

Adecco

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Interview do's and don'ts

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Interview Do's

Interviewing is tough. Here are a few simple ways to make it a little easier:

- **Be early.** At least 10 minutes early.
- **Fill out all applications completely.** Oh, and write “negotiable” in the pay/salary section.
- **Be enthusiastic.** About the position, company and yourself.
- **Ask specific questions.** An interview isn't a one-way street. Asking questions shows you're interested.
- **Stress your achievements and accomplishments.** This is your time to brag a little. Just don't go overboard.
- **Tell your possible employer what you'll do for them.** Because it's not the time to tell them what they can do for you.
- **Play up your strengths.** If you must discuss negative experiences, be direct and tell them what you learned.
- **Always represent yourself honestly.** It's OK to be Robin and not Batman. Talk about what makes you unique.
- **Be organized.** Know the key points you want to make—you can even make a list—and find ways to fit them in.
- **Be positive about your reason for leaving any current or previous job.** The key word to remember is “more.” You want more challenges, responsibilities and opportunities—you're a go-getter! If you've been let go or laid off, stress how much experience you gained.
- **Talk about the confidence former employers placed in you.** Point to specific projects and responsibilities your employer assigned to you.
- **Make the job you're interviewing for #1.** Let the interviewer know it's your first choice and that you can't wait to help.



Interview Don'ts

There are number of reasons companies don't hire candidates—even qualified candidates.

- **Don't be late.** Just don't.
- **Don't discuss pay or benefits.** We repeat: do not. Instead, remain open and let your recruiter handle the negotiations.
- **Don't answer questions with a simple “yes” or “no.”** Yeah, it's good to be concise, but sell yourself by using clear, relevant examples.
- **Don't forget to ask questions.** Make sure they're detailed questions about the position that show that you did your homework.
- **Don't make derogatory remarks about previous or present employers.** Don't go there. Ever.
- **Don't misrepresent your experience.** Provide factual information about your work history and your skills.
- **Don't have poor personal appearance.** See our “Dress to impress” section in this guide, or talk to your recruiter.
- **Don't seem uninterested, indifferent, lazy or bored.** Employers want to see some self-confidence and enthusiasm about the job. Also, maintain good eye contact and give a firm handshake.
- **Don't come across as cynical, intolerant, overbearing, aggressive, indecisive or conceited.** Because all of those are undesirable qualities.
- **Don't forget to say “thanks.”** Also, see our section on writing a follow-up letter.

Your step-by-step guide to winning the interview

Step 1: Do your homework.

Interviews can be tough, no matter how many times you've been through them. But, trust us, if you take the time to get to know the position, the responsibilities and the company, we promise you'll feel a lot more comfortable. And you'll be ready to talk about how your skills, experience and personality will fit right in.

Do your homework on the company.

Find out as much as you can about the company—from its history to its future. Use these sources:

- Your recruiter
- The internet
- Trade journals
- Annual 10-K report
- Friends and business associates

Do your homework on yourself.

Sure, that might sound strange, but you have a lot to remember, right? So make sure you remember it all. Start by brushing up on your entire career history:

- Review all dates, positions, responsibilities and accomplishments.
- Know your strengths and weaknesses.
- Be prepared to discuss specific achievements and how they apply to your potential new job.
- Focus on recent positions, but don't neglect your early career.

Remember, the employer won't hire you only for your skills and experience. They'll also consider you:

- Attitude and poise
- Presentation and communication
- Education and certifications
- Related industry and technical background

Be prepared to ask questions:

- What are the main responsibilities of the job?
- Who does the position report to?
- Who has been successful in this job and why?
- Who has failed and why?



Step 2: Write it down so you won't forget.

Let's be honest—selling yourself to an employer in 45 minutes is enough to make anyone sweat. But there are three simple ways to overcome nerves: practice, practice, practice.

Ask your recruiter, spouse, a relative, a friend—anyone you trust—to do some mock interviews with you and give you honest feedback.

Be ready to discuss these two very important points:

Tell us why you're interested in the opportunity.
(Use this space to collect your thoughts.)

Tell us why you're the best person for the position—brag a little.
(Highlight your areas of expertise and major accomplishments.)

Practice your answers to these commonly asked questions.

There are no 100% right answers to these questions, but there is a right way to answer them—make sure your answer is direct, confident, honest and thoughtful. For a little extra help, check out these great sample answers:

What do you look for in a job?

Sample answer: “First and foremost, I want to work for a company that I admire and respect. I also look for the right opportunity that fits my experience and skills and will allow me to grow. It’s also important for me to constantly feel challenged and make an impact for the business. That’s what I think this job offers and why I’m so excited about it.”

How long would it take you to make a contribution to our company?

Sample answer: “Right from the start, my skills and experience would allow me to play an important part on your team. And once I get more familiar with the company’s goals and resources, I think I’ll make an even more valuable impact.”

Why did you leave your last job?

Or

Why are you leaving your current job?

Sample answer: “I enjoyed my work, but I’m anxious to expand my knowledge and take on more. Honestly, the great opportunities at this job did not exist in my last position. That’s why I’m very interested in your company, and all that you have to offer. And I’m confident that I can do an excellent job.”

