



College of Education
Career Services
University of Nevada, Reno

Interviewing

Ten Tips on Preparing for a Job Interview

- 1. Do your homework.** Research the school/district/organization before your interview so that you can showcase that knowledge during the interview. Try to learn two or three facts so that you will sound well-informed at the interview. This will boost your credibility with the interviewer and will help you to formulate intelligent questions to ask him or her.
- 2. Know where you are going.** Make sure you know how to get there, how to park, where to enter, etc. You may want to do a drive by before the interview just to get to know the area. Plan your schedule and route so that you arrive 10 to 15 minutes before your appointment.
- 3. Look the part.** Your clothing should be neat, pressed, and professional looking. You don't know the culture of the environment beforehand, so it is important to err on the side of conservative. Even if everyone's wearing jeans when you arrive, you're still probably better off having shown up in a suit. Still, don't be afraid to inject some personality into your look, and don't neglect the details. Make sure to have a fresh haircut and clean, manicured nails. For more tips see our "What to Wear" section.
- 4. Rehearse beforehand.** Prior to your interview, prepare answers to common questions the interviewer is likely to ask, such as *What are your strengths and weaknesses?* *Why do you want to work here?* *Why should we hire you?* or *Tell me about yourself.* For practice, do a mock interview with a trusted friend who will give you honest feedback.
- 5. Secure your references.** Prior to the interview, find at least three key people—former supervisors, colleagues, or instructors – who are willing to serve as your professional references. Be sure that they are willing to speak highly of you if contacted by a potential employer.

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Interview Tips Continued

6. **Arrive early.** Be sure to arrive at least 15 minutes before the interview. Visit the restroom and check your appearance in the mirror. Announce yourself to the receptionist to let him or her know that you have arrived and that you have an appointment. Turn off your cell phone so it doesn't ring during your meeting. Observe your surroundings and get a feel for the workplace.
7. **Bring necessary documentation.** Make a checklist of documents that you will need for the interview, and make sure that you have them in your personal organizer or briefcase before leaving home. These documents may include extra copies of your résumé, college transcript(s), a passport, driver's license, Social Security card, or portfolio of writing samples or other professional work. Bring a pen and notepad to take down notes of just to look prepared.
8. **Sell yourself.** The interview is your chance to shine, so now is not the time to be humble. Convince them you deserve the job and could make a real contribution. Develop a 25-second compelling overview of *why you?* It should include your strengths, your abilities, and what sets you uniquely apart from other applicants. Be sincere, friendly but business-like, enthusiastic, courteous, and smile and make eye contact.
9. **Ask questions.** Based on your earlier research, ask questions about the school district or organization, its goals, and future plans, along with questions about the position. Interviewers are often favorably impressed by candidates who show that they are knowledgeable about the school district/organization.
10. **Follow up.** After the interview, don't forget to send a handwritten note or friendly email thanking the interviewer for his or her time and consideration, as well as restating your interest and commitment to the position. If you don't hear anything after one week, call to politely inquire when they will be making a final decision.

Before the Interview

- Get your interview clothes together and try them on.
- Plan on how you will wear your hair, accessories, makeup, etc.
- Decide what you will be taking along, get it ready and put it in a handy area.

The day before:

- Check the weather and adjust.
- Do as much morning preparation as you can the day before.
- If you have to depend on someone else, confirm and have a back-up plan.
- Do something to relax.
- Have a light dinner and get to bed early.

The morning of"

- Don't try anything new.
- Check your appearance from head to toe in the mirror.
- Avoid too much coffee or sugar.

You Can't Be Too Prepared

Plan what you are going to say.

One of the most important things that you can do to prepare is to plan what you are going to say. Try to have some stories about your work experience that illustrate your skills, experience, and education. These stories should relate to the skills that the employer is seeking, while emphasizing your:

- Strengths
- Leadership skills
- Ability to learn new things
- Contributions to the organizations in which you have worked or volunteered
- Creativity in solving problems and working with people

Clothes Talk: What are they saying?

- Your attire plays a supporting role in your interview.
- Appropriate attire supports your image as a person who takes the interview process seriously and understands the nature of the industry in which you are trying to become employed.
- If you are primarily remembered for your interview attire, this is probably because you made an error in judgment.
- Dressing nicely and appropriately is a compliment to the person you meet.

