

# Top Ten Tips for Job Interviews

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Job interviews are investments in your future. To bring high dividends for this investment of time you need to prepare, put your best foot forward, and smile. These moments could determine your income, your life's location, and your retirement plans. Preparing for success in an interview can land you the perfect job, so it's definitely worth the time you'll need to spend on a full examination of the process itself, as well as a thorough study of the district in which you're applying. The interview is **the** moment to display your ability and potential to your prospective employer. Here are ten tried and true tips to help you make the best impression:

**Over-prepare for success** in the interview with material and knowledge. Your interview may last an hour, and you will need to have absorbed plenty of material in order to fully present who you are and what you can bring to your future employer. **Study your prospective employer.** Read everything you can prior to the interview. You should read every page of their website. You should know the location of all sites within the organization. Prior to the interview you should drive the entire area of your prospective workplace. Talk to people who work there. Read the local newspapers for current local events. How will you fit into the organization, and what will you offer? Have enough material in your head and in the folder you take to the interview to make it clear that you are a serious, capable and competitive candidate.

1. **Practice for the interview.** Find sample questions that might be asked during the interview. Anticipate what might be asked of you, and who might be asking the question. Research question samples through the internet or visit a library to find a book about interviews. Develop questions you think may be asked. Sit in front of a mirror and practice answering questions. If you can, find someone to ask you the questions and comment on your answers. Better to feel foolish with a friend than a group of strangers! Getting through a successful interview is much like getting to Carnegie Hall...practice, practice, practice!
2. **Bring an impressive handout.** Bring along an example of work you have previously done that relates to the job for which you are interviewing to distribute to committee members. It should be simple and illustrative of the good work you would do for them. This may include a report, or an article or paper you have written. When the interview is over, the committee will have a reminder of you after you have left the room which will go a long way in distinguishing you from the number of other candidates they'll see that day.
3. **Give yourself permission to be nervous.** The committee will expect you to be nervous. You are a job candidate, and the committee will probably be forgiving if you are dry-mouthed or stammer a bit. They expect you to be nervous, so don't add that to your list of things to worry about. Your job at that moment is not to impress them with your smooth demeanor but rather, to show them how you can meet and exceed their expectations for the position and join them as a colleague and become a part of their campus culture.
4. **Relax!** Certainly easier said than done, it's always best to walk into an interview not feeling overly pressured to perform. This is easiest to do if you are well prepared. It's true, the committee will be focusing on you, but this is also your chance to interview them as well! Ask yourself if you would enjoy working with them. Although it is always best to search for a new position when you're already employed and you can display the internal confidence of knowing that if the interview does not work out, you are not facing unemployment, sometimes that's just not the case. If you **are** unemployed or facing unemployment, you must still present yourself with confidence. Remind

yourself of your past successes and the qualities that you would bring to the position. Relax and be yourself in the interview!

5. **Know your interview committee.** Prior to the interview, anticipate who might be on the interview committee. Successful candidates make it a point to go into the interview and give each person at the table a reason to hire you. Each committee member will need a reason to **want** to work with you. If there is full-time faculty on the committee, and there usually is, make them think it would be a great to have you working with them. If there are classified employees on the committee, weave an example into your answer of what you have done to support or help classified employees. Be ready to mention to part-time faculty what you have done for their constituency. Administrators and managers need to know that you are competent, cooperative and collaborative. Plan your answers to meet the needs of all of the constituents on the committee.
6. **Lighten up!** Frequently committee members will inject humor into the banter pre and post interview, so don't let that opportunity pass you by! Laugh with them when appropriate or inject your own humor if the moment calls for it. Admittedly, not everyone is capable of this art, but sharing a laugh with the committee can go a long way toward securing a job offer. While humor can be very effective, it requires good judgment and good timing. Don't force it, and remember that a little humor goes a long way!
7. **Understand the needs of the District/College.** In your own research you're going to come to some conclusions about the particular district or college in which you're applying. Some of those conclusions will be about what barriers to progress might exist at that particular institution. With that in mind, think about what the committee would be looking for given the unique needs or barriers of that district. Imagine what you would ask or look for in a candidate for the position if you were a member of their committee and then be **that** person in your interview. You're bound to strike a chord with the members of that committee and you'll provide yet another reason for them to identify with you.
8. **Take notes.** Bring writing materials with you to the interview. As mentioned before, you may be nervous during the interview and this could cause you to forget the question asked, or some salient point you want to make further along in the interview. For long or detailed questions, or pertinent information you want to bring up, write down key points to refer to so that you can be sure to respond completely. The activity itself will also serve to keep you focused and engaged, and will aid you in reducing your nervousness!
9. **Don't be shy.** Remember to make eye contact with members of the committee and be as articulate and concise as you can. Having the confidence to look each person in the eye can make or break your interview. Keep your eyes open, alert and receptive and guard against a dry mouth which can make it difficult to articulate well. Remember to bring or ask for water or put a penny in your mouth. *(Really! It works, but be sure to wash it first!).*
10. **Be comfortable!** No one expects you to be a fashion icon, but you'll want to dress appropriately for the occasion, the season and your body type and by all means, wear comfortable clothing. If you're fidgeting or appearing to be uncomfortable you'll definitely distract the committee members and leave a negative impression.