

Preparing for the Interview

You've done it! You did everything right; you found a job opening that fits you. You identified your transferable skills and customized your resume for just this job. You even went to your local Career Center for assistance in uploading it to the web before the close date. Now, you've gotten the call. You have an interview. But how do you prepare? Start by reviewing these tips and advice on how to prepare, so you can ace the interview and make a terrific impression on the interviewer.

An important part of interview preparation is to take the time to analyze the job posting, or job description, if you have it. Analyze what the company is seeking in a candidate. Make a list of the skills, knowledge, professional and personal qualities that are required by the employer and are critical for success in the job. When you have created a list of the qualifications for the job, make a list of your assets and match them to the job requirements. Create a list of up to 10 assets, including skills, certifications, experiences, professional qualifications and abilities, computer skills, and knowledge bases ready to share with the interviewer. Be sure your assets correlate directly with the skills and abilities required by the company. Refer back to your list of transferable skills, if you need assistance.

Know where you're going. Confirm the date, time, and place of the interview. If you are not familiar with the location, get detailed directions in advance. You can find the address and directions online.

Know who you are meeting. Know the name and job title of the individual you will be meeting. If you are unsure of the individual's title or how to pronounce his or her name, call the company

to confirm the information or research it on the company's website. Often interviews are scheduled by Human Resources (HR) personnel. You may be met by an HR representative who will then introduce you to the interviewer.

Be prepared. Prepare everything you will need for your interview the night before. Make sure you select what clothes you will wear, plan how to get to the interview, and have everything you may need at the interview. There are a few items that you should always bring to an interview such as copies of your resume, the job posting, and any official documents you may need. You should bring hard copies of these documents even if you have already sent them electronically. You should also bring any items that the interviewer specifically requested.

Necessities for an Interview:

- Personal Fact Sheet
- Copies of your resume
- List of questions you want to ask
- Work permit or work visa (if any)
- State-issued ID
- Social Security card
- Pens and a notebook
- Copy of job posting
- Any materials requested by the interviewer
- Name, title, phone number, and email of interviewer contact

Doing the Research

Before you go on a job interview, it's important to find out as much as you can about the company. Company research is a critical part of interview preparation. It will help you prepare to answer interview questions and to ask the interviewer questions. You will also be able to find out whether the company and the company culture are a good fit for you.

These days, even getting past a job interview phone screening is tough. But once you've got your foot in the door for that first face-to-face interview, it's critical to have significant knowledge about a company so you can make a good impression on a potential employer.

Your company research shouldn't come from a quick Google search or fast glance at the latest news. It's important to gather important information and understand how to use the company information to your benefit.

In addition to the company website, where should people look to conduct company research?

Use LinkedIn. LinkedIn company profiles are a good way to find, at a glance, more information on a company you're interested in. You'll be able to see your connections at the company, new hires, promotions, jobs posted, related companies, and company statistics.

Use Social Media. Check Facebook, Google+ and Twitter. Like or follow the company to get updates. You'll find information you may not have found otherwise.

Ask people who work there. If you know someone, or can network with one of your connections to speak with a current employee of the company to learn more about them and how they operate from someone with firsthand experience.

Should you take the time to research employees who you might know? Go on LinkedIn and see if you are connected to anyone who has worked or currently works at the company, and if you are call them beforehand and ask some questions. When you're at the interview, and it's appropriate, you can say "I'm actually connected to so-and-so who works in (name the department) through a friend."

Is there a downside when it comes to doing company research? People do research and feel like they need to showcase that information, so doing too much research can actually work against you. Do not ask questions that would reflect on the company negatively or put the company on the spot. For example: "I read an article on how many of your employees are upset about their pay. What do you intend to do about that?"

So what's the best way candidates can use the research they've done in the interview? You do want to point to research you've done or make a positive comment about an accomplishment the company has made. You do not want to make a negative comment in the interview or say that you would have done something differently, unless they ask. Learning about the company is also great for tailoring your interview examples and highlighting commonalities between you and the company, and areas where your expertise could be useful.

Should you Google the person you're interviewing with to learn about their background? Researching the interviewer can be a tricky matter. If you're comfortable with your ability to research information and connect with a person without coming across as creepy, then it can certainly be of benefit. Unless you're confident of your abilities to do this, then it's suggested you stick to company research.

Also, if you find no connecting points, you might be tempted to use the information you find there to draw assumptions and make connections that don't exist.

What should you do if you're interviewing with a smaller company, that does not have a significant web presence? If you can't find any information on

the company, you can say something like "I'm really intrigued by the company and I'm really excited to learn more." People love to talk about where they work. Taking a look at the company website is good enough in this case. You can say "I'm normally able to do some research about a company." That is totally acceptable and can be a great conversation starter and connecting point. Once they start telling you about the company, you can say "I worked on something very similar" and point to your experience.

Don't forget: Take some time, in advance, to ask around in your network to see who you know and who can help give you an edge over the other interview candidates.

Investigate *before your* Interview



Dressing for the Interview

Check out the company culture: When deciding what to wear on a job interview, you should first take into consideration the culture of the company you are interviewing with, and dress accordingly. Are you interviewing with a company where the employees wear suits or do they wear t-shirts and jeans?

Nothing too fancy, nothing too casual: A suit is not always the best choice to wear on a job interview. If you show up wearing a suit and tie and all the employees are wearing shorts and flip-flops, you will look out of place, feel uncomfortable and give off the wrong energy. The same is true of the opposite. If you show up wearing shorts and flip-flops to a company that wears professional attire, you will be just confirming that you don't fit into the company.

Match the interviewer: If you want to get the job, your choice of what to wear on a job interview should match or be slightly dressier than the normal work attire of the company. For example, if the normal work attire of the company is business casual, it's okay to wear a suit to impress. If the normal work attire is casual, it's okay to wear a business casual outfit to impress as well. Appropriateness is the most important factor on what to wear on a job interview.

