

job interview tips

Before the interview

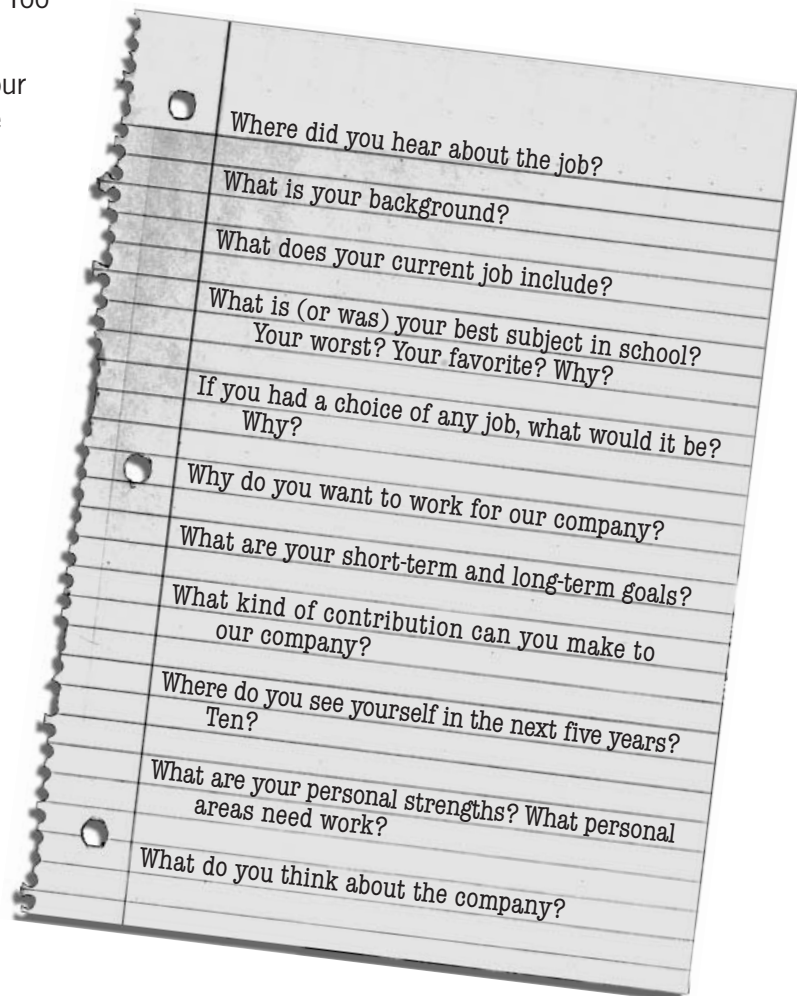
- When scheduling an appointment for an interview, ask to receive information about the job and the company (if you have not yet done so). Better yet, pick it up yourself at the company, get a good look at the place, and meet the receptionist/greeter. Ask for annual reports, brochures, a press kit (which includes company history, key personnel, biographies, and product/service information), and especially the job description. This will help you prepare to separate yourself from your competitors.
- Ask for directions and approximate travel time. Allow lots of time on the road; don't be sabotaged by unexpected traffic! Plan to arrive 15 minutes early and review your notes while you're waiting.
- Prepare a 40- to 50-word statement (your "infomercial") about yourself, your job goal, and two or three reasons why your skills fit the job requirements. For example: "I've just graduated from Randolph Technical Career Center, and my goal is to work as an engine mechanic at a farm equipment dealership. I completed the power technology course with excellent grades, and I took a second-year program to specialize in agricultural power machines."
- Practice your self-description aloud. Record yourself and listen to the way you sound. Are you enthusiastic? Too serious? Does your voice shake?
- Prepare several questions for the interviewer(s) and your responses to hard questions you anticipate. Those questions might include:



- Never turn down an interview. Even if you don't want the open position, every interview means another chance to improve your skill through practice. In addition, an interview can produce referrals.

Arriving for the interview

- In most cases, you'll have to wait a few minutes before your interviewer meets you. Be friendly to the receptionist/greeter because the interviewer may ask for his or her impression of you.
- While you're waiting for the interviewer, peruse one of the magazines on the coffee table or read the newspaper. Doing so will show your interest in business, current events, or the industry.
- When the interviewer comes to greet you, smile, offer a firm handshake, and address him or her formally — Mr. Smith, Ms. Jones, or Mrs. Green.
- If you're interviewing with a woman, ask the receptionist beforehand what title (Miss, Ms., or Mrs.) the interviewer prefers.



Interviewing to win

- The objective of the interview is to convince the interviewer that you are the most qualified potential team member.
- Do your homework beforehand. Reading a company's annual report, brochures, newsletters, and job description can make you an informed candidate.
- Almost always, the interviewer will begin by saying, "Tell me about yourself." If you have to talk first, present your prepared self-description.
- Put yourself in the interviewer's shoes; listen, and try to respond from his or her perspective.
- If the interviewer raises an area of personal interest such as sports or music, you should talk sports or music if you can. Follow his or her lead, and don't attempt to show you know more than he or she does about the subject.
- Prove you are capable of performing. Don't simply restate previous job tasks that are listed on your resume; instead, provide examples and illustrations of what you've accomplished. For example, the interviewer may not be interested that you sold Girl Scout cookies. He's likely to be interested to know, however, that you sold 27% more than any other troop member.
- If you do not understand a question, say: "I'm sorry, I don't understand the question" or "Could you please rephrase the question?"
- Do not make things up, guess, or generalize, and do not engage the interviewer in debate. If you don't know an answer to a question, it's okay to say "I don't have that information right now, but I'd be happy to provide it for you after the interview." In addition to demonstrating that you can follow up on a commitment, it will also give you a chance for further contact with the interviewer.
- Do not say why the job would be good or bad for you personally. This is not the point of an interview. The point is to emphasize how you can help the company.
- At the conclusion of the interview, indicate that you would love to work for the company (if it is, in fact, true). Ask the interviewer:
 1. by what date the company expects to have made a decision
 2. whether or not the company will contact you regardless of the outcome
 3. whether you may contact the company after two weeks, if you haven't heard by then

After the interview

- Send a note to thank the interviewer for his or her consideration and time, expressing your interest in the job and reminding the interviewer how well your qualifications fit the position. This is a perfect chance to mention a few more of your strengths that you may have forgotten to bring up during the interview.
- Call the interviewer if you have not received a response when one is expected.