<http://www.career.vt.edu/jobsearch/interview/appearnc.html>

The Don'ts: Why People don't get Hired.

There are many reasons why people fail to get hired:

- Poor personal appearance
- Application form or resume is incomplete or sloppy
- Overly aggressive behavior
- Lack of tact and courtesy
- Lack of maturity
- Lack of interest and enthusiasm
- Nervousness or lack of confidence and poise
- Failure to ask questions about the job
- Responding vaguely to questions
- No eye contact with the interviewer
- No genuine interest in the company or job
- Lack of planning for career; no purpose and no goals
- Over-emphasis on money
- Unwillingness to start at the bottom
- Negative attitude about past employers
- No sense of humor
- Arriving late for the interview
- Failure to express appreciation for interviewer's time

<http://www.iseek.org/sv/41315.jsp>

Grooming Tips

- **Hair:** Should be clean and neat. If men wear facial hair it should be well-groomed.
- **Shoes:** Should be in polished condition. Be sure that heels are not worn.
- **Details:** Make sure you don't have missing buttons, or lint; be sure to remove external tags and tacking stitches from new clothes.
- **Hands:** Clean fingernails; women should avoid extreme nail polish or nail length.
- **Fit:** Clothes should be clean, neatly pressed, and fit correctly.
- **Smell:** Perfume or cologne should be used sparingly or not at all. Be sure your clothes don't smell like smoke or other odors.
- **Tattoos and Piercings:** In most interviews, it is inappropriate to show piercings and tattoos. Of course this depends on the job interview, but you want to put your best foot forward. Take out piercings and hide tattoos if you can for now.

<http://www.career.vt.edu/jobsearch/interview/appearnc.html>

What to Wear: Men

Suit: A two piece matched suit is always the best and safest choice. Don't combine a suit jacket with pants that don't match.



Cost and quality: You are not expected to be able to afford the same clothing as a school administrator corporate CEO. One good quality suit is sufficient for a job search if that is all your budget allows. You can vary your shirt and tie.

Conservative colors and fabric: Navy and dark gray are safe and are the most conservative for men. Other color trends may come and go; avoid the extremes. Choose a solid or very subtle weave or pattern or plaid (the kind that look solid across the room). Wool, wool blends, or very high quality blends with natural fiber, are the only acceptable fabrics for a conservative men's suit.



Jewelry: Wear a conservative watch and keep other accessories minimal.

Ties: Tie styles come and go. Select food quality silk ties. Avoid fashion extremes, like character ties, in interviews. Notice what male educational personnel wear on the job, at career fairs, and at information sessions.

Belt: Black or cordovan leather, to match your shoes.



Socks: Dark socks, mid-calf length so no skin is visible when you sit down.

Shirts: Long-sleeved shirts, even in summer. Choose white or light blue solid or conservative stripes.



Shoes: Leather, lace-up or slip-on business shoes, preferably in black.



<http://www.career.vt.edu/jobsearc/interview/appearnc.html>

What to Wear: Women

Suit: A two piece matched suit is always the best and safest choice.



Suit with pants: Tailored pants suits are an appropriate choice for women. If you wear pants, they should be creased and tailored, not tight or flowing.



Suit with skirt: If you wear a skirt, it should cover your thighs when you are seated. When deciding what skirt to wear, it is a good idea to sit in a chair in front of a mirror in order to see what the person interviewing you will see. Ask yourself whether it will be distracting or reinforce your image as a person who looks appropriate for a school environment.

Conservative colors and fabric: Navy, dark gray, brown, and black are safe. Avoid other extreme colors or trends. Choose a very subtle weave pattern or a plaid that will look solid from across the room. Wool, wool blends, and high quality blends and synthetics are all appropriate fabric choices.

Cosmetics: Keep makeup conservative. A little is usually better than none for a polished look.

Hosiery: Should be plain, sheer, and in neutral colors complimenting your suit.

Jewelry/accessories: Wear a conservative watch and keep accessories simple. Avoid trendy items and extreme styles and colors.

Shirt/sweaters: Underneath the suit jacket, wear a tailored blouse or a fine gauge, knit shell in a color or small print that coordinates nicely with your suit. Whatever you choose, be sure it is not too low cut and does not show cleavage.