After you decide whether a professional, business casual, or casual outfit is the most appropriate for your interview, here are some guidelines you will want to stay within when deciding on the right outfit. The key is to wear clothing that you feel comfortable and look great in, while at the same time matching the corresponding dress code of the company. That way you'll give off great energy and your true personality will shine through.

Here are the guidelines:

1. Make sure your clothes are neatly pressed. Nothing gives away the lack of attention to detail more than wrinkled clothing.
2. Make sure your clothing fits properly. If your pants or sleeves are too long or something is too loose or too tight, you'll look and probably feel awkward.
3. Don't wear flashy jewelry. You'll want the interviewer to pay attention to you, not your bling.



4. Dress according to the season. Don't wear a stuffy turtleneck sweater in the middle of the summer.
5. Don't wear perfume or aftershave. You never know if your interviewer is allergic and this isn't a good way to find out.
6. Make sure you have a nice, clean haircut and make sure any facial hair is well-groomed.
7. Avoid articles of clothing with loud, busy prints. It's best to wear solid colors that flatter your skin tone.

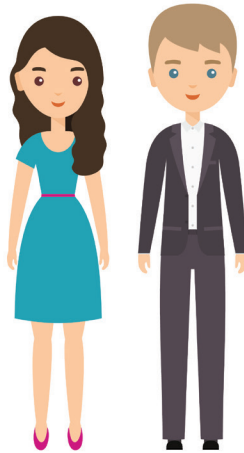
8. Don't overdo your makeup. Wear natural colors and avoid heavy eyeshadow, eyeliner and bright colored lipstick.
9. For pants outfits, make sure you wear a belt that matches the color of your shoes.

So, congratulations on getting the interview! Now you know exactly what to wear to the interview so you can get the job.

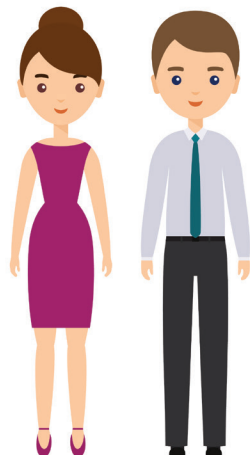
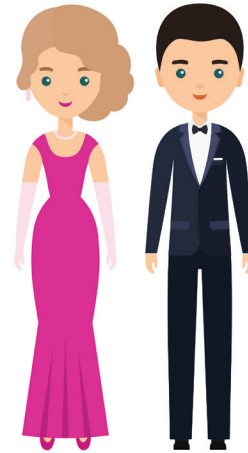
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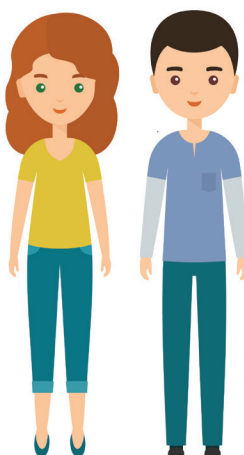
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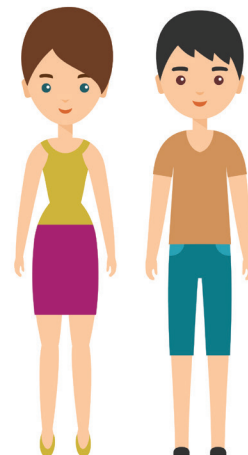
Formal



Business Casual



Casual



Ultra Casual

Types of Interviews

The Behavioral Interview

This Behavioral Interview uses specific types of job interview questions to assess how you have behaved and handled situations in the past. A behavioral-based interview examines previous performances and successes at work. This is an indicator of how you will behave in the future, should you be hired. This type of interviewing is most often seen in technology, finance, and healthcare sectors.

What You Should Do:

Prepare real-life success stories. Behavioral questions tend to focus on themes such as leadership, teamwork, conflict, and problem-solving. Take your cues from the job description and choose a few real-life examples that would be appropriate within each of these themes and write them down beforehand.

Use the STAR method to respond. Your stories and examples should include the situation you were in, the task you had to carry out, the specific actions you took, and the results you achieved. Using this method will allow you to show your detailed thought process to the interviewer.



The Group Interview

Group interviews are usually reserved for sales roles, internships, or other positions in which the company is hiring multiple people for the same job. How do you catch the hiring manager's eye when you're part of the group?

What You Should Do:

Be yourself. The landscape of professionalism is changing across the country, and employers want people who aren't afraid to bring the positive attributes of their personality to the office. Stay loose, and let the real you shine through.

Provide unique examples and accomplishments. Highlight specific accomplishments and share the stories behind them. Ask questions of the interviewers that show you're interested in them as people. This will help you and create a positive, real relationship.

Be polite, confident, and knowledgeable. Focus on being polite and friendly with everyone—not just the hiring team. Along with skill set and qualifications, the hiring team's also looking at your ability to behave under pressure, work with others, and demonstrate confidence.

Show up early. Make sure you're the first one there. Chances are you will get some one-on-one face time with the interviewer.

Do your research. Go to the interview knowing something about the company and maybe even the staff. It shows you're detail-orientated and ready to go the extra mile.

The Job Fair Interview

Many employers will send representatives to job or career fairs. In these fairs, companies set up booths in an area and provide information about their business while collecting resumes.

What You Should Do:

Treat this as a formal interview, although it may not seem like one. Since these events are fast-paced, prepare a short speech about your background and skills to deliver if you have the opportunity to converse with a potential employer.

Carry resumes with you. This way you can ensure that potential employers have something to remember you by after the fair. Keep your phone charged so you can collect contact information and, if appropriate, connect with prospective employers on professional networking sites.

