



Interview Tips for College Graduates

1. Be respectful of the interviewer's time.

Before sending out your resume, make sure your skills are compatible with the job post.

2. Arrive prepared to answer 3 standard questions:

a. "Why did you leave your last job?"

Avoid saying anything negative about your last employer. Rather, respond with an answer such as, "I have always aspired to work for a larger company where my potential for advanced training and growth could be realized."

b. "What is your greatest strength?"

The interviewer is not asking about your athletic ability or your extensive knowledge of the most popular movies. Your response to this question will give the interviewer a good indication as to your level of confidence and, ultimately, whether you would be a good fit for their company. Prepare for this question by carefully reading and understanding the job post and focusing on skills and traits that will benefit the position. If you do not have a professional track record as of yet, focus on what assets you can bring to the company such as, "I am self-motivated, detail-oriented, and an excellent communicator. I enjoy working with people and look forward to challenges." Or, if you have previous job experience, "I have a documented track record of increasing annual sales by 30% over the past 3 years."

c. "What is your greatest weakness?"

Take a negative and explain how you understand the importance of striving for improvement. Say something like "I have difficulty delegating because I want to do it all. I am, however working on letting go and allowing other's to help."

3. Know the interview basics:

Bring your resume, a note pad and pen.

- a. Your resume should be specifically tailored to the particular job opening.
- b. The cover letter should include a specific name, "Dear Mr. Smith", not "Dear Sir/Ma'am" or "To whom it may concern."

Ask appropriate questions:

- a. "What future career path does this position follow?"
- b. "How many employees have been in this position and where are they now?"
- c. "How does this position tie into the growth of the company?"

4. Confidently address any gaps in your resume.

Address the gap by explaining what you did during this time to enhance your job skills. Use a statement such as "I have been taking night courses in business while looking for a job during the day. I have also been volunteering my time at a local non profit, offering my accounting experience in their finance department."

5. Be prepared to answer the question “Why were you fired?”

You will derail your chances of getting the job if you make excuses or blame your boss or your coworkers. First and foremost be honest. (Never, ever lie.) A response such as “I was admittedly not a fit for my last position. I can however confidently say that I learned a great deal while working there and feel certain that the experience I gained will benefit my next employer”.

6. Be creative in your job search.

- a. Don't put your entire effort in Internet searches – select an organization that you want to work for and offer your services as an intern or volunteer.
- b. Be bold – ask for the opportunity without a monetary reward.
- c. Offer to be a guest speaker (expert in your field) at different luncheons and events, providing valuable tips while you have their attention.
- d. Join a networking group in the field that you are interested in pursuing.
- e. Visit job fairs and regularly communicate with your Career Services office.
- f. Find a professional mentor. Learn as much as you can and take every opportunity to ask questions.
- g. Enroll your parents' friends and professional associates in your job search. (Note: Your parents do not belong in the interview, physically or as by following up. Even if they opened doors for you in the interview process, it is now up to you to handle everything from this point forward.)

7. Make-up and good grooming is a “must”. (i.e. No facial hair, visible tattoos, multiple earrings, loud jewelry, etc.)

Ask someone you trust to provide his or her honest opinion regarding your grooming and interview attire. Every detail counts when you are competing with several other people for the same position.

8. Send a thank-you note.

Send out a thank-you note the same day, reiterating your enthusiasm and interest in the job. Mention that you will follow up in a few days and look forward to being considered for the position. Recheck your spelling and grammar before mailing out the note.

9. Your job may only be a telephone call away.

If you have not heard from the interviewer after a few days, don't hesitate to call and say, “I am very interested in the position and wanted to follow up to see when a final decision will be made.”

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Corporate Networking and Etiquette Training

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