

What are interview skills?

Interview skills are skills or actions that allow a person to be more effective throughout the interview process for a new position. Not all interview skills are conventional.

Rather, many interview skills help candidates prepare for the interview and guide them as they participate in job interviews. Acing job interviews requires in-depth preparation as well as the ability to feel comfortable and confident when discussing your skills, experience and qualifications with hiring managers.

The following are 10 of the most important interview skills that can support the interview process and help set you apart from other candidates:

1. Research

Before you go into an interview, it's important to spend time researching both the company and the position you're applying for. There are several ways you can research an organization, including by:

Reviewing their website, especially the "About" page

Googling the company name and reading any press releases or other information available

Looking at the company's social media platforms

Talking to employees of the company, if possible

Researching job platforms that provide feedback from current and previous employees about the company

You should also take time to obtain as much information as possible about the job you're interviewing for. Thoroughly review the job listing, look on the company website for the job listing if available to see if additional details are included and look up current employees who hold the same or similar positions.

You can also research the job title in general to get a more broad idea of what's expected and typical duties in that position. The more you know about the position, the better prepared you'll be when going into the interview.

2. Preparation

You should avoid going into an interview unprepared. Doing so may reflect negatively on you as a candidate, and most hiring managers can easily detect applicants who are not prepared. Set aside at least an hour to prepare the day before or on the day of the interview. Here are a few actions to take when preparing:

Re-read the job description and determine the most relevant responsibilities and requirements for the position.

Come up with several specific answers to potential questions related to the position you're applying for and the duties that will be expected of you.

Make a list of the essential aspects of the job so you have it on hand when answering and asking questions during the job interview.

Go over your cover letter and resume you provided to the company to ensure you remember how you initially presented yourself.

Spend several minutes or even hours researching possible interview questions related to the position you're applying for and the industry the company is part of.

Look up less specific interview questions that aren't directly related to the job, but may still be asked. For example, practice a few behavioral and situational interview questions.

Practice answering interview questions with a friend or family member so you feel comfortable when answering questions during the actual interview.

Prepare several specific examples from your previous job experience, including milestones, challenges and successes. These will support your interview answers and help strengthen your responses.

Look over your notes you prepared on the company during the research process to ensure the information is fresh in your mind when going into the interview.

3. Punctuality

On the day of the interview, make sure you arrive at least 15 minutes before the scheduled interview time. Punctuality is an important trait that hiring managers and employers value and gives them an idea of how punctual you will be on a daily basis if you're hired for the position.

To ensure you arrive on time, consider planning out your outfit the night before and ironing it so that it's ready the next day. You should also back your purse or briefcase the night before and ensure you have a copy of your resume and cover letter on hand. Set an alarm and make sure you have reliable transportation for the time of the interview.

4. Professionalism

There are several aspects that go into professionalism, and all of them are important when attending a job interview. To begin, ensure your attire is professional and tasteful and is neatly pressed and clean.

Avoid wearing clothes that are too casual, too large or small, too revealing or too flamboyant. Aim for an outfit with neutral colors that match and are not distracting or offensive. If you're unsure of the dress code requirements for the interview, dress in a more formal way to avoid dressing too casually.

When arriving at the interview location, use professional language when checking in and greeting the interviewer. Be polite to everyone you come into contact with, including other employees and receptionists. The more polite and professional you're in your actions and words, the more kind and pleasant you can come off to employers.

5. Communication

Good communication skills are crucial during the job interview process. This includes written, verbal and nonverbal communication skills. A few key tips to keep in mind when communicating with others during an interview include:

Address the interviewer by name and ensure you pronounce the name or names correctly.

Begin the interview with appropriate small talk. It's best to come prepared with a few conversation starters that are professional and conducive to an interview setting.

Match your communication style to the hiring manager. For example, if the hiring manager is communicating in a professional way, try to match your tone to theirs. If they're more upbeat and offer jokes here and there, don't be afraid to do the same as long as they're appropriate.

Avoid interrupting the person who's interviewing you.

Don't use jargon or abbreviated language.

Try to avoid using speech fillers like "um" and "like."

Be aware of your own nonverbal cues to ensure you're presenting yourself in a professional and positive way.

6. Listening

Listening skills are another important component of a successful interview experience. It's easy to listen to a person, and while doing so to think to yourself how you'll respond. While this may seem wise, it can also prevent you from actually catching the person's entire message. Listen attentively and give your full attention to the hiring manager, paraphrase what they said either in your mind or out loud when appropriate and use nonverbal cues such as nodding to convey that you're engaged.

You should also ask for clarification if you misunderstand something that was said to ensure communication is effective. Avoid quickly changing the subject and take note of any nonverbal cues the interviewer is giving you, such as facial expressions and tone of voice, to further understand what's being said.

7. Ask questions

Hiring managers often ask candidates if they have any questions during or after the interview. Interviewers look for candidates who ask genuine questions to help them gain a better understanding of the company and the role. Arrive at the interview prepared with a few questions to ask the interviewer that demonstrates a genuine interest in the opportunity and provides a chance to further discuss elements of the job that may not have been covered.

8. Confidence

Confidence has a significant impact on how you're perceived by interviewers. Arrive at the interview ready to discuss your experience, accomplishments and abilities in a confident way that conveys your own belief in yourself to perform the duties of the position you applied for. Work to exude a balanced and kind sense of confidence rather than simply boasting about your qualifications.

9. Showing interest

It's important to convey your genuine interest in the position during a job interview. If you give off a sense of disinterest or apathy, the interviewer may think you don't truly want the position or care about the outcome of the interview. Work to show earnest interest in the organization and position and a passion for your work and your abilities to complete the duties of the job.

10. Follow-up

Following up soon after an interview is considered crucial by many recruiters and hiring managers. A simple thank-you card or thank-you email can go a long way to show the interviewer you're genuinely interested in the position and are grateful for their time. Try to send a follow-up email or note the same day as the interview or the next day at the latest.