

Job Interview Types

There are different types of job interviews you may participate in during the hiring process. Here are the major ones and tips on how to handle them.

Screening Interview

A screening interview is meant to weed out unqualified candidates. Providing facts about your skills is more important than establishing rapport. Interviewers will work from an outline of points they want to cover, looking for inconsistencies in your resume and challenging your qualifications. Provide answers to their questions, and never volunteer any additional information. That information could work against you. One type of screening interview is the telephone interview.

One-On-One Interview

In a one-on-one interview, it has been established that you have the skills and education necessary for the position. The interviewer wants to see if you will fit in with the company, and how your skills will complement the rest of the department. Your goal in a one-on-one interview is to establish rapport with the interviewer and show him or her that your qualifications will benefit the company.

Committee Interview

Committee interviews are a common practice. You will face several members of the company who have a say in whether you are hired. When answering questions from several people, speak directly to the person asking the question, but do work to include the entire group at points. In some committee interviews, you may be asked to demonstrate your problem-solving skills. The committee will outline a situation and ask you to formulate a plan that deals with the problem. You don't have to come up with the ultimate solution. The interviewers are looking for how you apply your knowledge and skills to a real-life situation.

Group Interview

A group interview is usually designed to uncover the leadership potential of prospective managers and employees who will be dealing with the public. The front-runner candidates are gathered together in an informal, discussion-type interview. A subject is introduced and the interviewer will start off the discussion. The goal of the group interview is to see how you interact with others and how you use your knowledge and reasoning powers to win others over. If you do well in the group interview, you can expect to be asked back for a more extensive interview.

Stress Interview

Stress interviews are a deliberate attempt to see how you handle yourself. The interviewer may be sarcastic or argumentative, or may keep you waiting. Expect this to happen and, when it does, don't take it personally. Calmly answer each question as it comes. Ask for clarification if you need it and never rush into an answer. The interviewer may also lapse into silence at some point during the questioning. Recognize this as an attempt to unnerve you. Sit silently until the interviewer resumes the questions. If a minute goes by, ask if he or she needs clarification of your last comments.

Lunch Interview

The same rules apply in lunch interviews as in those held at the office. The setting may be more casual, but remember it is a business lunch and you are being watched carefully. Use the lunch interview to develop common ground with your interviewer. Follow his or her lead in both selection of food and in etiquette.

Telephone Interview

Telephone interviews are merely screening interviews meant to eliminate poorly qualified candidates so that only a few are left for personal interviews. You might be called out of the blue, or a telephone call to check on your resume might turn into an interview. Your mission is to be invited for a personal face-to-face interview.

Acing the Telephone Interview

- ◆ Practice! Using a telephone to convey points is very different from doing so in person. You are unable to use your nonverbals to emphasize or make a point, so your verbal language must be clear, concise, and comprehensive. In addition, familiarize yourself with using speaker phones so that you are comfortable with them.
- ◆ Anticipate the dialogue: Write a general script with answers to questions you might be asked. Focus on skills, experiences, and accomplishments. Practice until you are comfortable. Then replace the script with cue cards that you keep by the telephone.
- ◆ If the interview is with more than one person, write down the names and abbreviated titles of each interviewer. Then, when you have an opportunity to ask questions, seek to include all of the members of the group by asking them directed, individual questions.
- ◆ Keep your notes handy: Have any key information, including your resume, notes about the company, and any cue cards you have prepared, next to the phone. You will sound prepared if you don't have to search for information. Make sure you also have a notepad and pen so you can jot down notes and any questions you would like to ask at the end of the interview.
- ◆ Be prepared to think on your feet: If you are asked to participate in a role-playing situation, give short but concise answers. Accept any criticism with tact and grace.
- ◆ Avoid salary issues: If you are asked how much money you would expect, try to avoid the issue by using a delaying statement or give a broad range with a \$15,000 spread. At this point, you do not know how much the job is worth.
- ◆ Push for a face-to-face meeting: Sell yourself by closing with something like: "I am very interested in exploring the possibility of working in your company. I would appreciate an opportunity to meet with you in person so we can both better evaluate each other. I am free either Tuesday afternoon or Wednesday morning. Which would be better for you?"
- ◆ Try to reschedule surprise interviews: You will not be your best with a surprise interview. If you were called unexpectedly, try to set an appointment to call back by saying something like: "I have a scheduling conflict at this time. Can I call you back tomorrow after work, say 6 PM?"