

Interview Preparation Checklist

Most employers consider the interview to be the key component of their selection process. You know that it is essential to make an excellent impression during an interview, but do you understand everything that will be required of you to achieve that outcome? Use this checklist to determine if you are ready for professional interviews, as well as to track essential “to do’s” before each of your scheduled interviews.

Before Interviews

General Preparation

- _____ Do you have appropriate interview attire? Consider having at least two interview outfits. If you do well during a screening interview, you may be called back for a second interview. Or, you may have the opportunity to interview in the same week with multiple employers. For each interview, your clothing will need to be clean, pressed, and properly hemmed/altered to fit well. More information is found at the Dress to Impress guide: <http://amdt.wsu.edu/research/dti/>.
- _____ Know how to respond to typical interview questions such as:
 - “Tell me about yourself”
 - “What are your greatest weaknesses?”
 - “Where do you see yourself in 5 years?”
- _____ The best way to know for sure if you are prepared is to conduct a mock interview with a career services advisor. Find out how to schedule a Mock Interview by visiting: <http://ascareerservices.osu.edu/students/services/mockinterviews>
- _____ Depending upon the types of positions you are applying for, you may want to assemble a portfolio. A portfolio is a collection of items organized in hard copy or digital form. For jobs where creativity is a necessary skill (e.g., graphic design, advertising), employers often expect candidates to provide them with access to their digital portfolios. You can direct employers to your portfolio by including a link to it on your resume. Other fields where portfolios are commonplace include journalism, editing, broadcasting, dance, and photography. Tips on preparing a portfolio are found at <http://www.iseek.org/jobs/online-portfolios.html>

Preparation for Scheduled Interviews

- _____ Research the organization so that you know, at minimum, the following information:
 - What are the mission and vision of the organization?
 - What is the organization’s history? How old is the organization?
 - What has been their annual growth over the past 5 years?
 - Where is the corporate/national headquarters located?
 - What are their goals for improving upon the products or services they provide?
 - What trends are affecting their industry?
 - What recent news items have been published about the organization?
- _____ Understand the position description and how your skills and experience qualify you for the job
- _____ Use the Behavioral Based Interviews tip sheet to prepare for questions focused on your mastery of past situations
- _____ Have a solid response to the question “Why do you want to work here?”
- _____ Prepare 3-4 questions to ask the interviewer about the company and the position

- _____ Know the location of the interview, how to get there, and where to park. Consider driving to the site the day before to establish how long the commute will take (you don't want traffic or construction detours to make you late!)
- _____ Make copies of your resume and reference list in case you meet with more than one interviewer
- _____ Assemble your job search documents into a padfolio that also includes paper, pen, and your driving directions
- _____ Get a good night's sleep!

Day of/During the Interview

- _____ Eat a nutritious breakfast
- _____ Conduct usual grooming rituals—shower, shave, brush your teeth, use minimal makeup, wear your hair in an appropriately conservative style, forego the cologne or perfume, trim nails and refrain from bold nail color, remove any extra piercings, cover tattoos if necessary
- _____ Allow more than enough time to arrive to the interview 10 minutes early; have the company phone number available in case something unavoidable happens to cause you to be late
- _____ Run through your questions and answers; remind yourself of the qualifications you are bringing to the table (they wouldn't have selected you for an interview if they thought the position was beyond your capabilities)
- _____ Greet the receptionist and anyone you meet with a smile and respect
- _____ Take several deep breaths to relax while waiting for the interviewer; visualize yourself as being poised and confident
- _____ Greet the interviewer(s) with a firm handshake, steady eye contact, a smile, and address them as Mr., Ms., Dr., etc.
- _____ Do not act casually—sit only when invited to sit, don't use casual language ("like," "you know," etc.)
- _____ Sit up straight to project confidence and enthusiasm (one of the key things the interviewer will be looking for is your overall motivation: make sure you demonstrate that you are positive and achievement-oriented)
- _____ Pause before answering a question to give some thought to what's being asked; ask for clarification if needed
- _____ In a panel interview, make good eye contact with each person in the room throughout the interview
- _____ Refrain from speaking negatively about your former job, supervisor, coworkers, or company
- _____ Answer questions as concisely as possible and avoid making self-deprecating comments; i.e., "I'm not very good at..."
- _____ Be a good listener—don't ask questions that have already been addressed, and don't interrupt others
- _____ At the end of the interview, make sure you know the next steps—how soon will they have a decision? Should you contact them or will they contact you?
- _____ Don't ask questions about salary and benefits until an offer has been made or a second interview has been scheduled
- _____ Shake hands with the interviewer(s), thank them for their time, tell them you look forward to hearing from them soon

After the Interview

- _____ Within 24 hours, send an e-mail to thank the employer for the interview and to reiterate your interest in the position
- _____ Evaluate your performance, making notes for things to do differently at future interviews; commend yourself for things done well
- _____ Contact the interviewer if you don't hear back from them within the stated selection timeline

You may find it helpful to also review the job search videos at <http://www.collegegrad.com/job-search-videos/>, many of which focus on how to interview more effectively.