Now it's your turn.

Use the space provided to jot down your answers. Ready? Go for it!

What are your short- and long-term goals?

What do you look for in a job?

What's the difference between a good job and an excellent one?

Why did you leave your last job? or Why are you leaving your current job?

Why did you choose to interview with us?

What can you do for us that someone else can't do?

Why should we hire you?

Do you work well under pressure?

How are you best managed?

How has your early career and/or background influenced who you are today?

What pay or salary do you expect to make?

What are the most important rewards you expect in your career?

What are your five biggest accomplishments in your career?

What's your biggest strength? Weakness?

What qualifications do you have that'll make you successful here?

How long would it take you to make a contribution to our company?

How long would you stay with us?

If you could start your career over, what, if anything, would you do differently?

How do you rate yourself as a professional?

What qualities have you liked or disliked in your bosses?

What's the most difficult ethical decision you ever had to make? What was the result?

What parts of your previous jobs have you disliked?

How would you rate your most recent employer and why?

Step 3: Ask some questions of your own.

The best interviews are conversations. That's why you need to be ready with some conversation starters of your own. This is also your chance to get to know the person and the company and figure out if this job is a good fit for you.

Here are some questions you can ask that'll help you keep the conversation going, get some important information about the job and decide if this is someplace you want to work. Take a look.

- Who are your major competitors? How do they stack up against you in terms of strengths and weaknesses?
- Tell me about the history and growth of your company. What's been the biggest improvement and the biggest setback?
- What are the company's main goals and how will I help reach them?
- Tell me about a typical day.
- Tell me about your onboarding/training program.
- What are the qualities of your top people?
- Where do you see your company going in the next several years?
- What are your favorite and least favorite parts about working here?
- How do you see me fitting in with your company?
- What do you think your top people like most about your company? What do they like least?
- How do I compare with other qualified candidates?
- When can I return and meet some of the people on the team?

You may only get one chance— don't leave anything out.

Before you shake hands and walk away, make sure the interviewer knows everything they need to do to make a decision about you and why you'll be such a great match. If you prepared an awesome answer to a question they didn't ask, tell them the answer anyway. It's all part of selling yourself.

Oh, and lastly, always find out what and when the next steps will be—if you're proactive, you won't be caught off guard.

Step 4: Dress to impress.

These days, different companies have different dress codes, but, for an interview, you're going to want to dress a little nicer and more conservatively. Basically, just look your best. And if you're not sure about exactly what to wear, ask your recruiter. They'll know what the interviewer is expecting.

Men

- If you're wearing a suit, go for a dark blue or dark gray with a long-sleeved white shirt.
- Your tie should be conservative, but stylish.
- On your feet, wear dark socks (over-the-calf) with nice, clean polished shoes.
- Go easy on the jewelry—maybe just a watch and a wedding band.
- Fingernails—trim and clean them!
- Facial hair should be clean-shaven or trimmed neatly.

Women

- Dress in today's styles, but keep your hemline close to knee-length and keep blouses on the modest side.
- Keep jewelry minimal and in good taste.
- If you have to go with a suit, a business suit in a neutral color is usually best for first interviews.
- Hair should be clean and neat and nails should be well manicured.
- Makeup should be stylish, but natural and lightly applied.
- Go light on the perfume. Some people actually have allergies to strong perfume.

What if it's a phone interview?

A lot of times, a phone interview is the first step, so you should take them just as seriously. Here are some tips:

- Work with your recruiter to set up a specific time for the call.
- Be on time.
- Just in case you somehow miss the call, make sure your voicemail recording is courteous and professional.
- Make sure the phone you're using is high quality and in a quiet spot. If you're using a cell, be in an area where you get good reception and don't try to drive and interview at the same time.
- Stay focused! Turn off your music, your computer, your TV, your video games and whatever else can possibly distract you.
- Never, ever, interrupt your interview call for another call that's "beeping in." Ever.

- If you have a bad connection and are having trouble hearing every word, offer to call them back.
- Be prepared and organized with notes about the company, the position and yourself.

Again, don't take a phone interview lightly. Think of it like the first step in a two-part tryout. If you make the cut, the next step is an in-person interview.

Last but not least, if your phone interview goes well, ask to set up an in-person interview before hanging up. Even if they don't schedule one on the spot, they'll still appreciate you being proactive.

Step 5: Write a follow-up letter.

After the interview is over, it's important to follow up. This gives you a chance to say things you forgot or to correct things you wish you had said differently. More importantly, a lot of people have forgotten the importance of following up, so this could make you stand out!

Here are a couple of pointers:

- Send a follow-up letter immediately. This allows you to show a sense of urgency and a high interest in the job. Ideally, your letter should be dropped in the mailbox the next day.
- Ah, but before you drop the letter in the mailbox, email it to us. We'll proofread it and put ourselves in the shoes of the interviewers (we're sort of interviewers ourselves, so we know what they like) to make sure it's 100% spot on.
- Be as brief as possible. It shows respect for others' time. As a bonus, it's also easier on you.
- In the letter, thank them for their time and restate your interest and enthusiasm for the job—for example, say that you can't wait to hear back from them.