Shoes: Should be leather or fabric / microfiber. Choose a closed-toe dress shoe. If you decide to wear a high heel, avoid extremes; no stilettos or chunky platforms. Be sure that you can walk comfortably in whatever you choose.



Potential Interview Questions About Work

- 1) Why did you choose teaching?
- 2) Why do you want to teach in this school or school district?
- 3) Where would you like to be in your career five years from now?
- 4) How would you go about establishing your credibility quickly with colleagues and parents?
- 5) How would you feel about working with someone who knows less than you?
- 6) Give examples of ideas you've had or implemented.
- 7) How would you describe your teaching style?
- 8) Tell me about a time where you had to deal with conflict in the classroom.
- 9) What did you like least about your last job or internship?
- 10) What would be your ideal working situation?
- 11) Why should we hire you?
- 12) What experiences have you had related to teaching?
- 13) Do you have any questions for me?
- 14) What were the responsibilities of your last position or internship?
- 15) Give an example of a time that you went above and beyond the call of duty at work.
- 16) Describe a time when your work was criticized.
- 17) What will you miss about your present/last job?
- 18) What do you see yourself doing within the first 30 days of this job?
- 19) If you were interviewing someone for this position, what traits would you look for?
- 20) If I were your supervisor and asked you to do something that you disagreed with, what would you do?
- 21) If I were to ask your last supervisor to provide you additional training or exposure, what would s/he suggest?
- 22) Describe how you would handle a situation if you were required to finish multiple tasks by the end of the day, and there was no conceivable way that you could finish them.
- 23) What techniques and tools do you use to keep yourself organized?
- 24) If you had to choose one, would you consider yourself a big-picture person or a detail-oriented person?
- 25) What kind of personality do you work best with and why?
- 26) What do you remember most about your own education?
- 27) What are the qualities of a good leader? A bad leader?
- 28) When choosing your career was there a person who really made a difference?
- 29) Have you ever been on a team where someone was not pulling their own weight? How did you handle it?
- 30) Tell me about a time when you had to give someone difficult feedback. How did you handle it?

Potential Interview Questions About Yourself

- 1) Tell me about yourself.
- 2) What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- 3) Tell me about your proudest achievement.
- 4) If you could be anywhere in the world right now, where would you be and why?
- 5) What do you like to do?
- 6) What are your lifelong dreams?
- 7) What's the last book you read?
- 8) What magazines do you subscribe to?
- 9) Who are your heroes?
- 10) What would you do if you won the lottery?
- 11) What is your personal mission statement?
- 12) List five words that describe your character.
- 13) What is your greatest failure, and what did you learn from it?
- 14) What is your greatest fear?
- 15) What is the most important thing you've learned in school?
- 16) What do you like to do for fun?
- 17) Why did you choose your major?
- 18) Tell me about a time when you had to give someone difficult feedback. How did you handle it?
- 19) If you had to choose one, would you consider yourself a big-picture person or a detail-oriented person?
- 20) What's the most important thing you've learned in school?
- 21) What three character traits would your friends use to describe you?
- 22) What is your greatest achievement outside of school?
- 23) What's the most difficult decision you've made in the last two years?
- 24) How do you feel about taking no for an answer?
- 25) What was the most difficult period in your life, and how did you deal with it?
- 26) Give me an example of a time you did something wrong. How did you handle it?
- 27) Tell me one thing about yourself you wouldn't want me to know.
- 28) Tell me the difference between good and exceptional.
- 29) What is your favorite memory from childhood?
- 30) What is your biggest regret, and why?
- 31) What irritates you about other people, and how do you deal with it?
- 32) If you could choose one superhero power, what would it be and why?
- 33) What's the best movie you've seen in the last year?
- 34) What are your professional goals?

