

# PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

## LEARN ALL YOU CAN ABOUT THE EMPLOYER

If you were an employer with equally qualified applicants, which would you hire – an applicant who knows nothing about the company’s products and services? Employers want to hire applicants who care enough to make an effort to learn about the company before the interview. Go on their website to find out more about the company. Consider visiting the company to see what it is all about.

## BRING IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS TO THE INTERVIEW

Show the employer that you are a thinking employee who plans ahead by bringing all of the important documents that you may need during the interview. Important documents include a resume, photocopies (not originals) of diplomas, awards, certificates (including job training class certificates), a driver’s license, a social security card, letters of reference, etc. In addition, you may want to bring a portfolio of your work if it relates to the job you are applying for.

## KNOW WHERE YOU ARE TO GO FOR THE INTERVIEW

Sometimes the employer will schedule the interview at a main building office instead of at the store or company. If this happens, visit the interview site before the interview to see how long it takes to get there. Then, on the day of the interview, allow extra time to get to the interview so that you are not rushed. You should arrive about ten minutes early to the interview. If someone drives you to the interview, have them wait in the car. To show them that you are a responsible, capable adult, do not take a friend to the interview – go alone. Also, make sure a friend does not call you during the interview by turning your cell phone off!

## DRESS FOR SUCCESS

Think about what you are going to wear to the interview. To make the right impression you should be clean, neat, and dressed for the job. For a job in retail sales, you should dress as the clerks in the store do. For a job as a mechanic, nice jeans and a T-shirt would be appropriate. For professional jobs, a nice dress or shirt and tie would be best. Always dress a bit nicer than those who are already working the job you want. Then, when you get the job, dress for the job you want next. Come to the interview with fresh breath as well. According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers, 92% of employers asked said that a job applicant’s overall appearance influences their opinion about the job applicant. The percent of employers that are negatively influenced by these factors in a job applicant’s overall appearance are as follows:

82% - Nontraditional interview attire	72% - Body piercing
74% - Handshake	69% - Obvious tattoos
73% - Unusual hair color	64% - Unusual hair style

## INTERNET ISSUES: FACEBOOK & BLOGS

An increasing number of employers are searching the internet for any additional information about job applicants. About 45% of employers surveyed said that they have “Googled” or reviewed job applicants’ profiles on social networking sites. If you have any pictures or content that would make your pastor, priest, or

parents blush, consider removing it before applying for a job. Blogs are also something to be careful about. Even if you are blogging about something unrelated to work, you may get fired.

## PREPARE ANSWERS FOR POSSIBLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

During the interview, the employer will ask questions to find out if you are the right person for the job. Most employers ask applicants the same type of interview questions. It is best to practice the answers to these questions so that you can be relaxed during the interview. Great leaders know the value of practice. Former President Ronald Reagan practiced his speeches in front of a mirror. Ben Franklin practiced his speeches on a farm in front of the cows. You may practice your interview answers in front of a mirror, in front of your pet, or with a friend. Use the following pages to write down responses to the following questions that may be asked during the interview process. Limit your answers to about a minute long or less. Be honest, but put a positive spin on your answers.

# INTERVIEW PRACTICE QUESTIONS

- Tell me about yourself.** Tell the interviewer about any skills, experiences, jobs, volunteer positions you have/had that are useful for the job you are applying for. Don't share about your hobbies. In addition, list 4-6 personal traits from the box on the right.

