

# Acing the Interview

## So You've Landed an Interview...Now What?

It's a competitive world out there. Even if you're already a good interviewee, it's almost always the case that you can at least improve something.

Even though you probably already know most of these tips, a quick reminder never hurts.



### KEY ITEMS

- Please be sure to visit the client's website, and at the very least learn some basic information about the company.
- It is important to let us handle all salary negotiations on your behalf.
- Please remember that we are working on your behalf, and we are all in this together to help you get the best job and the best pay possible.
- If the client asks you any pay or salary questions, let the client know that you are comfortable with us handling all salary discussions on your behalf. If they ask again, or try to pressure you into answering, tell them that we have asked you to not to discuss salary with them (in other words, blame us, so that you don't have to feel like you're the one being disagreeable with them.)

### THE PHONE INTERVIEW

- Take a surprise call in stride
- Beware of over-familiarity (use surname unless invited otherwise)
- Allow company representative to do most of the talking
- Beware of giving yes/no answers
- Speak directly into phone
- Take notes

### DRESSING FOR THE INTERVIEW

- You only have once to make a first impression! Dressing professional says you understand the particulars of corporate life and you can be relied upon to deal one-on-one with members of the company. Taking the time to present an attractive professional image before your interview will add to your own self-esteem and confidence.

#### Men's Interview Attire

- *Suit (solid color - navy or dark grey)*
- *Long sleeve shirt (white or coordinated with the suit)*
- *Belt*
- *Tie*
- *Dark socks, conservative leather shoes*
- *Little or no jewelry*
- *Neat, professional hairstyle*
- *Limit the aftershave*
- *Neatly trimmed nails*
- *Portfolio or briefcase*

#### Women's Interview Attire

- *Suit (navy, black or dark grey)*
- *The suit skirt should be long enough so you can sit comfortably*
- *Coordinated blouse*
- *Conservative shoes*
- *Limited jewelry (no dangling earrings)*
- *Professional hairstyle*
- *Neutral pantyhose*
- *Light make-up and perfume*
- *Neatly manicured clean nails*
- *Portfolio or briefcase*





## VERY COMMON QUESTIONS

There are also some questions that are so very common, that you should stop whatever else you are doing, and work on your answer to these questions right now. Ideally, come up with a succinct answer that you can say naturally, without sounding like it's a memorized speech.

- "Tell me about yourself."  
*Answer from a work related perspective. Talk about things like your level of motivation, the satisfaction you get from doing things well, etc. If the client specifically asks you for information about you personally after you give a work related answer, then you can answer their question, but still try to steer toward things that contribute towards your chances for the job.*
- Rate your skills in "X" on a scale of 1 to 10.  
*Lead each answer with a concise one-sentence explanation, then your self-rating. More than one sentence is too long. People might think you're trying to avoid the question, or overly defensive about it. Keep it short!*  
*The explanation lets you include valuable information, and explain away any differences in your personal rating system to the interviewer.*  
*Examples: "I know Java extremely well, but I don't think anyone can truly be a 10, so I'll say 9", or "I only have a few months of Java, but I know C++ very well, so I'd have to say about a 5 or 6".*
- "What are your strengths and weaknesses?"  
**For strengths**, choose something work related.  
**For weaknesses**, try to follow these guidelines - choose either:
  - An old weakness you had, that is now fixed. For example, "Earlier in my career, I was motivated by the technology more than the business, but I've learned to balance the technical skills with learning more about the business too" OR something that doesn't matter for the job you're interviewing for. "Well, I wish I knew more about networking", when it's a programming position you're applying for, or vice versa ("I wish I knew more about programming" when it's a networking position you're applying for. OR, something you may not like doing, but that you're good at anyway: "Well, I can't say that I love doing testing, but I put a lot of pride in my work, and I do it very thoroughly anyway". (Of course, you'd use a different example if you were applying for a testing position).**IMPORTANT** – Just mention one weakness, and stop. Only give more if asked to.

## BODY LANGUAGE

- When your body language compliments your verbal statements, your message will gain a great deal of impact. The handshake should be executed professionally and politely.
- "Personal Zone" - 30 inches from their nose! Maintain this distance throughout the interview, and be particularly watchful of intrusions during the early stages when you meet, greet and take a seat.
- Your smile is one of the most powerful positive body signs in your arsenal; it best exemplifies the up-is-best principle, as well. Offer an unforced, confident smile as frequently as opportunities and circumstances dictate.

