

# Interviewing Guide

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## INTERVIEWING TIPS

+ Use the S-T-A-R method for responding to interview questions

- Set up the *Situation* and the *Task* that you were required to complete to provide the interviewer with background context.
- Spend the bulk of your time describing your *Actions*, or what you actually did, and what the *Results* of those actions were.

+ Prepare responses for some of these common interview questions:

- Can you tell me a little about yourself?
- How did you hear about the position, and why were you interested?
- What do you know about the company?
- Why should we hire you?
- What are your greatest professional strengths?
- What do you consider to be your weaknesses?
- What is your greatest professional achievement?
- Tell me about a challenge or conflict you have faced at work, and how you dealt with it.
- Where do you see yourself in five years?
- What is your dream job?
- Why are you leaving your current job?
- What are you looking for in a new position [or supervisor]?
- What type of work environment do you prefer? Or what will you need to be successful?
- What is your management style?
- Tell us about a time that you disagreed with a decision that was made at work.
- How would your boss or coworkers describe you?
- How do you deal with pressure or stressful situations?
- What do you like to do outside of work?
- Tell us about a time that you failed. How did you deal with that situation?
- Tell us about a time you had to be very strategic to meet all your top priorities.

+ Prepare questions to ask at the end of the interview, such as:

- What will a typical day look like?
- What are the biggest challenges that someone in this position would face?
- What are the performance expectations of this position during the first 12 months?
- What are the current goals that the company is focused on, and how does this team work to support hitting those goals?
- Who are the people/departments that I will work most closely with, and who will I report to directly?
- What is different about working here than anywhere else that you have worked?
- What are the next steps in the interview process?

## INTERVIEW PRESENTATIONS

- + Know your topic and who your audience will be. It is okay to ask questions to clarify the specifics of what they are wanting you to speak about and whether you will be presenting to your potential coworkers, supervisors, or clients. Knowing these things will help you set the tone for your presentation.
- + If appropriate and time allows, include personal stories from your previous work experience to support your main points.
- + Prepare a visual aid on PowerPoint or Prezi. Highlight your key points, but rarely include full sentences. You do not want to rely on your visual aid for what to say. Put enough information to get their attention, but not enough to distract from what you are saying. Think about what you want them to remember.
- + Practice over and over. Present it for other people or record yourself practicing. Get feedback and pay attention to how much you are saying “like” and “um”. You will use fillers more when you are nervous, so the more you practice, the less likely you are to say them too many times during the real presentation. It will also save you from accidentally going over the allotted time.
- + It is okay to have notes for yourself. Put them on index cards so that they do not distract from the presentation, and—like your slides—try to only include short bullet points. Again, you do not want to read directly from them.
- + Be conscious of your body language. Smile and make eye contact with your audience. Keep your body “open” to the audience, or make sure you are facing them and not the screen. Take some deep breaths right before you start to help naturally slow your speech.

## PREPARATION

- + Plan and lay out your outfit early. With doing this, you can make sure that your shoes match, that there is not a stain anywhere, and that you will be wrinkle-free.
- + Pack your materials. Take a padfolio with a notepad, pen, and at least five copies of your cover letter, resume, and references printed on resume paper. Feel free to add some notes that you want to review during any spare moments. Also consider stashing deodorant, chapstick, Band-Aids, and an umbrella somewhere.
- + Figure out where you are going and try to test drive the route the day before. If you can, do so at the same time of day that you will be doing it the day of the interview, so that you know what traffic will be like.
- + Research your interviewers and the organization that you will be interviewing with. Know their mission statements and become familiar with what they are working on.

## WHAT TO WEAR

- + *Both* males and females should wear a dark-colored, two-piece, pant suit in gray, navy, or black.
  - Females...wear a white or light-colored under shirt.
  - Females...may also wear a skirt suit instead of a pant suit, but typically must wear panty hose too.
  - Males...wear a white, collared, button-up shirt.
  - Males... wear tall socks that match the color of your pants.
- + If you want to have a pop of color somewhere (the best colors are red, blue, gray, or yellow):
  - Females...wear a simple statement necklace.
  - Males...wear a solid, striped, or conservative patterned tie.
- + *Both* always wear a black or brown leather belt if you have belt loops.
- + *Both* wear closed-toe shoes in black or brown.
  - Females...you do *not* have to wear heels. If you do, though, the heels should be 3.5" or less. Otherwise, it is perfectly acceptable to wear flats.