Accurate	Creative	Informal	Quick
Adaptable	Curious	Innovative	Quiet
Adventurous	Daring	Introspective	Realistic
Alert	Decisive	Kind	Receptive
Ambitious	Dedicated	Knowledgeable	Reflective
Analytical	Dependable	Logical	Reliable
Articulate	Determined	Loving	Resourceful
Assertive	Diligent	Loyal	Responsible
Attentive	Disciplined	Mature	Self-confident
Businesslike	Discreet	Meticulous	Self-reliant
Calm	Eager	Modest	Sensitive
Capable	Easy-going	Motivated	Sincere
Careful	Efficient	Objective	Smart
Cautious	Energetic	Open-minded	Sociable
Charitable	Enterprising	Optimistic	Sophisticated
Charming	Enthusiastic	Original	Spontaneous
Cheerful	Flexible	Organized	Stable
Clever	Forceful	Outgoing	Steady
Compassionate	Formal	Patient	Supportive
Competent	Friendly	People-oriented	Systematic
Competitive	Generous	Perceptive	Tactful
Confident	Hard-working	Persevering	Talented
Conservative	Healthy	Pleasant	Tenacious
Considerate	Helpful	Positive	Thorough
Consistent	Honest	Practical	Thoughtful
Constructive	Humorous	Productive	Tolerant
Cooperative	Imaginative	Progressive	Trusting
Courageous	Independent	Prudent	Trustworthy
Courteous	Industrious	Punctual	Versatile

*Skills and work experience:*

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*Personal Traits:*

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- Why do you want to work for this company?** The interviewer wants to know if you have made an effort to learn about the company, and why the company is important to you. The interviewer wants to feel like his/her company is special. Let the interviewer know why you selected his/her company as a special place to work. Don't say, "I just need a job."

*Say something good about the company's reputation, products, services, employees, etc.:*

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*Say how your skills or traits are in line with the company's values:*

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3. **What did you dislike about your previous job?** Do not complain about your former supervisor or coworkers. Only mention things that may be considered positive. For example, “I liked the job, but there was no opportunity for advancement.” or “I would like to change jobs to gain more experience and learn new skills in a different environment.”

*Say something positive. Do not bad mouth former employer or coworkers:*

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4. **What are your strengths?** Strengths include **personal strengths** (such as “I am a good team player because I have been a member of many sports teams,” or “I enjoy getting people to work together towards a goal”); **skill strengths** (such as “I was voted class president because of my leadership skills,” or “I’ve learned how to develop a website while taking a computer class at college”); and **work experience strengths** (such as “I have developed customer service skills while working at Del Taco,” or “I have developed personal relationship skills from my volunteer work at the senior’s center.” If you have not had a job before, lean heavy on your volunteer experience and the lessons you’ve learned.

*Personal strengths:*

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*Skill strengths:*

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*Work experience/volunteer strengths:*

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5. **What are your weaknesses?** Only mention *one* (1) weakness and turn it into a strength. For example, “It may take me longer to complete a task because I want to make sure the job is done right” or “I like to talk a lot which is useful when explaining product benefits to customers.” Do not mention a weakness that will affect your job performance, such as “I’m always late for class.”

*Weakness with a positive spin:*

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6. **What are your future plans?** Interviewers want to know if you have goals. You do not have to have detailed plans, but you should know the general direction you want to go in your work life such as, “I plan to enroll in college and major in business.” Do not mention a future plan that may eliminate you from the job such as, “I plan to quit in three months when I turn 18” or “I will work here until a better job comes along.”

*Your general future plans:*

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7. **Describe a challenging situation and how you overcame it.** Employers want to know that you are problem solver and that you can handle anything that comes your way. If you have an experience from a previous job, use it. Otherwise, share an example from your personal life. State how this experience has helped you become a better worker/person.

*Challenging situation:*

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*How you overcame the situation:*

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8. **What are you passionate about?** When you're asked what you're passionate about during a job interview it's a good opportunity to share what is important in your life. Your response doesn't need to be work focused, but do be sure that what you share isn't something that could potential cut in to your working hours.

*Your passion(s):*

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9. **How do you handle stress and pressure?** What the employer is getting at is how will you handle stress on the job. You may want to put a positive spin on this by saying something like, "For me, stress motivates me to do my best." or "Prioritizing my responsibilities so I have a clear idea of what needs to be done when, has helped me effectively manage pressure on the job."

*How you handle stress and pressure:*

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10. **Do you have any questions for me?** Be sure to have one or two questions ready to ask the interviewer. Possible questions include: "What are the opportunities for advancement?" "When do you expect to make a decision?" "What are the company's goals for the future?" "Do you have any more questions about my skills and qualifications?" Do not ask about pay, raises, or vacation pay.

*Questions for the employer:*

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