 15 years' experience as a Senior Account Manager, Sales Representative and Client Services Manager (**one of them is their title**).
2. My **industry knowledge** covers life safety and bio-medical technologies with product knowledge of fire alarm systems, security systems and medical test equipment (**include their industry or product where possible**).
3. **3. My expertise** is managing sales teams, customer relationship management, business development and sales/service leadership. I am a master of account management **and I grow business - period!**
4. **4. The Companies** I have worked for include: Company 1, Company2 and Cpmpany3
5. **BRIDGE: What I am looking for is** an opportunity as an Engagement Manager, Sr. Account Manager or Client Service Manager (one is their title) where I can utilize my skills developing accounts, building teams, serving customers, training and business development.
6. **CLOSE to the target question and back in control!! Rather than bore you with two hours of my background,** could you share with me the top 3 tasks that are most important to be successful in your position, and let me focus my background on them?
- 7.

Here is a sample for an IT professional (Example 2)

Sample sentences 1-3:

(1) TITLE: Mr. Manager, I've had 20 years of technical background in information technology, a BS in computer science with increasing responsibilities from **Developer, Project Leader and also a Presales Consultant.**

(2) My strongest expertise is in the **Microsoft technologies** including .net development, SQLserver data base and Business Intelligence where I have performed all tasks associated with defining, developing and implementing custom Business applications for the Financial Services industry.

(3) My Applications experience included Manufacturing, Cost accounting and Supply Chain.

(4) COMPANIES: I have received increasing compensation and responsibilities in the **4 companies** including **Accenture, IBM and Ciber.** I have been with because I completed my projects in a timely and reliable manner. My performance ratings were always top 20%.

(5) BRIDGE: My personal goals at this point are to find a company where I can build upon this technical background and bring this expertise to help solve additional problems as well as add some new experiences. That why I'm pleased to be exploring your company where d itit appears my background will allow me to contribute quickly and take on some responsibility to help your department accomplish its goals.

(6) CLOSE to the target question and back in control!! Rather than bore you with two hours of my background, could you share with me the top 3 tasks that are most important to be successful in your position, and let me focus my background on them?

(7) Or general CLOSE (where there is no obvious position or description): I look forward to sharing additional relevant experience with you today but before we start, could you give me some feeling for where you see the need for this kind of background within your department?

So the key to handling this simple, yet treacherous interview question is to be prepared ahead of time.

Pick 3 points and your steering question. Structure a very simple 4-5 sentence summary of what you bring to the table that is clear and relevant to the manager and the opportunity at hand. Do not stray into other events. Do not cover the job description in detail. Remember, it is a summary. The manager will get to the detail he needs, rest assured. Good luck and good interviewing.

Questions You Should Ask in Your Job Interview

Always prepare questions to ask. Having no questions prepared sends the message that you have not been thinking about the job. Avoid asking questions that are clearly answered on the employer's web site and/or in any literature provided by the employer to you in advance. This would simply reveal that you did not prepare for the interview, and you are wasting the employer's time by asking these questions. Never ask about salary and benefits issues until those subjects are raised by the employer.

Remember that an interview is a two-way conversation. For you, the interview has two purposes: One, to sell yourself, and two, to evaluate the position. After asking questions, the interviewer usually invites you to ask questions.

By asking informed questions, such as the following, you not only gain knowledge about the potential employer, but you also make a good impression.

- What is the size of the division, sales volume, earnings?
- Does the company plan to expand? What are the company's strengths and weaknesses compared to its competition?
- What are the significant trends in the industry?
- Could you explain your organizational structure?
- Can you discuss your take on the company's corporate culture? What are the company's values?
- How would you characterize the management philosophy of this organization?
- Are any acquisitions, divestitures, or proxy fights on the horizon?
- What do you think is the greatest opportunity facing the organization in the near future? The biggest threat?
- How will my leadership responsibilities and performance be measured? And by whom? How often?
- Would there be opportunities for advancement, and, how long before I might be considered for one?
- What qualities do you prize the most in those that report directly to you?
- How does the organization rank within its field?
- What is the reputation of the department (or facility) to which I am applying?
- How is this department (or facility) perceived within the organization (or corporation)?
- What have been its goals in the last year, and, did it meet them?
- What would be the goals of the department (or facility) in the coming year?
- Do you think those are aggressive or conservative goals? Who set them?
- What problems or difficulties are present in the department (or facility) now?
- What are the most important problems to solve first?
- What will be the greatest challenge in the job?
- What are the greatest strengths of this department and company?
- What would you expect me to accomplish in this job?
- What is your management style?
- How often would we meet together?
- What responsibilities have the highest priority?
- Can you describe a typical day for someone in this position?
- How might these responsibilities and priorities change?
- How much time should be devoted to each area of responsibility?
- What qualifications are you looking for in the person who fills this job?
- What are some examples of the achievements of others who have been in this position?
- How many people have held this job in the last five years? Where are they now?

- Why isn't this job being filled from within?
- What is the history of this position?
- What are the traits and skills of people who are the most successful within the organization?
- If this position is offered to me, why should I accept it?
- Why did you come to work here? What keeps you here?
- What do you see in my personality, work history or skill set that attracts you to me?
- How soon do you expect to make a decision?
- If I am offered the position, how soon will you need my response?

