



# SHARPENING JOB INTERVIEW SKILLS

## Do Your Research

Knowledge about the company may prepare you for the type of interview questions you may be asked and give you some crucial awareness about the problems and challenges the company is experiencing. This will help you address how your skills can help the company handle its problems.

## Practice Always Helps

Consider writing out the likely interview questions and the answers you may give. Then review them by: speaking into a recorder; practicing out loud in front of a mirror; or working with a partner to practice what you will say. You will also want to prepare for when you are invited into the office: your handshake; how you will handle silence; what questions you will ask and what you will say when you are offered the job. This will help you feel more comfortable in the interview and therefore you will portray more confidence.

## Communication Techniques

- Maintain good eye contact.
- Present appropriate body language. Be relaxed and open, interested, and attentive. Sit up straight with your feet on the floor.
- Listen actively. Indicate that you are hearing and understanding what the interviewer is saying.
- Choose your words carefully. The right words will come easily if you have thoroughly prepared yourself.

## Dressing for Success

### For Men:

- Shirt — Long-sleeved white or light color.
- Shoes — Black or brown leather, polished and well maintained.
- Socks — Complements pants; long enough to cover crossed legs.

**Note:** Many job interviews require suit and tie. In formal attire interviews, the darker the suit, the more authority it carries. A conservative tie is best, particularly one which complements — not matches — your suit.

### For Women:

- Dresses — Solid color or conservative print; coordinating jacket is a plus.
- Skirt and Blouse — Solid or conservative print skirt with solid blouse, coordinating jacket, or blazer.
- Shoes — Navy, black, brown, or neutral pumps that are polished and well maintained. No flats, open toes, or very high heels (no more than 2").
- Hosiery — Neutral skin tones or conservative color. Have an extra pair available.
- Make up — Natural is the key word. Do not overdo eye makeup.
- Jewelry — Less is more.

**Note:** Business suits may be appropriate for many job interviews. In formal attire interviews, solid colors or conservative plaid or checkered with coordinating blouses in solids or small patterns.

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## Knowing What to Expect at an Interview

**Tell me about yourself.** The interviewer is asking about you as a person, not merely about your job skills.

**What kind of starting salary would you be expecting?** You are being asked to name a figure. A wrong answer may eliminate you. You may respond by asking the salary range of the position, or you may state that you have researched the position and are confident the company will make a competitive offer. You may state your prior salary range.

**What is your greatest strength/weakness?** Be honest, and do not exaggerate strengths. Present a weakness in a positive fashion and show how you can overcome the weakness.

**Why did you leave your last job?** Do not “trash” your last employer. You may be looking for a better opportunity, more challenge, or professional growth. Your prior company may have downsized or re-engineered. Maybe you relocated.

**What did you like most/least about your last position?** Present your answers in a positive manner.

**Can you work under pressure?** Be honest. You may use past work experience to demonstrate you can work under pressure.

**What did you think of your last boss?** Be sincere. Address the qualities you genuinely admired.

**What five words would you say describe you best?** Be prepared for this type of question. Memorize your answers.

**Why should I hire you?** Summarize the job description and how you meet each qualification. You may include information obtained when researching the employer.

**Interview Follow-up:** Send a brief “thank you” to the interviewer or call and express appreciation for getting the chance to discuss the job opening. Remember to express your interest once again in the job opening and the company. Try to send the letter within 24 hours of your interview.

## Here are 10 Rules to Remember for Effective Interviewing:

1. **Appearance.** Your first impression is a lasting one. Make it count!
2. **Attitude.** This may be the top factor in receiving a job offer.
3. **Punctuality.** Be on time, but not more than 10 minutes early.
4. **Thoroughness.** Fill out job applications neatly and completely.
5. **Honesty.** Be honest about your education and all relevant experiences.
6. **Salesmanship.** Never exaggerate, but be confident in discussing your abilities.
7. **Company Knowledge.** Learn about the company before you interview.
8. **Courtesy.** Good manners and common sense will always help.
9. **Body Language.** Sit upright and be attentive. The way we act sends a message.
10. **Ask for the Job.**