Effective Job Interviewing:
Ten Steps to Interview Success

1. Before the job interview, write down several success stories and list key job skills. Write down a few instances where these job skills were successfully employed.

2. Perform some preliminary research on the company and learn about its products and services. Print out several pages of the company’s website and lay them out during the job interview. When asking the employer about the company, make notes in the margins of these printouts.

3. Be clear and concise. When answering questions during the interview, don’t ramble on and get off track. Keep answers brief and to the point, yet at the same time conversational.

4. Discuss strengths and job accomplishments. Throughout the job interview, mention a core set of key strengths several times. Include discussion on specific achievements. Be specific, citing three or more major accomplishments.

5. Tie job skills and strengths into the company’s goals. Talk about how the candidate’s core set of strengths and job skills match the position and how they would benefit the company.

6. Think like a member of the company’s team. When the candidate says something like, “As a member of the company’s team, (the candidate) would...,” it impresses the employer and displays the candidate’s enthusiasm and proactivity. However, the candidate should not overdo it and act like he or she already has the job.

7. Ask the employer questions about the company and the requirements of the position. Toward the end of the job interview, the employer always asks whether the candidate has any questions. The answer should always be “yes,” and the candidate should be prepared with a list of questions to ask.

8. Don’t be a one-sided robot. While the candidate should at all times be brief and concise, at the same time he or she should never be robotic or one-sided. Answer all the employer’s questions concisely, but make sure to keep a steady conversational flow going.

9. Pay attention to body language. Do not fidget in the chair. Sit up straight, on the edge of the chair if need be. Do not gaze out the window or furrow the eyebrows at challenging questions. Maintain good eye contact and smile often.

10. Wear modern clothing and an updated hairstyle. An updated look indicates to an employer a youthful appearance. Youth is associated with energy and vigor, which employers are attracted to. A youthful look along with a modicum of enthusiasm during the job interview can help increase the chances for landing the job.

Bottom line: The key to a successful job interview is to be relaxed, yet professional. When the job seeker performs initial research before the job interview, asks questions related to the duties of the position, expresses enthusiasm, ties strengths in with company goals, and smiles often, he or she may impress the employer enough to place the interviewee in the list of top candidates.

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Basic Interview Skills

Job interviews represent some of the most important and also nerve-wracking moments in people's professional lives. Decrease the anxiety and increase your success.

Going for an interview can seem a daunting task, but it doesn't need to be unduly stressful or scary. The better prepared you are for an interview, the better you will feel and perform, and the better your chance of being hired.

Good communication is the key to a good interview; you need to know what you want and why you are there, and be able to convey that to the employer. You are trying to convince the employer that you would be a positive and beneficial addition to their company or business.

Preparing for the Interview

Know yourself. Know what your personal and career goals are, and how they fit with the company's goals. It can be a good idea to do some research on the company beforehand, to get an idea of what it does, what it believes in and even who the company works with or competes against.

You should also study the job description carefully, and be able to talk about the skills you have that are listed in that description, as well as other skills that may apply to the position. Be able to discuss where or how you acquired these skills, and how you might best put them to use for the company.

Practice answering questions. While this may seem silly, it will go a long way to preparing you for an interview. Nerves and adrenaline make people inclined to rush or babble, two things that should be avoided during an interview. Practicing beforehand will help to combat this.

Most interviews will consist of fairly similar questions. Some will, of course, be specific to the job and company, but you will likely always be asked about past jobs, past projects, hobbies and interests, your ability to work as part of a team and/or to be a leader. Keep your answers brief and to the point, without leaving out any important information. Always focus on the positive.

Dress well. Regardless of a winning personality or stunning intelligence, much of a first impression is based on physical appearance. Follow the old adage to “dress for success” and demonstrate by your attire and how you carry yourself that you are professional, organized and confident.

During the Interview

The first few minutes are crucial; studies have shown that interviewers form their overall impression of applicants within the first four minutes of the interview. Be sure to keep in mind the following basic things:

- Stand tall.
- Make eye contact.
- Shake hands firmly.
- Be polite; use the formal address of Mr., Ms., unless invited to do otherwise.
- Wait for invitation; do not sit until invited to do so. Sit straight and tall and look attentive and enthusiastic.

All of these things indicate that you want to be there and that you are calm, confident and professional.

What to Expect

All interviews have certain basic elements in common. When you first arrive, the interviewer will likely try to put you at your ease with some small talk. This may include discussion of the weather or current events, or questions about your interests and hobbies.

Respond appropriately. Be warm and conversational, but don’t ramble. Remember that your hobbies, your life in general, will reflect to the employer who you are and what kind of employee you might be.

The body of the interview will likely begin with the interviewer giving a detailed description of the job. This is an opportunity for you to ask intelligent questions and demonstrate what you know about the position and the company.

The main portion of the interview is all about you, the applicant. You will be asked to answer questions succinctly, but thoroughly, and focus on the positive. Be enthusiastic and use good grammar; do your best to avoid too many “um”s, “ah”s, “you know”s and other such fillers.

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http://suite101.com/article/basic-interview-skills-a68748