



10 Keys to Interview Success

Learn how to give yourself a competitive edge in any job interview—whether for roles you pursue during college or after graduation!

COLLEGE
SUCCESS
FOUNDATION

Put yourself in the interviewer's shoes

You're swamped with work, you finally get around to advertising a job, you're bombarded with resumes, and you're hoping one candidate will shine and make your decision as easy as possible.

How can you, the candidate, help make this happen? What can you do to set yourself apart from the crowd?



1) ATTITUDE TRUMPS TALENT



- If you're invited to an interview, you're already pre-qualified; they know you (and the majority of other candidates) could likely do the job
- Most skills you learned in college won't directly apply to the real world; showing the manager you're eager to learn and be coached is critical
- For early-career jobs, most hiring managers are screening for enthusiasm, initiative, a team-focused mindset, and a willingness to learn

“Your problem isn't the problem, it's your attitude about the problem.” Ann Brashares

2) RESPECT GOES A LONG WAY



- Most hiring managers have worked hard to get to their current role and are looking for others willing to “pay their dues” just like they have
- Avoid looking at your phone, interrupting, focusing on your own needs, or coming across as entitled – or just looking for a paycheck
- Treat the interviewer as your “customer” and listen closely to their needs, show interest, and validate what you think they’re telling you

“One of the most sincere forms of respect is actually listening to what another has to say.” Bryant H. McGill

3) GET YOUR GAME FACE ON



- Get a good night's sleep, be hydrated, and make sure you arrive at the interview location early – but not TOO early! (5-10 minutes is ideal)
- Bring several printed copies of your resume, as well as a notepad or portfolio for taking notes
- Dress appropriately for the job and in a way that makes you feel confident and professional
- Be unfailingly nice and polite to the front desk person; they can make or break your chances!

“What you wear is how you present yourself to the world, especially today, when human contacts are so quick. Fashion is instant language.” —Miuccia Prada.

4) LET GO OF THE OUTCOME



- Don't focus on getting the job; focus on understanding the job and gaining the best possible sense of the employer's needs/wants
- Relax, try to have fun, and let go out of the outcome; concentrate on getting to know the other person and seeing where they need help
- As much as you may want the job, don't try too hard or act desperate; such behavior turns hiring managers off and will work against you

“Successful people are always looking for opportunities to help others. Unsuccessful people are always asking ‘what's in it for me?’” Brian Tracy

5) ACE THE “SOFTBALL” QUESTIONS



- The first question most interviewers ask is “tell me about yourself”; don’t rehash your resume, focus on your strengths, passions, and goals
- Come up with thoughtful answers to the “greatest strengths & weaknesses” questions; be authentic and toot your own horn a bit
- When asked “what interests you about this job and/or our company?” go beyond the obvious answers everybody will give; get creative!

“Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe.” Abraham Lincoln

6) HAVE KILLER EXAMPLES READY



- Be ready for “behavioral interview” questions where companies ask for specific examples of how you’ve applied your skills/strengths
- Come up with a few great stories related to your proudest and best moments, then practice them out loud until they flow smoothly
- Keep your stories to 2-3 minutes and circle back to the interviewer’s question when finished to show you listened and have a clear “ending”

“Good stories stick in our minds and help us remember ideas and concepts in a way a PowerPoint crammed with bar graphs never can.” Joe Lazauskas & Shane Snow

7) GOOGLE IS YOUR FRIEND



- Treat interviews like an “open book test” where the job description is the study guide; it’s pretty easy to anticipate what you’ll likely be asked
- Make sure there isn’t a single qualification, competency, or keyword in the job description that you’re not ready to talk about
- With a little bit of web research, you can seem smart and talk a good game about anything, even if you don’t have hands-on experience

“It’s not resources, but resourcefulness, that ultimately makes the difference.” Tony Robbins

8) LOOK FOR PAIN POINTS



- There's almost always a “backstory” behind every job and a few key skills/qualities the employer is seeking more than anything else
- Study job advertisements to see if there is any unusual, unorthodox, or emotional language that might signal a key frustration or pain point
- Once you think you understand what a hiring manager's problems are, make statements that show you're eager and able to solve them

“Your job, as an interviewer, is to be the aspirin to the employer's headache.” Anonymous Recruiter

9) ASK GREAT QUESTIONS



- Employers love candidates who show curiosity, ask questions, and seem genuinely interested and engaged in the opportunity at hand
- Consider asking questions throughout the interview; don't necessarily wait until the end unless you get clear signals to back off
- While pre-planned questions are fine, it's even better to ask questions that arise naturally out of the conversation and show you listened

“Judge a person by his/her questions rather than by his answers.” Voltaire

10) LAST IMPRESSIONS COUNT



- At the end of the meeting, show positive body language (good eye contact, firm handshake)
- Tell the employer you realize they likely have a lot of good applicants, and a tough choice to make, but you'd love to be part of the team
- Follow up with an e-mail to the interviewer within 24 hours, thanking them again for their time and restating your interest in the role

“I think the day I become comfortable doing interviews and going on talk shows is the day that I don't know what it is to be a human being anymore.” Joaquin Phoenix

Final Pre-Flight Interview Checklist!

- #1. Attitude counts;** set yourself apart by approaching the interview with a ton of energy, enthusiasm, and curiosity
- #2. Show respect;** hiring managers have worked hard, paid their dues, and have little tolerance for “entitlement” attitudes
- #3. Prepare to succeed;** make sure you’re well rested, hydrated, and dressed for success when the time comes
- #4. Try to relax;** don’t focus on getting the job at all costs, focus on getting to know the other person and understanding their needs
- #5. Ace the easy questions;** be ready to answer the “tell me about yourself” question and speak to your strengths/weaknesses
- #6. Tell powerful stories;** think hard about the examples you can share, either personal or professional, to showcase your talents
- #7. Don’t get stumped;** if there’s anything the company has listed in the job description you don’t understand, google it!
- #8. Be a detective;** watch for clues about what qualities the employer values most and what specific “pain points” they need resolved
- #9. Ask great questions;** don’t be afraid to engage the manager in conversation, and ask questions, if they seem open to it
- #10. Stick the landing;** be humble, but tell the employer you appreciate their time and are seriously interested in winning the job