Leaving a lasting impression with prospective employers. The key is to keep moving forward in the hiring process, so make sure to follow up with your interviewers. Within 24 hours of your interview, email or call your interviewer, and thank them for the opportunity.

Reiterate your interest in the company. End by expressing your interest in staying in contact with them. Indicating your wishes for future contact will show that you're dedicated to success with their company.

The Lunch Interview

Has your potential employer suggested an interview over a meal? That's a good sign—it usually means they want to learn a little more about you and how you act outside of the office.

What You Should Do:

React to your mistakes. In interviews, your reaction to mistakes are more important than the mistakes themselves. Acknowledging a mistake in a way that feels comfortable removes a layer of tension.

Order the right food. This includes: food that is eaten with a fork. Don't order things that are known for getting stuck in your teeth, like spinach, broccoli, seeds, or blackberries.

Don't stare at the menu. Check out the menu online before getting to the restaurant. This way you can order with confidence and be left with awkward silence.

Compare plates. If there's a lot less food on your plate than the interviewer's plate, you're talking too much. If there's a lot less food in front of him, you're not talking enough.

Don't Overindulge. If the interviewer's ordered an alcoholic beverage and you'd like a drink, then order one. If you don't drink (or if you just don't want one), then order something else. However if the interviewer orders another round, don't do the same.

The Phone Interview

A phone interview is usually a first-round screening to see if you're a fit to interview in person. You'll want to prepare just as you would for a traditional interview, with a few adjustments for the phone format.

What You Should Do:

Prepare a phone interview cheat sheet. Phone interviews offer an advantage that in-person and video interviews lack: Your interviewer isn't looking at you and can't see what you have in front of you. So you can use notes!

Demonstrate good speaking and listening skills. Have a conversation with the interviewer, listen and engage when questions are asked, don't read off a script, just prepare a few key points ahead of time.

Sit or stand up straight and smile. Just because the interviewer can't see you, doesn't mean that can't get a sense of your energy over the phone. Smiling can be heard in your voice, as can exhibiting good posture -- You'll sound more confident and energetic.

Put company research to use. Identify at least three things that make you enthusiastic about working for this employer and summarize them in a few words for your cheat sheet. Try to make at least one of them about the work the company is doing and how you want to contribute.

Ask questions. Prepare a few question that are based on the role, team, company, or where you are in the application process. Maybe you want to know more about a project or recent expansion. This shows you've done your homework.

The Traditional Interview

This is the scenario you'll face most often: You sit down with a solo interviewer and answer a series of questions designed to help them figure out if you're the right candidate for the job.

What You Should Do:

Prepare answers to commonly asked interview questions. This will help you articulate why you're a good fit for the position.

Demonstrate good speaking and listening skills. During the interview it is important to display good speaking and listening skills. Speak clearly and confidently and avoid slang. It is okay to take a little time to think about a question before answering.

Sit or stand straight, and look the interviewer in the eye. Avoid fidgeting, slouching, or looking down. When the interviewer is speaking, listen carefully without interrupting, and pay close attention.

Take notes on anything you want to remember or ask about later. Maintain eye contact and nod, or use other nonverbal cues to indicate that you are paying attention and understand.

Put company research to use. Most company websites have a page that explains their vision and mission or a page shares the most recent news about the company. This is a great place to find talking points for the interview.

The Working Interview

In some industries—writing, engineering, or even sales—you may be asked to complete an actual job task as part of the interview. Basically, your interviewers don't want you to tell them you can do the job, they want to see it.

What You Should Do:

Understand the goal of the exercise. Don't be afraid to ask questions like, "can you help me understand how the assignment will be evaluated?" "How long will the assignment take?" "Are you looking for details or the big picture?"

Ask questions. You have every right to ask for additional information when asked to do an assignment for employment. You should not be expected to start from scratch. If the company doesn't have the information you're requesting, then do your best.



The Virtual Interview

Virtual interviews are becoming more common, and should be taken just as seriously as a face-to-face interview, and often many of the same tactics to prepare can be used.

What You Should Do:

Test your technology. Check your internet connectivity before the interview, and confirm your camera and microphone are working properly. If it's not your local Kentucky Career Center - Bluegrass office offers interview space, as does most your local public libraries and adult education centers.

Set the scene and minimize distractions. Find a room with optimal lighting, one that is tidy, and minimize background noise.

Sit down prepared. Have your notes near you or pulled up on a screen ready to go. Also print out a copy of your resume, so that you don't forget key talking points.

Monitor your body language. Since you can't shake the interviewer's hand via video, you will want to show your eagerness in your body language by sitting up straight, smiling, and keeping the camera at eye level.

Dress the part. Just because you are interviewing from home, you shouldn't look like it. This means to dress entirely in professional clothing, not just on top with pajama bottoms or worse, because you think it won't be seen.

In Conclusion

To prepare yourself for any interview is to take pieces of each style to build confidence and to practice. Practicing your answers to various questions and styles will put you at ease when you're sitting in front of the hiring manager.

What Your Should Do:

Practice, Don't Memorize. Avoid memorizing each response, so you don't sound overly rehearsed and insincere. It's easy to tell if you aren't being genuine, so it's a good idea to run through a few practice rounds. It may feel awkward, but you'll be in a safe place to make mistakes and learn from them, so you're better prepared for the real thing.

The Kentucky Career Center - Bluegrass also offers interview training and mock interview assistance. They can run through common interview questions with you and offer tips for responding.

Keep things simple. Don't feel like you have to give a long-winded answer if the question doesn't warrant it. Be clear and concise.

Communicate confidence by sitting up straight and smiling. Employers are more likely to remember what you said if you maintain eye contact, so keep your focus on the camera when talking, not on the image of the hiring manager. Practice this!

Dress appropriately for the interview. Professional clothing will show you're serious about the position. Dress as you would for an in-person interview. Professional clothing will show you're serious about the position and make you feel confident, as well.