When the position involves management of other employees, you may also wish to ask some of these questions:

- How much authority will I have in running the department (or facility)?
- Are there any difficult personalities on the staff?
- Have you already identified staff or staffs that should be let go or transferred?
- Have you already identified staff members that are stars and are in line for promotion?
- How many employees would I supervise?
- What condition is morale in, and why?
- May I see an organizational chart?

Finally, you may want to discuss issues of compensation. Following are some suggestions for questions pertaining to salary and benefits packages:

- What are the benefits and perks?
- What is the salary range?
- What is my earnings potential in 1, 3, 5, and 10 years?

If commissions are involved, ask about the median salary of a person holding a position comparable to that which you are seeking.

Professionalism is of the utmost importance and my preference is to take an open, honest approach at the end of a job interview. After the hiring manager has asked if you have any questions for him or her and you've discussed those, consider asking one of the following questions:

“Based on my background and the skills and experience we discussed, how well do I fit the profile of the candidate for which you're looking?”

This question will help you find out what the hiring manager thinks of your background and whether or not they believe you're a good fit.

“Given what we've just discussed during this interview, do you have any concerns about my fit for this position?”

This is a reverse question because it tries to uncover any issues that might hold the interviewer back from hiring you and gives you the opportunity to discuss those concerns before you leave the interview.

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT RESUME

Youremail@gmail.com

Phone

City, State

LinkedIn URL, Website

Motivated student (3.6/4.0) who demonstrates strong work ethic and creative ability. Seeking to apply my graphic design skills and artistic drive as a summer intern at your company. Will leverage proven experience as a competent designer to contribute to company goals and needs.

EDUCATION

Santa Monica High School, Santa Monica, CA

Senior

- **GPA:** 3.6 / 4.0
- **Relevant Coursework:** Intro to Graphic Design, AP Art, Yearbook, Computer Applications
- **Honors:** Member of the National Honors Society and National Art Education Association
- **Clubs:** Yearbook Club, Santa Monica Newspaper, Spanish club

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS

Yearbook Club

Yearbook Design Team Lead

2015 - Present

- Created a Yearbook logo designed to incorporate school mascot and colors; opted to use coated paper in 2016, which improved photo quality and increased profits by 5%.
- Arrange all club photos and pages to correspond to yearbook theme.
- Trained and supervised 2 sophomore students in graphic design.

Santa Monica Newspaper

Graphic Designer

2015 - Present

- Procured advertising for school paper, saving organization 25% in costs.
- Edited and curated photos used for school paper; increasing readership by 15%.
- Custom design page layouts to fit articles, photos, and advertisements into strict format.
- Contributed to school's online publication by designing page layouts to accommodate mobile screens.

ADDITIONAL SKILLS

- Proficient in Photoshop and Adobe Creative Suite
- Basic knowledge of HTML
- Basic knowledge of Adobe Dreamweaver
- Great photographer
- Keen eye for aesthetics with good understanding of image gradients
- Intermediate speaking level in Spanish

AWARDS, HONORS, AND HONORARY MENTIONS

- Nominated for Macmillan Prize for Illustration in 2016
- Submitted artwork to Ocean Awareness Student Art Contest 2016
- Came in 2nd place in the Applied Arts 2016 Student Awards for submitting graphic design work under the category of Advertising.

Steven Student

123 Forest Street, Charleston, WV 25329

Cell: (123) 555-5555 ▪ steven.student@email.com

Qualifications

Highly focused and responsible high school student guaranteed to contribute strongly within a customer service role requiring enthusiasm, charismatic communications skills, and an exemplary work ethic.

- **Communications:** Convey information persuasively both orally and in writing. Facility for building positive relationships with others with humor, helpfulness, and cultural sensitivity.
- **Teamwork:** Able to apply lessons learned as a lettered student athlete to motivate and support all team members in assigned tasks and projects.
- **Mathematics:** A+ math student, with ability to use superb mental math skills to ensure accuracy in order processing, cash handling, and credit transactions.
- **Technical Proficiencies:** Solid command of Microsoft Office Suite (Word, Excel, PowerPoint) and of social media. Swift learner, easily mastering new software systems.

Education

George Washington High School, Charleston, WV; 3.75 GPA

Honor Roll, National Honor Society, Co-Captain, Boys Swim Team; Debate Team; Math Club; Student Math Mentor

Experience Highlights

Steve's Lawncare Services, Charleston, WV

Gardener, June 2017 to Present

Provide ongoing lawncare services to 25+ regular clients. Communicate with customers to schedule services and define requirements; mow, weed, and rake lawns and gardens and shovel snow.

- Built a lasting clientele through word-of-mouth referrals from satisfied customers.

Habitat for Humanity, Charleston, WV

Volunteer, June 2018 to Present

Team with fellow church youth group members to contribute to Habitat for Humanity projects. Work on construction teams to erect new housing for low-income families.

- Conceptualized and coordinated fundraising Christmas bazaar that raised over \$5K for organization.