

# How To Prepare For A Job Interview?

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*by Pat Brill*

You're just about ready to start your job search and send out your first resume. Stop! Before you send out that resume, are you prepared for the job interview? Your resume just gets your foot into the door. If you want to have a successful interview, you will need to plan. Here are some tips to guide you in preparing for a terrific interview.

## ***Know your skills and accomplishments***

Probably the most common question you will be asked is "Tell me about yourself." Be ready to clearly present your knowledge, skills and abilities and how you can add value to the company.

Employers will also evaluate your fit for the job by asking "behavior-based" questions. Questions like: In your previous job what was your most challenging situation and how did you handle it? They want the details and will continue to probe until they have an understanding of how you dealt with the situation. The belief here is that past performance is a strong indicator of how you will continue to behave.

Take the time beforehand to review your job experiences. Collect some stories about challenging situations or people that you handled well, successful projects, or solutions you have initiated that made the work more efficient.

## ***Organize your references***

Make sure you have three references before you start your job search. Most companies include reference checking before making a final decision on a candidate. Bring to the interview the contact information for your references, and only give it to them if they ask.

Ideally, provide a reference from each company you have listed on your resume. If you have an extensive work history, you can focus on references from your last two companies. Potential references are supervisors or managers or peers within the work place. If you volunteered on a project, this is also a good source for a strong reference.

Your references should be able to discuss their relationship with you, your abilities, knowledge, work ethic, and how you interacted with others in the company. Don't forget, the employer may want to know your weakness as well, so ask your references to be ready to answer that question.

As soon as a company requests your references, contact them to notify them of a potential call. They are your partners in your job search, so give them all the details you have about the company and the position -- don't leave them in the dark. If you can't speak with them directly, email or leave a voice mail notifying them of the details.

## ***Practice, practice, practice***

The more comfortable you feel about what skills and knowledge you have to offer, the more confidence you will have in the interview. It's a good idea to practice your answers either in front of a mirror, or work with a friend or a coach.

## ***Prepare for a telephone interview***

Companies have different screening processes to find suitable candidates for their open positions. It is not uncommon for a recruiter to screen you briefly on the telephone, so be ready to present yourself as soon as you send out your resume. Don't be casual about any contact with a company -- be prepared.

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## ***Do your research***

Research as much as possible about the company you are interviewing at. One source of information is their website. You can also do a search on the internet to see what information surfaces about the company. The more you know about the company, the more effective you can be in presenting your skills and knowledge.

## ***Prepare questions***

Most of the time a candidate spends time preparing answers for the employer's questions. Don't forget your questions! I recommend creating around 10 questions you want to know about the position and the company ahead of time. Why is this important? For two reasons: You are letting the interviewer know you did your research on the company; and second, you want to know if this job is a good fit for you.

## ***How to dress***

Know ahead of time what you are going to wear at the interview. Even if a company is business casual, dress in a suit so you can make a great first impression. I recommend that you select two interview outfits that you feel absolutely great in. This way in case one gets dirty, and a job opportunity surfaces quickly, you have another great outfit to wear. It is known that the more confident you feel about how you look, the better you will present yourself.

## ***Do a test-drive***

If you are not sure where to go, do your test-drive to the office before the interview. You don't want to be nervous about being late, so figure out beforehand how to get there and how long it takes.

## ***Bring extra resumes***

Just in case the interviewer can't locate your resume, bring two or three copies of your resume with you.

## ***Closing the interview***

Usually an interviewer will end the meeting by asking "do you any other questions?" If you are interested in this position, this is a great opportunity to let them know you are interested in the position, and briefly summarize what you have to offer.

## ***Write a thank you note***

Collect business cards from everyone that you meet and send a "thank you" note to them. The effort is worth it, as you get another opportunity to state your interest and suitability for the position. In the body of the note, sum up your strengths and remind them how you can add value to the company.

## ***What did you learn?***

Every interview is a learning experience. As soon as the interview is over, step back and reflect on how the interview went. Did you answer the interviewer's questions clearly, how did they respond to you, how well did you present your strengths, and did you get all of your questions answered about the job and the company. Use this information to practice for your next interview.