Make a Connection. Don't be afraid to have a short aside about a common interest. The recruiter might enjoy the break from the routine questions they have to get through. Sharing that connection with an interviewer can be the difference between you and equally qualified applicant.

It's not easy to connect with everyone, but it's a crucial part of an interview. You want the interviewer to be able to remember a personal story you told or a common interest you share. This is the best way to prevent yourself from blending in with the other applicants.

Be Yourself. A key task for a recruiter is determining whether you would be a good fit for the company's culture. Give them a positive reason to remember you and how you and organization may be a good fit.

Immediately Follow Up. Send an individual thank you email to everyone you met within 24 hours of the interview. Taking the time for this small gesture will show you value their time and provides the opportunity re-highlight the strengths you bring to the role, or share any additional information you need to add.

If there was something specific that you shared as a common interest, mention that in the email -- but be brief. Keep the email concise; you want your note to leave a lasting impression, not immediately end up in the trash.

FINAL NOTE: BE PREPARED.

Answering Interview Questions

Common Questions and How to Answer Them

1. Tell me about yourself.

This question is simple, but people don't seem to prepare for it.

Here's the key to answering it: Don't give your complete history, employment or personal . Instead, give a pitch or elevator speech. Talk about your employment highlights in a way that is concise and compelling and that shows exactly why you're the right fit for the job.

Break your answer down into three parts: 1. Briefly describe your current or most recent position, try to highlight one big accomplishment. 2. Include how you got there and relevant experience. 3. Finally, in with why this new role and why its a good fit for you.

Example: "Well, I was a team leader at Smith Automotive, where I handled training new employees and ensured production numbers were met. Before that, I worked as a line production worker, where I was ranked highest producer for three months straight. And while I really enjoyed the work that I did, I'd love the chance to continue up the ladder and show my skills in other ways."

2. How did you hear about this position?

Employers like to track how new candidates learn about their open positions. If someone recommended you for the position, be sure to refer to them by name and share how you know them.

If the person referring you is a former coworker then add to your credibility by explaining why they thought you'd be the good fit.

If you found the position yourself, explain why you are the right hire and identify values you share with the company and their mission.

Lastly, if you were recruited, explain why you agreed to apply. Even if you weren't familiar with the organization prior to being recruited, be enthusiastic about what you've learned and honest about why you're interested in moving forward with the process.

3. What type of work environment do you prefer?

Be sure to get informed on the culture of the organization before you interview. This will be the difference between a job you can stick with and a job that makes your miserable. Your preference should be similar to the company (if it doesn't, it is probably not the job for you). For example, you may find on the company's website that they prioritize teamwork and precision. Those are key words you can mention in your answer to this question.

If the interviewer tells you something about the company that you didn't uncover in your research, like, "Our culture appears very serious and siloed, but in reality, we are a family-friendly company that recognizes employee satisfaction achieves success," try to describe how your work ethic matches that of the organization's.

Example: "That sounds great to me. I like fast-paced work environments because they make

me feel like I'm always learning and growing, but I really thrive when I'm collaborating with team members and helping people reach a collective goal. I want to love my job, but I am a dedicated worker because of my family."

4. How do you deal with pressure or stressful situations?

The employer wants to know that you ability to stay calm under pressure and that you won't crumble under stress if things get tough. This is a highly prized talent.

If it's a skill you're developing, acknowledge that and include the steps you're taking to respond better to pressure in the future.

Example: "I know stressful situations happen, and I have learned to navigate them in my career. I think I get better at it with as time goes

on. For example, while working on a production deadline at my last employer things were not going according to schedule with my team. Instead of pointing fingers, which doesn't help anything, my first reaction was to take a step back and figure out some strategies around how we could we solve the problem at hand and meet our deadline.

There was a time early in my career where I may have defaulted to panicking in that situation, so being calm and thinking things through was definitely a step forward and helped me approach the situation with more clarity."

5. Do you prefer working on a team or alone?

Your answer should honest and, if you have done your research, it will match the companies culture. Quick tip: most work enviornments support some team aspect.



Even work-from-home jobs sometimes require regular collaboration. When you answer this question, highlight the best traits of your personality and how they fit the job requirements listed in the description.

Example: "They both have their advantages, I do well with a team to strategize with, get diverse opinions from, and reach out to for feedback. But I am comfortable and can produce work quickly when working independently. I value collaborating with my teammates to come up with the best ideas, but when it comes to producing an end result, I am capable of doing it completely independently."

6. When you're balancing multiple projects, how do you keep yourself organized?

Your potential employer wants to know that you use your time and energy to stay productive and efficient. They're also need to know you have a system for staying on track with the work beyond the company's schedules and workflow plans. Be sure to emphasize that you adhere to deadlines and take them seriously.

Prepare for your interview by thinking of a specific time when you've had multiple projects or deadlines and what you did to stay on track. Talk about the importance and urgency of the projects you were working on and how you got them done on schedule. Explain how you remain organized and focused on the job in front of you.

Example: "I've juggled projects at my last job where I have my own production numbers to meet, while I mentor new hires. I prioritize my tasks to stay on track. I've found it really helps me get what needs to be done first, and it holds me accountable for the more repetitive day-to-day tasks I'm responsible for."

7. What did you do in the last few years to improve your knowledge?

This question may come up as a result of the pandemic. Employers want to know how people used their time, but know that you don't have to feel scared about answering this question if you didn't spend your time brushing up on skills or taking courses. We learn from any experience we have.

If you spent time honing your professional skills, you might say the following.

Example: "The extra time on my plate really allowed me to think about my future career. I took some online courses to learn and watched a lot of tutorials to improve my leadership."

If you chose to work on your personal development, you could say something like the following.