Can I just email them?

Sending follow-up letters via email is a bit on the impersonal side, so we recommend avoiding it, unless it's necessary due to timing or special circumstances.

If you just can't get around sending an email, no worries; the rule of thumb is to send the letter as an attachment.

Sample follow-up letter

Date
Primary Interviewer's Name
Primary Interviewer's Title
Company Address

Dear [Primary Interviewer's Name],

I appreciate the time spent with you discussing [Company] and the _____ position. It was a pleasure meeting with you, _____ and _____. I feel my qualifications and skills in _____, _____ and _____ reflect those necessary to be successful at [Company].

At _____, I successfully [Mention one or two of your top accomplishments]. I am confident that I have the experience and drive to succeed on your team.

I feel an even greater excitement level about the opportunity because it will allow me to attain my goals of _____ and _____.

I look forward to our next meeting to discuss this in greater detail.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

Let's talk money.

If you get to the point when you're discussing your hourly rate or salary, that's good news—you're getting closer to landing the job! Here are some things to keep in mind:

- Most companies want to make a fair offer. They really do. They want to bring new employees on board at a salary or hourly pay level that makes them happy and keeps them around—they want you to feel valued.
- Be realistic and know what you're worth. For the most part, the economy has been growing slowly, but steadily. Most companies are offering reasonable salaries, but don't get carried away with your expectations. Talk to your recruiter to get a true picture of what someone with your skills and experience is earning these days.
- Sometimes having a great job with great coworkers is worth more than a few extra euros.
- Be flexible. A lot of times your entire compensation package is more than your pay. Think of what benefits and perks come with the job.
- If you're asked what salary you're looking for, try to avoid quoting a specific number. Say something like this: "I'm very interested in the opportunity and feel I can make a meaningful contribution. I am currently earning _____ € per year (or per hour). I'm open to a competitive offer." It's best not to mention a specific number because you don't want to over- or underprice yourself. That could raise a red flag in the minds of the interviewers.

Overall, it's a good idea to keep your recruiter in the loop. Trust us, we do this for a living and can come up with a good solution that will make everyone happy.

Step 6: Resign from your job with class.

Resigning from your current position can be emotional and stressful. There's no easy way to say it, but here are a few ways you can make it a little easier:

- Put it in writing. Handing your boss a resignation letter is the best way to handle an uncomfortable situation. Not to mention, it's something to keep for your records—for your protection. Oh, and it makes that initial awkward conversation a little more comfortable.
- The sooner you leave the company, the better. Give fair notice, but ask to be relieved ASAP. Yeah, you're awesome, but the company will get by without you. You now owe your loyalty to yourself and your new job!
- Don't talk about counteroffers; it's probably the worst thing you can do during the resignation process.
- Talk to us first. We'll help make this process as stress-free as possible.

Sample resignation letter

Date
Former Manager's Name
Title
Company

Dear [Former Manager's Name],

It is with mixed emotions, yet with firm conviction, that I write this letter of resignation from [Company].

My association during the past [#] years with this excellent company and its many fine people has been a wonderful part of my professional and personal life.

Please understand that I have made my decision after considerable thought. An outstanding opportunity presented itself that will significantly enhance my career and assist me in achieving my goals.

I am therefore resigning from [Company] effective [date]. This will allow sufficient time to complete current commitments prior to commencing with my new employer on [date]. In the interim, I will work with you and the staff to provide a smooth transfer of my current duties.

I hope that you understand and accept my decision. I will support you in making this change as easy as possible for the staff and department.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

Think twice about a counteroffer.

Did you get a counteroffer to stay at your current your job? We're not saying you shouldn't accept it, but here are a few things to consider.

1. What does it say about the company you are working for if you have to threaten to resign before they pay you what you're worth? Think about it.
2. Where's the money for the counteroffer coming from? Is it your next raise early? All companies follow some strict wage and salary guidelines. Can they make your increase retroactive in order to compensate for underpaying you?
3. The same problems that caused you to look for a new job in the first place will probably repeat themselves in the future. As much as some things change, others stay the same.
4. Your company may immediately start looking for a new person at a cheaper price. In some cases, you could be training your replacement. It's true.
5. You've now basically made your employer aware that you're unhappy. From this day on, they may question your loyalty.
6. When promotion time comes, where will you be on your employer's list?
7. When times get rough, your employer might begin the cutbacks with you.
8. Statistics show that, if you accept a counteroffer, the probability of voluntarily leaving in six months, or being let go within a year, is extremely high—85% of people who accept a counteroffer are gone in six months, and 90% are gone in 12 months.
9. Accepting a counteroffer, can give you the feeling that you were bought.
10. Once word gets out, the relationships that you now enjoy with many of your coworkers may not ever be the same.

Based on an article from The Wall Street Journal

If you're working with one of our recruiters, tell them what you thought about your interview, or ask them any other questions throughout the whole process—even after you land the job. Don't be shy. After all, it's our job to find the best job for you, and the more we know, the better.

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