

# GuidanceResources® Online

## Preparing for an Interview

If you are looking for a part-time job or starting the college application process, chances are that part of the process will include an in-person interview. If you do not have a lot of experience with interviews, a little preparation can help you ace every aspect of an interview.

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### Before the Interview

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Before the interview, there are a few key things that you can do to prepare:

- **Get information:** Find out as much as you can about the college or the company. Use the internet to your advantage by looking up information on a college or company's website. You may also want to talk to friends and relatives to see if they know of someone who attends the college or who works for the company.
- **Think about the interview itself:** Consider who will be interviewing you since that may affect the type of interview. Find out if there will be tests to take and ask for an example of the things you'll be asked to do.
- **Prepare for questions:** Think about the questions you may be asked at an interview and prepare some answers ahead of time. Try to be positive in your answers. Prepare your own questions to ask the interviewer; this demonstrates that you have done your research and that you are interested in the college or company.
- **Plan your trip:** Consider making a test run before the day of the interview so you will know how long it will take to get there. If necessary, ask for directions when you schedule the interview. Plan an alternative means of getting there and be prepared for the unexpected.
- **Think about what you will wear:** Give yourself plenty of time to decide what to wear and get the clothes ready the day before. Aim for a neat, tidy, clean and uncluttered appearance.

### On the Day of Your Interview

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On the day of the interview, here are some things you can do to ensure that you make a good first impression.

Before leaving:

- Give yourself plenty of time to get ready.
- Make sure you have any relevant paperwork.
- If you are unavoidably delayed, call the interviewer early to explain, apologize and ask to reschedule, if necessary.
- Try to arrive about 10 minutes before the interview time.

When you arrive:

- Give your name to the receptionist or whoever is there to greet you. Treat this person kindly; the interview begins the minute you walk through the door.
- Try to relax and keep calm.

### During the Interview

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First, accept that the symptoms of nerves -- a fast heartbeat, clammy hands and butterflies in the stomach -- are natural. These are your body's natural ways of meeting a challenge.

You will make an impression in the first few minutes. It takes only a short amount of time for people to assess someone and store this information. Once an impression has been formed, it is hard to change.

Nervous tension may make your voice sound shaky. Practice deep slow breathing before you get to the interview. This will slow down your heart rate and help you avoid taking quick, shallow breaths.

Use these tips to make a good impression during the interview:

- Enter the room confidently, shake hands firmly and introduce yourself to the interviewer. Wait for the interviewer to direct you to a seat.
- Always be polite and friendly.
- Answer questions as fully as you can and provide examples to clarify them.
- Ask questions as they come up.
- Tell the truth.
- Do not fidget and slouch in your chair.
- Try not to criticize former teachers, schools or employers. Try to find a way to place a positive spin on any negative thoughts or experiences.

## Dealing with the Unexpected

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The following situations can cause problems, but being prepared may help you deal with them if they arise:

- **The unprepared interviewer:** Not all interviewers have had training or are experienced in interviewing people. He or she could be just as nervous as you are about the situation. You might find yourself being talked at and given little opportunity to sell yourself. This may mean waiting for a gap in the conversation and taking the lead during the interview.
- **Delays and interruption:** Try not to become impatient if the interviewer keeps you waiting or if the interviewer is interrupted with an emergency.
- **Uncomfortable surroundings:** If you find yourself being interviewed in unsuitable surroundings such as a busy public area or noisy part of a factory, keep calm and try to do your best.

## After the Interview

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The interview is not over when you walk out the door. Make sure you send the interviewer an email thanking him or her for taking the time to meet with you. This can help to give you the extra edge over other applicants.

Take some time after the interview to think about what you can do to prepare for the next interview. Create a checklist to help identify areas for improvement and try to learn as much as you can from each interview. Aim to become more prepared and confident in the future by looking for areas to improve and developing your stronger areas of performance.

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