Example: "Like most people I had lost my job during the pandemic, so I decided to spend my time on things I love. I got back to learning how to play the guitar and gardening. It has been really great for my mental health and productivity."

8. What are your salary expectations?

Before you walk in for your first interview, you should already know what the salary is for the position you're applying to. Check out websites such as Glassdoor, Fishbowl, or Vault.com for salary information. You could also ask people in the field by reaching out to your community on LinkedIn.

Employers will ask this question because every position is budgeted, and they want to ensure your expectations are consistent with that budget before moving forward.

Remember that it's often better to discuss a salary range rather than a specific number during the interview and leaving room for negotiation. It's better to quote a slightly higher number because it's easier to negotiate downward than upward. As a general rule, do not bring up the salary until your interviewer does.

Example: "Based on my skills and experience and on the current industry rates, I'm looking at a salary around \$____" (then fill in with your desired salary range and rationale).

9. Are you applying for other jobs?

Interviewers want to know if you're genuinely interested in this position or if it's just one of your many options. They want to know if you're their top choice. Honesty is the best policy. If you're applying for other jobs, say so. You don't have to necessarily say where you're applying unless you have another offer. You can mention that you're actively looking for offers if your interviewer asks.

Example: "I've applied to a couple of other places, but I am really looking forward to this position because..."

10. From your resume it seems you have a gap in your employment. Would you like to tell us why that was?

This is a lot less important than it used to be, but employers still want to know if you weren't working, why not? Again, it's important to be honest. If you were taking care of a family member during illness, if you were ill yourself, or if there was issues like incarceration or recovery, let your interviewer know that your gap year wasn't about procrastinating. Provide a short explanation of why you took the time, then focus on what came out of it that made a positive difference for your future.

Example: "Last year my grandmother got very ill and I was the only one who was available to take care of her. Taking care of her actually helped me develop so many new skills I became very detailed oriented, having to manage her Doctors appointments and medication schedule. I also learned a lot about communication, communication with insurance companies, with hospitals, pharmacies, and family.

To make a winning impression, you'll need to answer each question with skill, but practicing first really helps. Practicing will allow you to appear confident, helping position you as the ideal candidate when the competition is tough.

The STAR Response for Success

The STAR method is commonly connected with behavioral-interviewing, but it is an excellent way to respond various types of interviews. Due to the organized manner the responses are framed. The STAR method discusses the specific situation, task, action, and result of the situation you are describing.

Situation: Describe the situation that you were in or the task that you needed to accomplish. You must describe a specific event or situation, not a generalized description of what you have done in the past. Be sure to give enough detail for the interviewer to understand. This situation can be from a previous job, from a volunteer experience, or any relevant event.

Task: What goal were you working toward?

Action: Describe the actions you took to address the situation with an appropriate amount of detail and keep the focus on YOU. What specific steps did you take and what was your particular contribution? Be careful that you don't describe what the team or group did when talking about a project, but what you actually did. Use the word "I," not "we" when describing actions.

Result: Describe the outcome of your actions and don't be shy about taking credit for your behavior. What happened? How did the event end? What did you accomplish? What did you learn?

Make sure your answer contains positive results. Make sure that you follow all parts of the STAR method. Be as specific as possible at all times, without rambling or including too much information. Be sure to end your response with the results, forgetting the response is a common mistake when job candidates attempt to use STAR, so practice

organizing your thoughts as you prepare for an interview. Obviously, do not include examples that do not paint you in a positive light. However, keep in mind that some examples that have a negative result (such as "lost the game") can highlight your strengths in the face of adversity.

Same Star Response:

Situation (S): One of the new hires I was mentoring was having a problem keeping his production numbers up and it was causing a problem.

Task (T): I knew I needed to get the numbers back up to meet the minimum or he was going to lose his job.

Action (A): During break I asked him if he was having any issues with his equipment. He mentioned that one of the buttons on his machine was sticking and it was causing a drop in speed because he had to push it multiple times before it would work.

Result (R): After hearing that, I called out maintenance to take a look at the machine and they ended up replacing the button. Once the button was replaced that guy was one of our top producers and our team got recognized for our production numbers the next month.

How to Prepare for a Behavioral Interview:

- Recall recent situations that show favorable behaviors or actions, especially involving course work, work experience, leadership, teamwork, initiative, planning, and customer service.
- Prepare short descriptions of each situation; be ready to give details if asked.

- Be sure each story has a beginning, middle, and an end, i.e., be ready to describe the situation, including the task at hand, your action, and the outcome or result.
- Be sure the outcome or result reflects positively on you (even if the result itself was not favorable).
- Be honest. Don't embellish or omit any part of the story. The interviewer will find out if your story is built on a weak foundation.
- Be specific. Don't generalize about several events; give a detailed accounting of one event.
- Vary your examples; don't take them all from just one area of your life.

STAR Interview Method



Follow-Up Contact

The Thank You Email

You've just finished an interview for a job opportunity you're really excited about. You know you should send a thank you note to your interviewers, but you're not sure what to write.

Here's some advice on what to say — and not to say — in your message, along with sample emails. I'll also cover why writing a thank you note is something you should do, even if it feels like a formality. Let's start with what to write in your note.

How to Write a Thank You Email

Your email should be short, sincere, and sent within 24 hours of your interview.

1. Preparing for the thank you note starts during the interview. Jot down notes when you're interviewing. Write down your interviewer's name, what you discuss, and a few key words to trigger your memory, so you can make your follow-up message more meaningful.
2. Address the email to the person who interviewed you and make sure you spell their name correctly. If their name is Christopher and they asked you to call them Chris in the interview, it is okay to call them Chris in the email. If you interviewed with multiple people, it's a good practice to send each person a brief message as well.
3. Briefly highlight your draw to the organization. Mention an aspect of the conversation in the interview that was interesting or share something to help them remember what your interview in particular.

