

The Workplace

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A Fact Sheet

Highlights

Three steps to preparing for an interview:

1. *Thoroughly research the company and the specific position. Gather as much information about the company as possible.*

2. *Carefully prepare the materials plan to take with you, including answers to possible questions you might be asked.*

3. *Prepare yourself physically for the interview.*

Job Search 101: Preparing for the Interview

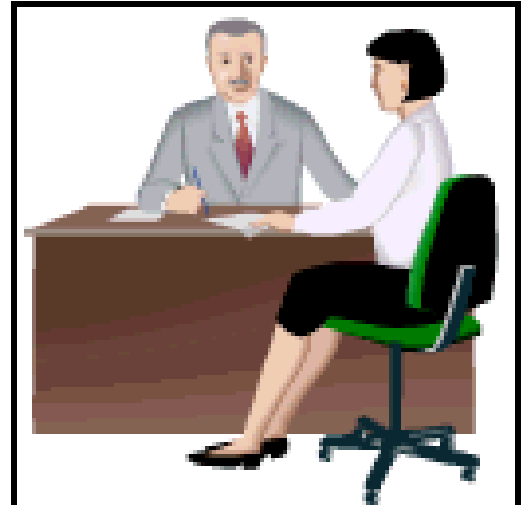
The interview should be the final part of your job search. Nevertheless, it is no less important than the other elements of your job search and should be approached with the same enthusiasm and attention to detail.

Understanding the purpose of the interview is vital to preparing for it. If you understand the dynamics of the actual interview, it is easier to get prepared for and to relax. The basic purpose of all interviews is for the applicant and the company to get to know and understand more about the other and is actually two-fold:

1. Your purpose is to make a favorable impression on the interviewer and to gather more information about the particular job and/or company.
2. The interviewer's purpose is to determine how well your personality, work ethic, and skills and experience fit with company's mission and goals. More specifically, how well would you get along with the others in the department in which you would be working.

It is not uncommon to go for an interview only to realize that the position for which you interviewed is not for you, even if the company thinks your qualifications and personality are a good match.

Most interviews take only 30 minutes to an hour. Subsequent interviews, however, especially those for high level positions, may last up to two days. To make a good impression on your prospective employer, it is essential that you prepare thoroughly. First, research the company and the specific position. Gather as much information about the company as possible. The type of information with which you need to be familiar includes the history of the company, its mission and goals, and its bottom line, i.e., what are the profits and projections, stock prices, and the company strength compared to competitors. You should also be well-informed about the company's product line as well as the number of employees and where plants are located. Understanding how the company is organized (including who is



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in charge of what) and the flow of materials, products, and people also helps the applicant interact knowledgeably with the interviewer without appearing to be overly confident. Applicants who take the time and are motivated to investigate the company and its operations impress most interviewers.

Second, carefully prepare the materials you plan to take with you. During the first part of most interviews, the applicant answers questions about their credentials, skills, and experience; during the second part, the applicant asks questions about

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the job and the company. Your being hired depends primarily at this point on how you answer the interviewer's questions. Deciding in advance how you will answer some of the more common questions (which will be subject of the next issue of *The Workplace*) helps you clearly articulate your experience and aspirations. Ask someone to help you rehearse so that you are sure that you cover the points you want to make in a manner that puts you in the best light. Make notes of points you want to get across; don't be afraid to refer to your notes to make sure that you have left nothing out.

A well-prepared applicant asks pertinent, provocative questions that engage the interviewer. Plan ahead for questions that you will be asking about the position for which you are interviewing and the company for which you will be working. Making a list of such questions prevents you from

asking trivial questions that may disrupt the momentum of the interview.

Make several copies of your resume on good quality bond paper. Also, take a list of your references with you so that they are handy if needed; one word of caution, do not offer the references unless asked. Sometimes it is merely a formality; sometimes not. Having samples of your work also helps when making a point about your experience and skills. Giving your prospective employer the opportunity to examine your work first-hand reinforces your ability and competencies.

Third, get yourself physically ready for the interview. Decide well in advance what you will wear so that if it needs laundering or pressing, you can get it done before the day of the interview. The job you are interviewing for will dictate your choice of what you will wear. Regardless of the job, always wear appropriate clothes, i.e., you would not wear a business suit to an industrial construction site to interview for a site supervisor's position. Your clothes should be clean, well pressed and free of details, and your shoes should be polished. The details of how to dress for an interview will be addressed in a later issue of *The Workplace*.

Exercise and eat a good dinner the night before the interview. Go to bed early so that you can get up early enough to bathe, eat a light breakfast, and still have time to get to your appointment about 15 minutes early.

There is no one way to prepare for an interview or to ensure you will be hired, but being unprepared is one sure way to leave without a job offer. Paying attention to details assures your prospective employer that you will pay attention to getting the job done.

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Sources:

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