

## Guide to Interviews

Interviews are incredibly important. No matter how good your qualifications, skills, resume, etc., you'll need to interview well in order to get the job. Following is a step-by-step guide to an effective interview, from preparation to post-interview.

### **Step 1: Preparation**

- Think hard about what you want out of your next job, and decide whether or not this job will fit your needs.
- Research the company. Become familiar with its products, size, structure, finances, reputation and growth potential. If you decide you want to work for this company, you should be able to articulate why.
- Prepare answers for the questions you are likely to be asked about your qualifications, experience, accomplishments, interests, and goals.
- Prepare some relevant questions to ask the interviewer.
- Select your pre-interview outfit:
  - *Professional attire (even if the company has a casual dress code)*
  - *Minimum jewelry*
  - *Conservative, unscuffed footwear*
  - *No perfume, and little makeup*
  - *Neat, well-groomed hairstyle*
  - *Clean and wrinkle-free clothing*
- Bring extra copies of your resume and samples of your work, if appropriate.
- Double-check the location and time of the interview, and be sure to know your interviewer's name.
- Get a good night's sleep.

### **Step 2: Arriving at the Interview**

- Arrive at the interview approximately 10 minutes before the interview is scheduled.
- Be courteous to the receptionist; remember, he/she is the gatekeeper to the company!

- When you meet your interviewer, look him/her in the eye, smile, and greet him/her by name.
- Offer a firm handshake.
- Sit down only after the interviewer invites you to sit down, or after he/she has taken a seat.
- Face the interviewer directly, sit up straight, and continue to look him/her in the eye with a friendly, alert look on your face.
- Act poised and calm. Avoid fidgeting, squirming, laughing excessively, chewing gum, drumming your fingers, jiggling your legs, or demonstrating other signs of nervousness (remember, everyone is nervous during an interview. But you don't need to show it).

### **Step 3: During the Interview**

- Listen closely to the questions posed by the interviewer, so that you can provide appropriate, intelligent responses.
- Avoid taking notes during the interview. Rather, you should write down your impressions immediately following the interview.
- Don't think about the possibility of rejection. Instead, focus on getting the job, and on what you can do for the employer.
- Clearly describe your experience and skills, and how they relate to the position in question.
- Don't be afraid to offer an honest assessment of your strengths and weaknesses (remember, nobody is perfect, and you won't seem credible if you don't admit to any faults).
- Remember, you don't need to answer every question right away; some questions require thought, and employers tend to be suspicious of answers that seem trite or simplistic. When asked difficult questions, take your time, and answer carefully.
- Don't be afraid to admit if you don't know something. Nobody knows everything. Ask about things you don't know with genuine interest and curiosity.
- Describe your abilities with confidence, but avoid crossing over into arrogance.
- Avoid bad-mouthing former colleagues, superiors, or companies.

- Be honest, and avoid exaggeration.
- Ask appropriate, well-prepared questions about the job and the company. Ask the interviewer about his/her personal experience at the company.
- Do not ask about salary until you have been offered the job.

#### **Step 4: Closing the Interview**

- Try to pick up the interviewer's cues about when the interview is about to end, and don't drag the interview on.
- Tactfully ask when the company plans to make a final hiring decision.
- State that you're really excited about the position.
- If you're offered the job on the spot, it's a good idea to ask for time to consider the offer. You might think of questions later that hadn't occurred to you in the interview setting.
- Smile at the interviewer, offer a firm handshake, and thank him/her for meeting with you.
- Thank the receptionist on your way out.

#### **Step 5: After the Interview**

- Immediately following the interview, write an individual short note of thanks to each person who took the time to interview you.
- If you don't hear from the company within the time period that they said you would, call and politely ask if there's any other information you can supply to assist them in their decision.