

Landing the Job You Really Want

Job hunting can be a full-time job itself. It involves networking, checking newspaper and on-line job listings, going to job fairs, sending out great (and honest!) resumes, making phone calls, and a lot more. Getting a call inviting you to go for an interview is an important step closer to your goal. An interview is your foot in the door. Use it well and you're in all the way.

The thought of an interview, where you feel as if you are under a microscope, can make anyone nervous. The best way to lower your anxiety level is to be prepared. Following these three steps will help you get ready to present yourself for an interview.

Background Preparation

- **Research the company.** Do your homework. Familiarize yourself with the company. Check out their website. Ask the receptionist or secretary to send you a copy of their annual report. Jot down a few questions about the company so you can ask them at the interview. You need to show that you know about the company, so you can explain why you want to work there.
- **Research the job.** Know the specifics of the job for which you're applying—study the job descriptions and the requirements needed. You'll need to be able to demonstrate how you fit the bill, by citing your accomplishments and skills. Be ready to prove your ability to contribute to the company's mission. It's your job to sell yourself to them. Find out the salary range for the job you're interested in before going to the interview. Again, jot down any questions about the job you might have so you can ask them at the interview.
- **Review.** Know your resume by heart. Many of the questions you will be asked in the interview will be based on the information you've provided in it. Be ready to elaborate with examples of how you used your skills to accomplish goals of which you are proud.
- **Rehearse.** The only ways a stranger can evaluate you are by how you present yourself at the moment, reports of your past behavior, and background checks. Role-play the interview. Ask a friend to help, or schedule an appointment with the Career Exploration and Counseling Center. Anticipate the kinds of questions you might be asked. Practice your answers. If there are gaps in your work or education history, be prepared to answer questions about them.

Get yourself ready

First impressions count. Dress professionally. Men can wear a clean, pressed suit or a sport jacket, slacks, and tie. Women can wear a suit or nice, conservative dress with modest (not short) hemline. There should be no threads hanging, no stains and no worn places on your clothing! Shoes should be polished and not scuffed. Do not wear much jewelry and remove any facial or body piercings you have. Tone your hair down if it is "punk". Fingernails must be clean and filed smooth. You want your appearance to enhance your image, not be a distraction. However, if your personal style is important to you, then make sure you apply to companies that do not have strict dress codes and policies.

Bring:

- Several copies of your resume in a manila folder so they don't get wrinkled.
- A notebook or pad of paper and several pens.
- A typed sheet with your list of the names, addresses, and phone numbers of your references. (Do not give it to the interviewer unless s/he asks for it.)
- Tissues, breath mints, and a comb or brush for last minute touch ups.
- Your list of questions for the interviewer.

Getting There

- If you are unfamiliar with the location of the interview, get directions and take a trial run, timing the trip.
- Arrive at least ten minutes early for the interview.

Manor College Counseling Department
700 Fox Chase Road, Jenkintown, PA 19046
215-885-6299

- Don't schedule anything for 3-4 hours after your appointment. You don't want to have to cut short the interview to leave if things are going well and you're about to land the job.

The Interview

At the beginning

- Introduce yourself. Give a firm whole-hand handshake. Make eye contact and smile.
- Thank them for inviting you to interview.
- Address the interviewer as Mr. or Ms._____, even if they are close to you in age. If they say, call me_____, then you have permission for more informal address.
- Never put anything on the interviewer's desk. Put your purse or folder on the floor leaning against your chair or keep them in your lap for easy access.

During the interview

The goal of most of the interviewer's questions is to find out if you: have the skills or experience needed for the job, are dependable, are easy to get along with, have a good work ethic, and finally, whether you're worth the company's investment of the time and money it will take train you for the job. Be sure that your demeanor and your answers say "YES!" to all those questions.

• **Pay attention to your body language.** Ninety percent of all communication is non-verbal. Maintaining eye contact indicates your interest. Don't daydream; your eyes will glaze over. Sit erect in your seat—no slouching, no extending your legs out in front of you. Don't get comfortable, you're supposed to be "on your toes"!

• **Ask questions.** Since you've done your research, come with a few questions you may have about the company or the job. Asking questions about the company reveals your knowledge and interest. You want to show the interviewer that you are interested in doing this particular job at this particular company, that this isn't a casual "fishing expedition" on your part.

• **Jot down a few notes.** Make notes of answers to questions you might have had or highlights of information about the job or the company the interviewer presents. Don't take too many, though. You want to be really present at the interview.

• **Give yourself time to think.** Take a few moments to formulate your responses to questions. Answering concisely, don't ramble on and waste the interviewer's time. Where possible, provide specific examples whenever you can.

• **Focus on your strengths.** List accomplishments, such as specific achievements, or specific times when you handled difficult situations well.

• **Don't bring up salary.** Unless the interviewer asks point blank, don't mention money. Wait until you are offered the job. If they bring it up, show you've done your research and mention the salary-range for similar positions in this region. The interviewer can then inform you of the salary range for that position at that company.

• **Thank the interviewer.** Shake the interviewer's hand, and thank him or her for taking time to interview you. Indicate your interest in the position.

• **Get their business card.** You will need their contact information to follow up.

After the interview

• **Write a thank-you note.** As soon as you get home, write a note thanking them for their time. This important protocol shows you are aware of professional standards of behavior. It also allows you to remind the interviewer of your qualifications and to reiterate your interest in the position.

• **If you're offered the job.** Generally, this is the time to negotiate salary. If you think they're bringing you in at the low end of the range, and you can justify a higher salary request, mention it now. Be prepared, however, to take what they offer, especially if it is an entry-level position. Whatever the outcome, thank them.