

# INTERVIEWS

## PERSONAL APPEARANCE

Appropriateness in clothing and personal appearance is essential. Clothing does not need to be expensive, but it should be chosen in good taste. Well-groomed candidates have a distinct advantage. First impressions are lasting. You should "look the part" to help the employer envision you representing his/her organization.

## YOUR PART IN THE INTERVIEW

**An interview is a two-way process.** It provides you and the prospective employer with the opportunity to meet and assess one another in an attempt to find a mutually satisfying employee-employer relationship.

1. Confirm that you know the time and specific location of the interview either by telephone conversation or e-mail. If you are driving, make sure you know where to safely park -- if there is a parking lot, what is the fee or is it covered by the interviewing organization?
2. It is important that your interview appointment be kept. A "no show" or last minute cancellation on the day of the interview reflects poorly on you. If you are scheduling a telephone interview, make sure you are available on a landline or a well-charged cell phone. Make sure you have a quiet, dry and warm space to have your interview conversation. A telephone interview is frequently a first step after submitting your resume, cover letter and application.
3. Plan to arrive 10-15 minutes before your scheduled appointment -- this should give you time to find a safe parking place if you are driving and to accommodate traffic delays caused by construction or other unforeseen situations.
4. Make a final check on your personal appearance. Locate the restroom if needed. If your hands are cold, then wash them in warm water or if they are hot and clammy, wash them in colder water and dry them thoroughly so you can be comfortable when you shake hands with your interviewer. Take a few deep breaths to relax and enjoy the experience. You may want to bring breath mints with you.
5. Show genuine interest and enthusiasm through eye contact, voice modulation, gestures, and appropriate body language. If you are on the phone, visualize a smile and an enthusiastic voice.
6. Be sure you know the name of the person you are to interview. Pronounce his or her name clearly and distinctly. Give the interviewer your name clearly. Offer a firm handshake.
7. **A good interview involves an exchange of intelligent and pertinent questions and answers.** You should possess information about the organization which the interviewer represents. The discussion will generally move more smoothly if each person involved gains as much significant data as possible. Some company information is typically available on the organization's website. To obtain more information, call or write the organization to request it prior to your interview.
8. Questions which you may be asked during the interview include:
  - **Tell me about yourself.**
  - **Why should I hire you?**
  - **Why do you want to work for us?**
  - **What are some of your major accomplishments?**
  - **What do you want to be doing in five years?**
  - **What 2 or 3 things are most important to you in your job?**
  - **What is your favorite color and why?**
  - **Why did you choose your particular major?**
  - **What would you say your strengths are? Your weaknesses?**
  - **What animal represents you and why?**

## YOUR PART IN THE INTERVIEW (continued)

9. The interviewer usually leads the initial part of the discussion. You should be prepared to make brief and factual statements regarding yourself and your qualifications. You should have prepared a few well thought-out questions about the requirements of the position that you are seeking and the community in which you might live and work. You may be asked some “**behavioral questions**,” situations that demonstrate your experience and accomplishments that can “transfer” to a new situation. Be prepared to tell stories that answer the “STAR” model: **S**= situation, **A**=action you took, **R**=results you achieved. For more information on behavioral interviewing, do an Internet search on **STAR Interviewing Techniques**.
10. Questions you can ask the interviewer:
  - **What are the possibilities for professional growth and promotion?**
  - **How would you describe the ideal candidate for this position?**
  - **How does this job relate to other positions?**
  - **How often are performance reviews given?**
  - **In promotions, are employers ever transferred between functional fields?**
11. Keep in mind that your prospective employer is primarily interested in your professional training, experience and skills, and how you can apply your background to HELP the prospective employer. More specifically, the interviewer is interested in you from two perspectives.
  - You, the colleague who will work on a day-to-day basis as part of a staff team, and
  - You the potential employee who may fulfill a current personnel need as well as follow a long range career path -- with the organization.
11. The salary should be discussed at some point during the interview, but not at the beginning. Prospective employers often cannot make a definite salary offer, but usually can provide a salary range within which an offer will be made. It is also pertinent to discuss opportunities for advancement which would include salary increases for the successful employee. If the prospective employer asks you what salary you expect, give a range based on your research of comparable positions in the field.
12. **Listen attentively** to the questions asked of you. Respond to all questions. Ask questions which concern you, especially pertaining to job responsibilities. Always try to relate to your past experiences to the responsibilities of the position for which you are interviewing. If you do not understand a question asked of you, politely ask to have it restated. It is perfectly acceptable to take a few seconds (it may seem forever to you) to formulate your response to the stated question so you respond with a well composed answer.
13. Be sure you understand all of the requirements of the position you are seeking.
14. More than likely, on the first interview you will not receive a definite offer. If there appears to be mutual interest, ascertain whether or not you will receive further consideration and if so when you can expect to hear from the interviewer.
15. When the interview is concluded, thank your interviewer and then graciously take your leave.

## SECOND INTERVIEWS

If you are invited by letter or e-mail to visit a company for a second interview:

1. Respond immediately by setting a convenient date for yourself and the company by a telephone response or e-mail, based on the employer’s preference. Or, advise them that you are appreciative of their invitation, but have decided to accept employment elsewhere.
2. Most companies which issue definite invitations to visit them pay all the expenses incurred. Avoid any misunderstanding by tactfully inquiring if the company policies permit payment of these expenses.

## FOLLOW-UP

1. After an interview, write a thank-you e-mail note or immediately write letter (snail mail) on quality stationery. See a sample follow-up letter below.
2. Immediately furnish your prospective employer with any additional recommendations or materials requested.
3. If you have been promised a definitely answer from an employer regarding a certain position and you have not received any word on the appointed date, a courteous letter of inquiry, a telephone call or an e-mail message from you is proper. It does no harm to show genuine interest on your part.

## SAMPLE FOLLOW-UP LETTER

### YOUR NAME

Street Address  
City State Zip Code  
(Area Code) Telephone Number  
e-mail address

Date of Writing  
(1-5 days after your interview)

Mr. or Ms. Interview  
Title of Interviewer  
Organization  
Street Address  
City, State, Zip Code  
E-mail address if sending electronically

Dear Mr. and Ms. Interviewer:

**1st Paragraph:** Thank the interviewer for the interview and express appreciation for the courtesy and consideration extended to you. State the job for which you interviewed as well as the date and location of the interview.

**2nd Paragraph:** Reaffirm your interest in the position and the company. Mention anything that you have done since the interview that would evidence your interest in them, i.e. performed additional research on the organization, talked with local dealers or representatives.

**3rd Paragraph:** Show your willingness to provide any additional clarifying data or statements and submit any further information you may want to add to your application.

**4th Paragraph:** Close with a suggestion for further action, i.e., your availability for additional interviews.

Sincerely,

/s/ (you can sign the online form with a script font)  
(Your handwritten signature)

Type your name

P.S. Immediately after the interview, write either a thank you note via e-mail or compose a hand-written thank you note sent via snail mail. Yes the U.S. Postal Service may also serve as a fine reminder of the wonderful interview experience you had. Thanking the interviewer(s) personally for their time, information and for sharing their expertise regarding the organization, will bring your name back into their mind.