

# Tips for Successful Interviews

## Before

- Practice as much as possible before your actual interview. Practice with a friend, use Perfect Interview, our online interview practice software or complete a mock interview with a career counselor. Anticipate questions that may be asked and try out your answers aloud—especially for difficult questions.
- Dress appropriately, turn off your cell phone and use good manners. Your appearance should be polished, and you should address everyone in a polite manner.
- Be on time. If you are late for the interview, you could ruin your chances. Arrive between five and 10 minutes before the scheduled time. There is such a thing as arriving too early (20 minutes or earlier).
- Show that you are knowledgeable about the company. Interviewers look more favorably on a candidate who has made the effort to research the company and the position.
- Self-doubts and fear of failure can damage your performance in an interview. Be calm and aware of any nervous habits (nail-biting, fidgeting, etc.). Do some deep, slow breathing exercises before entering the building and think of this experience as just another chance to practice your interviewing skills.

## During

- Unfreeze your face and smile! Smiling exudes confidence and a positive attitude. Show your enthusiasm for the opportunity to meet with the employer.
- It is important that you exhibit effective communication skills during the interview. Speak clearly and concisely. Listen attentively and maintain eye contact. Resist distractions.
- Follow the interviewer's lead, and stick to the point. Listen carefully. Sometimes, interviewers will rephrase a question to check for alertness and consistency. The interviewer is also interested in attitudes that might affect your job performance. Avoid revealing negative opinions about other people and organizations.
- Express your interest in the job. Ask if you can call back to find out about the decision.

## After

- Send a thank you note(s) within 24 hours—either by email or U.S. Mail. If there is an interview committee, thank each member for his or her time and restate your desire for the job. Mention your qualifications again and refer to something you discussed during the interview.

## Handling illegal interview questions

Asking certain questions during a job interview may be prohibited by law. Many times, interviewers ask inappropriate questions because they are unaware of the law or what types of questions are too personal. Some questions that seem like they are illegal are not because they relate directly to the position's essential job functions.

Illegal and inappropriate questions commonly focus on the following topics:

- Religion
- Race
- Ethnic origin
- Marital status
- Age
- Disability

A smart job hunter is aware of illegal questions, knows options for handling them and stays cool when responding. Here are some options to help you maintain professionalism. There are pros and cons to each of these, and you need to decide what makes you most comfortable.

- Simply answer the question.
- Try to determine the interviewer's motivation for asking a particular question. Ask, "How does my answer to this question relate to the position?" Depending on his or her answer, decide whether or not you want to answer the question.
- Bring the interview back to your qualifications. If you think the employer is worried about something in your personal or professional life, assure them that you can handle the requirements of the job and mention some of your qualifications that relate to the question.
- Decline to answer the question by saying, "That question makes me uncomfortable. I would rather not answer it."
- If you think you were denied a job based on discrimination, contact the Equal Opportunity Office for more information. Be aware that even if you have a legitimate claim, it may be difficult to prove.

Preparing and practicing for an interview will help you in sticky situations such as those related to inappropriate interview questions.