Types of Interviews

- **Informational interviews** are not job interviews. However, they are a good opportunity to get additional leads and referrals that will help you tap the “hidden job market” even when there are no current job openings
- **Telephone screening interviews** are used to eliminate candidates based on essential criteria such as employment objective, education, or required skills. Since these interviews can often occur unexpectedly, it is important that your job search records are organized and kept where you can reach them at a moment’s notice.
- **In-person screening interviews** are used to verify your qualifications for the position and to establish a preliminary impression of your attitude, interest, and professional “style.” This interview is most often conducted by a professional screener from the human resources department. The screener’s goal is to determine if you are a candidate for meeting with the decision maker.
- **Behavior Based Interviews** are focused on your abilities and past performance. The belief is that your previous behavior is the best predictor of your future performance. Interviewers will ask you a series of standardized questions designed to get you to talk about how you handled or responded to certain situations in the past. Behavioral questions usually begin with a statement like: “Tell me about a time when...” or “Can you describe a situation where...”
- **Selection interviews** are conducted by a decision maker. He or she meets with you to discuss your qualifications in detail and assess whether a working relationship can be established. You might be asked back to speak with the same person and/or with other school personnel. Each time, your ability to establish rapport and present yourself as the right person for the position is critical to achieving the next step.
 - **Types of selection interviews:**
 - **Peer group interviews** provide you with an opportunity to meet and talk with your prospective colleagues giving them a chance to determine how you will “fit.”
 - **Panel interviews** consist of three or more people questioning you. When answering questions, direct your answer to the individual that asked you it, but work to maintain some eye contact with the other members of the group.
 - **Group interviews** are conducted with other candidates. They provide the school or organization with a sense of your leadership potential and style. The group interview helps the company get a glimpse of how you interact with peers: are you timid or bossy, are you attentive or do you seek attention, do others turn to you instinctively, or do you compete for authority? The interviewer might call on you to discuss an issue with the other candidates, solve a problem collectively, or discuss your qualifications in front of the other candidates.

<http://www.iseek.org/sv/41306.jsp>

http://www.jobskills.info/resume_edge/types_of_interview.htm

<http://jobsearchtech.about.com/od/gettingthejob/a/Interviewing.htm>

Prepare Questions to Ask

Impress your interviewer by asking intelligent, well thought out questions. Consider the topics below:

- Philosophy of Administration
- Community Involvement
- Student Services and Counselor Support
- Parental Expectations and Involvement
- Extracurricular Responsibilities
- Textbook Adoption Policies
- Primary Issues Facing the School/District

Ending the Interview

At the end of the interview:

- Restate any strengths and experiences that you might not have emphasized earlier.
- Mention a particular accomplishment or activity that fits the job.

The end of the interview is also the time to let the employer know if you are interested in the job:

- If you want the job, say so!
- Ask when the position will be filled.
- Find out if there will be additional interviews and when the employer plans to make a decision.
- Determine a time when you may contact the employer to learn of the decision.

Finally, be courteous and end the interview on time.

- Thank the interviewers for their time.
- Request a business card.
- Shake hands in closing.
- Two or three days after the interview send a thank you note addressed to the interviewers. If you did not get a business card with contact information try looking up the address on the web or in the phone book.

<http://www.iseek.org/sv/41315.jsp>

http://www.worksmart.ca.gov/tips_interview.html

Thank You Notes

After you interview, be sure to write a thank you note to the employer or interviewer. This is very important because a thank you note gives you one more chance to remind the employer about the special skills you can bring to the position. It is a good idea to request the interviewer's business card before leaving the interview. This will help when writing your thank you note to correctly spell the interviewer's name and job title.

Tips for thank you notes:

- Neatly handwrite or type the note.
- Address the note to the interviewer or the lead interviewer.
- Keep it short (No longer than one page).
- First paragraph: Thank the employer for the interview. Also, mention that you are interested in the position.
- Second paragraph: Briefly state a few of your skills without repeating the information on your resume word for word. Include any important information not mentioned at the interview.
- Third paragraph: Provide your contact information, telephone number with area code, and an e-mail address, if available.
- Sign the note with your first and last name.
- Proofread the note and check for spelling or grammar errors. Ask another person to proofread the note.
- Mail the note within two or three days after your interview.

http://www.worksmart.ca.gov/tips_interview.html

Resource Links for Interview Preparation

Career Services @ Virginia Tech

<http://www.career.vt.edu/JOBSEARC/interview/interview1.htm>

Interview Tips

<http://www.iseek.org/sv/41315.jsp>

Acing the Interview

<http://jobsearch.about.com/cs/interviews/a/aceinterview.htm>

Interview Questions and Answers

<http://jobsearch.about.com/od/interviewquestionsanswers/a/interviewquest.htm>

Ace the Interview

<http://www.acetheinterview.com/>