## CREATING A LINKEDIN PROFILE

- + Optimize your profile by including your location & specific industry.
- + Create a custom headline that includes your position or “aspiring” for a specific position.
- + Craft a story-like summary that is written in first-person, i.e. “I”, “me”, and “my”.
  - Keep the summary to about 3-5 short paragraphs that include work-related passions, stand-out skills, and unique qualifications.
- + Include examples of your work (presentations, videos, or written documents) with positions, if possible.
- + Request recommendations from supervisors, coworkers, clients, etc.
- + Work towards having 50+ connections. This will allow your profile to become more visible to employers.

## GENERAL SOCIAL MEDIA CLEAN-UP

- + Use professional profile pictures.
- + Post about relevant interests.
- + Try Googling yourself.
- + Avoid and delete “incriminating” pictures and angry or venting posts, including: inappropriate content, drugs or alcohol, bad-mouthing previous employers, proof of falsified qualifications (ie do not lie on your resume), and poor grammar.
- + Consider setting irrelevant posts to private.

## THANK YOU NOTES

- + Thank you notes should be sent within 24 hours of completing your interview, and if possible, by the end of the same business day.
- + When possible, send a personalized thank you note to the primary interviewers you met with. It can simply be a one-line difference wishing them well on vacation or mentioning work details they shared with you.
- + Try to make the opening paragraph grab their attention.
- + Consider your word choice. Try not to use slang or exclamation points.
- + The body of the note should be direct.
- + The closing should include a summary and highlight when a decision was set to be made.
- + If you are physically going to the interview (as opposed to a phone or video call), bring a pre-addressed and stamped envelope and card so that you can write a quick note and drop it in the mail before you leave town.

Dear Ms. Wanda Job,

I wanted to take a moment to thank you again for the time you spent with me this afternoon and for how comfortable you made me feel throughout the process. The additional information you provided about the Compensation Assistant position convinces me that this is a job I would enjoy, as well as one where I can be successful and make a valuable contribution to Major Bank.

Again, I appreciated the opportunity to interview with you, and I look forward to hearing from you next week. In the meantime, if there is any additional information that you need from me, please let me know.

Sincerely,

Crystal Clear ← [Sign if it is a handwritten note]

## NEGOTIATING

- + Do not try to negotiate until you have a written offer.
- + Research what an average salary is for that type of position, your level of experience, and the area you would be working in.
- + Know your target amount (what number you want) and your reservation amount (what number you will turn the job down for).
- + Ask for more than you are hoping for but be reasonable.
- + Give a reason why you deserve more. Perhaps you have more experience and education than was required on the job description or you personally increased goals at your previous organization; those are reasons you can give.
- + Do not try to negotiate if they tell you that the number they offer is their best offer or if you have no real justification for why you deserve it other than wanting more money.
- + Remember that whatever you are offered after negotiations will always be more than if you had just immediately accepted the offer. Try not to be greedy or to push the process too far.

## ACCEPTING OR DECLINING

### *Accepting*

- + Before accepting, ask yourself the following questions:
  - Does this job meet all of your hard requirements (the things you would not negotiate on)?
  - Do I know what will be expected of me and can I realistically meet or exceed those expectations?
  - Am I excited about the work or at least portions of it?
  - Can I see myself working well with my potential supervisor?
  - Is the organizational culture a good fit for me?
  - Will taking this job help me reach or get closer to my career goals?
  - Do the positives of accepting outweigh the negatives in my perspective?

### *Declining*

- + Before declining, ask yourself the following questions:
  - What is holding me back? Is that enough to not accept?
  - Does this job get me closer to my career goals?
  - Am I excited about the vision and direction they are headed?
- + Show your appreciation and briefly give a good reason, why you are declining.
- + Close by thanking them again and wishing them well.