4. Share your interest in the job opportunity.
5. Thank the person for their time and consideration.
6. Offer to answer any questions.

What to Avoid in Your Thank You Email

If you don't want to leave the interviewers with a bad impression, avoid these three common mistakes.

- Adding too much detail

Remember that the intention of the message is to say thank you, not to pick up where your interview left off. When you say too much you run the risk of appearing desperate or like you weren't prepared for the interview.

- Making requests

People are busy. Avoid requesting anything that creates additional work. You want to show your interviewer that you're easy to work with.

- Typos

Always review your email for grammar and spelling before sending. This is an example of your communication.



THANK YOU!

Sample Thank You Email Templates

Use the samples below to get started, but make sure you customize them to fit your needs.

Sample 1

Subject: Thank you

Hi Maria,

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today and sharing some of the innovative ways your company works as a team.

From our conversation, I understand that the pace is fast, the work is top-notch, and as hard as you work, you all have a great time doing it together. People's care for their work and their coworkers did not go unrecognized, the sense of community was amazing.

I also understand you are looking for a person who can hit the ground running, does not need hand-holding, and is fun to work with. I am confident I am that person.

If you have any questions or want to continue our conversation, please feel free to reach out at any time.

I look forward to being in touch.

Best,

Sample 2

Subject: Thank you

Dear Mr. Cassidy,

I want to thank you for taking the time to meet with me today to discuss the production team lead position at Cascade Fasteners. I appreciate you sharing the history behind your family business and that you care for every customer as if they were your own family.

From our conversation, I understand that maintaining the legacy of top-notch service is your priority, and you are looking for team leaders who want to continue that legacy for years to come. As I shared, I have a young family of my own, and I am looking to put down roots with an organization that I can be proud to work for. I am excited about the possibility of joining your team.

If you have any questions or want to continue our conversation, please feel free to reach out at any time.

Sincerely,

Sample 3

Subject: Thank you

Hi Chris,

It was great speaking with you yesterday about being a possible fit for your team. I appreciate the welcoming tone of everyone I met and what it might be like working at [company name]. It seems like an amazing team with a lot of potential. I am excited about the possibility of working with you. If you have any questions or want to continue our conversation, please reach out at any time.

I look forward to being in touch.

All the best,

Why Is It Important to Send a Thank You Note?

Beyond it being a nice gesture, there are multiple benefits to sending a follow-up message after an interview.

- It creates a positive connection with the interviewer(s).

No matter how well your interview went, many hiring managers squeeze multiple interviews into their busy schedules. A thoughtful message helps you leave a lasting positive impression after the interview is over.

- It helps you stand out from the crowd.

Investing the time to send a thank you increases your chances of standing out from other applicants. One study found that only one out of four candidates sent thank you messages after their interviews, yet 80% of HR managers said those messages were helpful when reviewing candidates.

- It's an opportunity to demonstrate your professionalism and people skills.

It's one thing to tell an interviewer you're detail-oriented and work well with others — it's another to show them. A well-crafted and timed thank you message illustrates your follow-up, your ability to capture the meeting's essence in writing, and that you understand the importance of expressing your appreciation for others.

- It confirms your interest in the job.

Hiring managers understand that candidates may be interviewing for multiple jobs at the same time. Busy themselves, leaders don't want to invest time in a candidate who is not invested in the role they're hiring for. A thank you message confirms that you're both interested and excited about the role and worth following up with.

You may send your message and get a response in minutes, or you may never hear back at all. Either way, investing 15 minutes to express your appreciation may be the difference between getting the job or getting lost in the crowd.



If you're about to send a second or third interview follow-up email, keep your tone calm and professional. Writing a rude message or showing frustration won't make the process go any faster, and it could even cost you the job.

Use a positive tone, tell the employer that you're checking for status updates and you're excited to hear feedback when they have a chance, and then conclude by saying something like, "Thank you for your time. I look forward to hearing back when you have a chance."

Here are some word-for-word samples you can copy...

Sample Follow-Up Emails After an Interview

First Follow-Up Email:

Hi <NAME>,

I hope all is well.

I'm following up to see if you have any status updates regarding the <JOB TITLE> position that I interviewed for on <DATE>.

I'm excited to hear about the next steps, and the role seems like a great fit for my background based on what I learned! Any updates you can share would be great.

Thanks so much,

<YOUR NAME>

If you send this, wait five business days for a response. If you don't receive a reply at that point, then it's time to send a second email...

Second Follow-Up Email After No Response:

Hi <NAME>,

I hadn't heard a reply to my last email so I wanted to check back in to see how the interview process is moving on your end.

Are there any updates you can share regarding the <JOB TITLE> position? I'm still interested in the opportunity, and I look forward to hearing from you when you have any news to share.

Thanks so much,

<YOUR NAME>

Note: The follow-up email templates are best if you've already sent a thank-you email a day after your interview.

We can't go back in time though. So if you didn't send a thank-you note after your interview, you can write a follow-up email that also thanks the employer.

The basic interview follow-up steps above will still work, but we need to add one piece near the beginning of the follow-up email. After greeting the hiring manager or interviewer by their name, you should thank them for taking the time to interview you. Mention the specific date you spoke to remind them, too. For example: "Dear Jeff, thank you for taking the time to meet with me on August 10th."

Then you can use the same steps that we covered above for a regular interview follow-up email... Say you enjoyed learning about the position you discussed (be specific and refer to it by the job title), and then tell them you're

eager for an update. Be clear and direct, and ask for an update. Finish by thanking them, and then conclude the email with your full name, just like the examples above.

Interview Follow-Up Email Combined with a Thank-You Email:

Hi <NAME>,

Thanks so much for taking the time to meet with me on Thursday to discuss the <JOB TITLE> position. I enjoyed our conversation and the information you shared about <specific topic> was interesting.

