

## Interview Advice

Before going for an interview, find out as much information about the company as you can. It may seem obvious but there are a lot of people failing to answer the “What do you know about our company?” question. The best way to show enthusiasm for the job is to research the company and position you are interviewing for. Human Resource managers say they are impressed when the interviewee is well-informed.

Consider researching the following information about the company:

- What the company does and what product or service provides.
- How big it is.
- Company history.
- Company values and goals.
- Financials information.
- Mission statement.
- Promotional opportunities.
- Benefits information.
- Interesting facts from news and forums.
- Information about competitors.

Most of this information can be found on your prospective employer’s corporate Web site. Check out the annual report, but also look for a “press room” or “company news” page that links to recent news releases. Use the company site’s search facility to query the names of the hiring managers. Take a little time to search a few major newspaper sites to see how the company is faring in the media. Jot down some stand-out points about the company from both sources (corporate website and the news).

Large companies may also have separate websites dedicated to a single company. Those boards help job applicants to learn the “insider” knowledge about companies and industries. You can often find invaluable information about the work environment and learn what current employees think about the company. It may also give you some tips that’ll really impress your interviewer, such as changes in management or recent business deals.

If you do a good research it will be much easier for you to explain why you’re a good match for the company, what you can contribute to the company’s goals and where you see yourself going with the company in the future.

When you are dressing up for a job interview, don’t wear anything too distracting. Don’t dress too casually or wear flashy clothes. And, most important, be neat and clean. Wearing ill-fitting or unpressed clothes sends the message that you are slovenly and don’t pay attention to detail - not what most employers want.

Appropriate attire supports your image as a person who takes the interview process seriously and understands the nature of the industry in which you are trying to become employed. Even if you are aware that employees of an organisation dress casually on the job, dress up for the interview unless you are specifically told otherwise by the employer. You also need to think about your face, hair, the

amount of jewellery you have on, the strength of your perfume or aftershave, the bag you carry and so on.

### **There are a few main rules to keep in mind when dressing for a job interview:**

- Shoes should be clean and conservative. Scuffed shoes are an indication of lack of attention to detail. Dirty shoes are one of the most detrimental dress mistakes.
- Hair should be neat and clean. If it needs cut, get it cut several days before the job interview so you are comfortable with it. Avoid a hair style that requires you to constantly brush or flick your hair back during the job interview. Sunglasses pushed up in your hair look messy.
- Smell nice, but don't knock out the interviewer. Cologne or perfume should be minimal.
- Fingernails should be cleaned and trimmed. You'll shake hands several times and your hands are in full view on your lap during your job interview, so make sure they are clean.
- Have fresh breath. You may be closer to the interviewer than you think if it's a small room.
- Jewellery should be kept to a minimum. Big, dangling earrings and jangling bracelets are particularly distracting as they bounce about as you talk and move your hands. Iron your clothes for interview. You want the interviewer to concentrate on your face and what you have to say.

### **What Should Women Wear to a Job Interview**

- The classic **two-piece matched business suit** is a good option for your interview attire. Navy, dark grey, brown and black are safe colours. It always looks professional.
- The **suit skirt** should be long enough so you can sit down comfortably. A skirt that ends at the knee when you're standing looks chic and professional. Longer skirts are professional too. A shorter skirt often results in having to tug it down during the interview!
- Underneath the suit jacket, wear a tailored basic **white blouse or a coloured blouse** if you prefer that coordinates nicely with your suit.
- **Limited jewellery.** Wear a conservative watch and simple jewellery. Whatever jewellery you select, remember it should be understated and not distracting for the interviewer. So avoid big, dangling necklaces that make clanking sounds every time you move!
- **Light make-up and perfume.** Keep makeup conservative. A little is usually better than none for a polished look.
- **Conservative shoes.** Regardless of what is in style, avoid extremes. Make certain you can walk comfortably in your shoes.

### **What Should Men Wear to a Job Interview?**

- The safe standard interview dress for men is the classic **dark business suit**.

- **Long sleeve shirt.** Short-sleeved shirts are never as professional as long-sleeved shirts. A white colour is a good choice; a white shirt gives the impression of authority. If you prefer a coloured shirt rather choose a light colour that co-ordinates with the suit and is not overpowering.
- **Dark socks,** mid-calf length so no skin is visible when you sit down. Socks should match the colour of your trousers. They can be slightly darker. This gives an uninterrupted visual line from your waist to your shoes.

One area where job interview clothes are different is in the creative field. If you showed up in a creative, individualistic workplace like a fashion designer, you would want to look like someone who belonged in that environment instead of in an investment bank. If you are in any doubt about what to wear, do some research. Either ask someone setting you up for the interview, or spend a little time learning what you can about the target company to get a sense of what people expect in the workplace.

Here are a few great questions to ask during a job interview:

1. **Could you describe a typical day/week in this position? The typical client/customer I would be dealing with? How will my leadership responsibilities and performance be measured?** These questions not only show your interest in the position, but also help you to clearly understand your role and the tasks that you would be expected to undertake.
2. **Can you tell me about the opportunities for learning and development? or What is the company's policy on providing training, seminars and workshops so employees can keep up their skills or acquire new ones?** This will help you to understand where the job might lead and what skills you might acquire. It also indicates that you are ambitious and thinking ahead.
3. **What are the skills and attributes you value most for someone being hired for this position? or Do you have any questions or concerns about my ability to perform this job?** From the answer to this question you will understand if you fit the position. If they say that you are lacking in some key skill then you can move into objection handling mode and point out some relevant experience or a countervailing strength.
4. If from the company's web site you've learned some information about new products, new stores, hiring or laying people off, etc., you can ask about it. For instance, **What can you tell me about your new product or plans for growth?** or I've heard the company X laid off a number of employees. **So, what is the biggest challenge facing the organisation today?** The answer gives you a bigger picture of where the company is going to as far as its strategies and it proves that you are interested in more than just "Nine to five" job. It can lead to interesting discussions that can show you in a good light – especially if you have done some intelligent preparation. But do not ask questions that are clearly answered on the employer's web site and/or in any literature provided by the employer to you in advance. This would simply reveal that you did not prepare for the interview, and you are wasting the employer's time by asking these questions.
5. After answering interviewer's questions you might also want to ask about his/her personal insight.

For example, **What attracted you to work for the company?** or **What opportunities did you have during your career?** People often like talking about themselves and if you can get your interviewer talking you can make a good impression and learn useful and interesting things.

These types of questions show an interviewer that you take the position very seriously and want to understand the company strategies and how you personally can help.

Good Luck!