## DURING THE INTERVIEW

Always answer the question asked, don't babble. Examples are almost always helpful, preferably specific and relevant examples; although hypothetical examples are fine if/when a specific example isn't available. Almost every answer should include a brief example or clarification.

Be prepared for tough questions:

- "Describe a situation where your work or an idea was criticized."
- "Have you done the best work you're capable of?"
- "What problems do you have getting along with others?"
- "What are some of the things your supervisor did that you disliked?"
- "What aspects of your job do you consider most crucial?"

- “Why are you leaving your current job?”  
*(Don’t lie, but be sure to be upbeat/professional/and not say bad things about them).*
- Tell me about a time you had a difficult coworker. How did you handle it?  
*They are looking for a balanced answer, clues that you’re neither too passive “I let them have their way immediately”, or too aggressive “I got into a major argument with them immediately”. The right answer, is that you appropriately and professionally attempted to resolve the situation on your own at first, and if it didn’t work, after trying, then you escalated the issue to management.*
- “Describe a situation where your work or an idea was criticized.”  
*Any “yes/no” question – Very few interview questions should be answered just with yes/no. Be sure to toss in examples every time you have that opportunity. (“Do you know Java? “Yes I do, I spent the past 2 years working with Java 2” is more convincing than “Yes”.)*
- Can you work overtime? Can you travel? Can you work weekends?  
*Each of these topics should be discussed with your recruiter in advance, to know whether the job requires any of these, and based on those answers, whether or not the job is a fit for you.*
  - *If your answer is “No” when the client needs a “Yes”, tell us in advance! It’s better not to go on the interview, than go on one where you know it won’t be a fit.*
  - *We’ll never ask you to say “Yes” if your answer really is “No”. However, you do need to be prepared and informed enough to provide a straight and honest answer.*
  - *If your answer is not a hesitation free “Yes I can!” with examples (see above), please discuss this with your We recruiter BEFORE the interview.*
  - *Usually, we know in advance if the job in question involves overtime, travel, or weekends.*

## **FOLLOW UP**

Immediately call your recruiter for a de-briefing. Your recruiter will then immediately follow-up with the client and get back to you as soon as possible. Do a self-evaluation of the interview.

- Whom did you meet? (Names and titles)
- What does the job entail?
- What are the first projects/biggest challenges?
- Can you do the job?
- What aspects of the interview went poorly? Why?



## TOP INTERVIEW MISTAKES

- When you walk into a job interview you should have some knowledge of the company's history, goals and current activities. This helps the interviewer to know that you are not only prepared but also want to be a part of the organization. Do your research and it pays off.
- Get directions or drive the route the night before and arrive early. If something happens to tie you up and you can't make the interview on time, call ahead and request to reschedule or ask if you can be 10 minutes late. Nothing says "lazy and disorganized" more than arriving late to an interview.
- Leave your gum, smoking and drinking at home. These are all items that help you to calm your nerves and none of them will help you now. More and more employers are less likely to hire smokers. If you are interviewing at lunch or dinner, others may order drinks but you should not.
- Dress for the interview. You're not visiting with friends and you're not going to a funeral or a wedding. Instead you are interviewing for a job in a business environment and you should look for part.
- During the interview if the essential that you are friendly with your interviewer but engaging in too much camaraderie makes you look clingy. Don't spill your secrets, complain about your last job or believe the interviewer is your personal therapist. This is a time to be professional, and instill confidence in the interviewer that you can do the job.
- Be prepared to articulate answers to common interview questions. You know the interviewer is going to ask you what your strengths and weaknesses are. Be able to specifically list your major strengths and turn your weaknesses into positives. In other words you may say that one weakness is that you're a bit of a workaholic. This weakness may not play well with your partner but it indicates to your future employer that you're ready and willing to roll up your sleeves and get to work.
- Don't sit through the interview like a zombie. On the other hand don't monopolize the conversation with all of your questions. Do your research to develop a set of questions that will tell you whether or not this job and this company is a good match. If you don't ask questions it indicates to your future employer that you are not interested enough to have come prepared.
- Do not ask about the compensation or benefits of the position during the interview. Wait for the interviewer to bring up the issue and be sure to discuss your qualifications and the companies concerns, needs and wants.
- At the end of the interview, confirm the next step. When the interviewer indicates that your time together is finished be sure to convey your interest in the position and ask what the next step is. This indicates to your interviewer that you are interested in pursuing the position and gives them the end impression that you are a motivated and directed individual.