I'm following up to see if you have any updates regarding the position now.

I'm excited to hear about the next steps, and the role seems like a great fit for my background based on what I learned! Anything you can share would be great.

Thanks so much,

<YOUR NAME>

And for your future interviews, here is a thank-you email template for after your interview. Send this within 24 hours Try lunchtime of the following day:

How Long Should You Wait After an Interview to Follow Up?

- You should follow up five business days after your job interview if you haven't heard feedback from the employer. Or, if the employer provided an expected date for feedback after the interview, follow up one business day after that date has passed.

Hi <NAME>,

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me yesterday. I enjoyed our conversation about <SPECIFIC TOPIC>, and the <JOB TITLE> position sounds like an exciting opportunity for me at this point in my career. I look forward to hearing any updates as they're available, and don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Best regards,

<YOUR NAME>

For example, if the hiring team said that they would inform you about the next steps within three days of your job interview, wait four days, and then send a follow-up email.

The idea is... this will help you avoid looking too eager and desperate.

Note that you should also send a thank-you email within 24 hours of the interview. Don't use these follow-up templates to email the company a day after your interview; employers need time to make their decision. However, companies appreciate a brief "thank you" before they've even made a decision.

What Else to Do While Waiting for Interview Feedback

- Keep in mind that delays happen and the hiring process takes time. So the best thing for you to do while waiting for a status update is to apply for more jobs and try to get more interviews scheduled. You shouldn't stop doing this until you've signed a job offer! No matter how well you write your follow-up email, it isn't going to get a company to move its process faster, bypass delays, skip over other candidates, etc.

This is why you should keep applying for jobs until you've signed a job offer. No exceptions. Because you never know if a company is interviewing 10 other people, considering promoting an internal candidate, or any number of other things that could cost you the job even if your interview went well.

“These Emails Seem Too Simple. Should I Add More?”

- Some job seekers ask whether the example emails are too brief. Simply put, no. Follow-up emails should be short, professional and direct.

Don't complicate your message. Give a polite greeting, be up-front and say what you want (an update on the hiring process), and then conclude your email politely without any unnecessary filler content.

This type of follow-up email is your best shot at getting a prompt update after your interview without seeming pushy, desperate, etc.

In all likelihood, the person you emailed will get back to you and apologize and say they're still working on a decision. Or there's a chance they have news to share and will update you as soon as they get your email.

Either way, you reminded them you're waiting for news and still have interest in the position, which is the goal (employers aim to hire people that seem genuinely interested in the role, and they won't just assume you're interested after an interview if they don't hear from you!)

If you want to know what else hiring managers look for when conducting interviews, read my list of job interview tips here. It'll help you understand the employer's mindset better and will give you a big advantage over the competition in your job search.

What if the Employer Says They Don't Have Any Feedback Yet?

- In some cases, the hiring manager or recruiter will reply to your follow-up email and say they're still in the middle of the hiring process and don't have information about the next steps yet. At times, they'll be specific about what they're working on behind the scenes (for example, they might say that they're still working on getting the whole team together as a group to discuss various candidates) but often, they won't tell you the specifics. Either way, Try responding with a brief email to keep the conversation alive and ensure that you stay in touch. By using the following email template, you give yourself an opening to follow up again if needed, too.

Sample Email Response if Employer Says They Don't Have Any Status Updates:

Hello <NAME>,

Thank you for the information.

When would be an appropriate time for me to check back in?

I'm excited about the opportunity and want to stay in touch, but I know these things take time so I don't want to follow up too often here.

Any information that you can share about the process would be great.

Thank you,

<YOUR NAME>

What if the Company Hasn't Responded to Multiple Emails After the Interview?

- If you sent the first and second follow-up emails from the samples provided earlier and still didn't hear back from the employer about your status as a candidate, here's what to do:

First, make sure you've waited one or two days for a response to your most recent email (not counting weekends).

Then, send a follow-up to the same person, replying to the same email you already sent and keeping the same email subject line.

Sample Email Body:

Hi <NAME>,

I just wanted to follow up again, make sure you saw my last email, and ask whether you have any status updates regarding the <JOB TITLE> position that I interviewed for on <DATE>. I'm looking forward to hearing back about potential next steps when you have a chance. Thank you so much!

Thank you,

<YOUR NAME>

Be Patient After This...

If you still haven't gotten a response at that point, I'd be patient. There's a chance that an important person in the hiring process is on vacation, or that the person you've been emailing is extremely busy, sick, etc.

It is recommended that you wait a minimum of 48-72 hours at this point, and in some cases, a full week is better to wait. Sending another follow-up sooner than this won't help you get the job. So try to focus on other tasks in your



job search while waiting to ask for an update again.

Once you do feel it's time to take things further, here's who to email and how to write the email...

Pick the next logical person in the company to email. For example, if you were emailing an HR person before, try the hiring manager or somebody in the department you've been talking to in your job interviews. Or vice versa; if you've emailed the hiring manager multiple times with no response, then try checking in with HR, a recruiter, or another relevant contact within the company.

Since this is a brand-new email thread, you'll need to write a subject line. Remember to keep it simple and use one of the example subject lines shared earlier in this section.



Follow-Up Email to Second Person in Company After No Response):

Hi <NAME>,

I'm writing to ask for any updates regarding the <JOB TITLE> position that I interviewed for on <DATE>.

I emailed <NAME> last week and hadn't received any reply or updates, so I thought it made sense to ask you next.

If/when you have any feedback you can share, please do let me know. I enjoyed learning about the opportunity and am looking forward to hearing feedback when your team has a chance.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
<YOUR NAME>

How to Conclude Your Interview Follow-Up Email

- In the sample emails above, you'll notice a mix of different ways of "signing off" and concluding the email. You can choose whichever option sounds natural to you, as some are more formal than others.

