|  |
| --- |
| **The Interview Structure** |

You will most likely have several interviews with the company before receiving a job offer. The first interview is a screening interview conducted either over the phone or at the employer's office. This type of interview is usually brief, lasting anywhere from 30-60 minutes. The employer might take this time to have you expand on the information on your résumé; or, the employer might take this time to describe the company and the position. If the employer is impressed with you, you will be asked to come in again for a second interview.

The second interview is longer, and can last anywhere from two hours to a whole day. It can include questions, (sometimes) testing, a tour, and possibly interviews with other employees. At the end of this interview, you should have a thorough understanding of the company and the job opening, and have enough information to determine whether you should accept the position (if it is offered).

**Effective Communication**

Effective communication is essential to the interview process. The better that you can communicate your skills, knowledge and experience to the employer, the higher the probability is that you will be offered the job. Here are come communication tips:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| bullet | **Be yourself.** Allow your personality to come through. Be professional and enthusiastic about your skills and experience. |
| bullet | **Listen carefully.** This is important for learning something about the job and to be able to answer any questions. |
| bullet | **Be positive.** Employers don't want to hear about bad experiences. If the employer asks you about a weakness in your background, try to focus on what you've learned from the experience. |
| bullet | **Be poised.** Nonverbal behavior is very important. Smile when you greet the employer, maintain eye contact, don't slouch and keep both feet on the floor when seated, and try to control nervous behavior.  |
| bullet | **Don't worry about short pauses.** Every moment of the interview does not have to be filled with conversation. The employer may need a minute to formulate a question, and you may need a minute to formulate an answer. |

An interview usually follows a pattern of warm-up, information exchange, and wrap-up.

**Warm Up**

The warm-up is the first few minutes of the interview. During this phase, the employer will formulate a first (and lasting) impression of you. The employer will formulate this impression by the way you make your greeting, your handshake, and the way you are dressed. The employer may start out by asking about the weather, your travel to the interview, or some other neutral subject; on the other hand, the employer might start out with "Tell me about yourself."  This is your opening to briefly talk about your skills, background, and interest in the position.

**Information Exchange**

This is the major part of the interview. This is when you will be asked the most questions, and when you will learn the most about the employer. During a screening interview, an employer might spend more time describing the company and the position than on asking you questions; in a second interview, however, the employer will spend more time asking you questions. The questions may range from "Why are you interested in this position?", to "What are your strengths and weaknesses?", to "What are your long range career goals?" If you have prepared for the interview, you will be able to respond by emphasizing your qualifications for the position. The more you practice, the more polished you will become.

**Wrap Up**

The employer will generally move to the wrap-up stage of the interview by asking "Do you have any questions?" Always ask questions to demonstrate your interest in the job and your research about the company. Examples are:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| bullet | Questions to clarify information; |
| bullet | Questions regarding the use of new technology; |
| bullet | Questions related to practices in the career field; or, |
| bullet | Questions to assess the direction of the company (such as, "Where is the company headed in the next five years?" or "Why do you like working for ... ?"). |

Do not ask direct questions about salary or benefits unless the employer does so first. The employer might ask if you have anything else to add. It's always best to have a response. Take the opportunity to thank the employer, summarize your qualifications, and re-emphasize your interest in the position. This is a good time to add more information or emphasize a point you made earlier. The last impression is very important and will add substance to the information exchange part of the interview.

**How To Wow at a Job Interview**

by Mike Hardcastle

for About.com

The resume gets you in the door but it's the interview that gets you the job. For the inexperienced job hunter an interview can be intimidating but it's really not so bad as long as you follow the simple guidelines listed here.

**Difficulty:** Average

**Time Required:** As long as it takes.

**Here's How:**

1. Show up 10-15 minutes early for your scheduled interview. Do not show up too early as this may be an annoyance to an interviewer especially if waiting room space is limited. Never show up late.
2. Dress neatly, conservatively but also casually. Avoid trendy clothes, jeans, or personal identity statements (like a Mohawk or political t-shirt) unless they are fitting to the job, for example; trendy is OK if the job is in a trendy clothing store. For more see [jobsearch.about.com](http://jobsearch.about.com/od/interviewattire/)1
3. Remove piercings that may be objectionable and obvious to an employer such as a facial piercing and keep tattoos covered. It is unlawful in most regions for employers to deny you a job because of these things but it can still happen.
4. Know your resume inside out. Nothing looks worse than an applicant who keeps reading off of their resume. If there is an application form take your answers from your resume so you won’t stumble when asked about your qualifications.
5. Shake hands and remain standing until offered a seat. Clearly and confidently state your name and thank the interviewer for seeing you.
6. Avoid giving speeches when asked questions. Keep your answers concise and to the point. If you don’t understand a question or you didn’t hear it do not be afraid to ask to have it rephrased or repeated.
7. Whenever possible prepare your answers in advance. There are some standard interview questions you can expect. Examples of these types of questions can be found at [jobsearch.about.com](http://jobsearch.about.com/od/interviewquestionsanswers/)2
8. Know a bit about the company you are applying to work at and details about the job you are after. Answer any questions you are asked with references to these things whenever relevant.
9. Do not be afraid to ask questions of your own. In fact, many interviewers consider the “do you have any questions” part of an interview to be very telling about a potential employees work ethic and job expectations.
10. If it hasn’t been stated it is OK to ask about the rate of pay, bonus structure and advancement opportunities within the company. If the company is very large, like McDonalds, ask about any employee scholarship programs that may be available.
11. Never lie about your availability. If you can only work weekends, say so. If you can’t work any later than 9pm make it clear right away.
12. Ask when the interviewer expects to have made a decision and if they will be contacting all applicants or only those who are hired. Make a point of following up via telephone 2 business days after your interview.
13. Before leaving thank the interviewer again and shake hands. Smile and make eye contact as you leave.