Here's a complete list of good, reliable options for how to end your interview follow-up email (in order of more formal to less formal):

- *Thank you for your time and consideration*
- *Sincerely*
- *Best regards*
- *Thank you for your time*
- *Thank you*
- *Thanks for your time*
- *Thanks so much*
- *Thanks*

You can also decide whether to write your first and last name or just your first name. Choose based on your previous interactions with the hiring manager or employer, and what you feel fits with the industry and company culture.

Two More Tips for Following Up

- If you follow the advice above, you will have great emails to send after any interview... from a phone interview to a final stage in-person interview.

However, there are also a few other tips that will make the process easier and help you get the job:

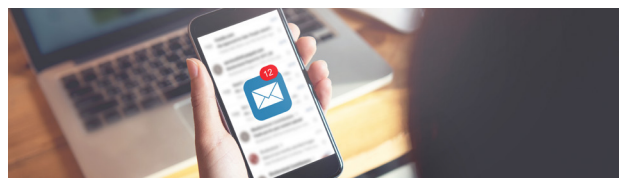
Tip 1: If you're still not 100% confident about your emails after reading the information above, have a friend, family member or a staff member with the Kentucky Career Center - Bluegrass look at your follow-up email to give feedback.

Tip 2: End each interview by asking when you can expect to hear feedback. Simply say, "When can I expect to hear feedback, and who will be in touch?"

Sometimes it's normal for it to take one to two weeks for a response after your job interview. For example, maybe you were the first person they interviewed and they need to talk to a couple of other candidates before making a decision.

This tip will save you a lot of stress because you'll know whether it's time to follow up or not, and you won't be worried if you've gotten no response after a couple of days.

While you wait for feedback, you can read these signs your interview went well or badly.



Know Your Value When Getting the Job!

Don't underestimate the importance of your abilities. During the job application and interview process, employers look for applicants who are able to clearly communicate they have abilities useful to their company and the ability learn new skills.

Teachable abilities or skill sets that are easy to quantify. Examples of hard skills include:

- Proficiency in a foreign language
- A degree or certificate
- Typing speed
- Machine operation
- Computer programming

These skills are often listed in your cover letter and on your resume, and are easy for an employer or recruiter to recognize.

Other skills are much harder to quantify, these "people skills" or "interpersonal skills" relate to the way you interact with other people. Examples of these skills include:

- Teamwork
- Communication
- Flexibility
- Patience
- Time management
- Motivation

Skills Employers Look For

While certain hard skills are necessary for any position, employers are looking increasingly for job applicants with particular employability skills. This is because, while it is easy for an employer to train a new employee in a particular hard skill (such as how to use a certain piece of machinery), it is much more difficult to train an employee in an employability or interpersonal skills (such as patience).

Emphasizing Both Hard and Employability Skills

During the job application process, you should be sure to emphasize both your hard and soft skills. This way, even if you lack a particular hard skill required by the company, you can emphasize a particular soft skill that you know would be valuable in the position. For example, if the job involves working on a number of group projects, be sure to emphasize your experience and skill as a team player and your ability to communicate with team members.

In the next section of this manual we will be reviewing how employability skills are the key to career success.



Exercise 2.1: Preparing for the Interview

1. What are the three most important things to remember about preparing for an interview?

1.

2.

3.

2. Name at six of the 10 things you should take with you to a job interview?

1. _____ 4. _____

2. _____ 5. _____

3. _____ 6. _____

Exercise 2.2: Doing the Research

1. Explain why researching a company can help you during an interview.

Exercise 2.3: Dressing for the Interview

1. In general, what is the appropriate dress for an interview?

2. Is wearing a formal suit always the safest "dress for success" attire? Yes No

3. What are the four types of dress codes for the workplace?

A. Casual, Semi-Casual, Formal and Business Professional

B. Smart Business, Business Professional, Semi Formal and Super Formal

C. Casual, Business Casual, Business Professional and Formal

D. Formal, Business Casual, Semi-Formal Business and Interview Attire.

Exercise 2.3: Dressing for the Interview

4. Why should you always dress to impress for an interview?

5. When going to an interview it is appropriate to wear what? Check all that apply.

- A. A man should wear a suit and tie. D. A man should wear construction shoes.
 B. A woman should wear jeans and a collared shirt. E. Males/females should wear dress shoes.
 C. A woman should wear a dress and jacket. F. A woman should wear a pant suit.

Exercise 2.4: Acing the Interview

1. Why is practicing for an interview valuable?

2. In your own words, explain the STAR method.

3. Pair off with a partner and take turns playing the role of an employer interviewing and an applicant at an interview, using the questions provided below:

- Give an example of an occasion when you used logic to solve a problem.
- Give an example of a goal you reached and tell me how you achieved it.
- Describe a decision you made that was unpopular and how you handled implementing it.
- Have you gone above and beyond the call of duty? If so, how?
- What do you do when your schedule is interrupted? Give an example of how you handle it.
- Have you had to convince a team to work on a project they weren't thrilled about? How did you do it?
- Have you handled a difficult situation with a co-worker? How?
- Tell me about how you worked effectively under pressure.

Exercise 2.5: Acing the Telephone Interview

1. Nine tips to acing the telephone interview were given. List as many as you can remember.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____

2. Pick three that you consider the most important and explain why they could be key to a successful telephone interview.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____





Exercise 2.6: Acing the Video Interview

1. Nine tips to acing the video interview were given. List as many as you can remember.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____

2. Pick three of the tips that you consider the most important and explain why they could be key to a successful video interview.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Exercise 2.7: After the Interview

1. There are 12 tips to keep in mind after interview. List as many as you can remember.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____

2. Pick three that you consider the most important and explain why they could be key to landing the job.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

