

This article and many more can be found at [www.CollegeRecruiter.com](http://www.CollegeRecruiter.com)

## **Prepare for the Interview**

The best way to ace your next job interview is to prepare for it. This may sound obvious, but it's not. Too many applicants walk into an interview without knowing as much as they should about the industry, the company and its problems. Remember: You are there to solve a problem. Otherwise, the company wouldn't be hiring. Follow these steps:

### **1. Know the company.**

Find out as much as you can about the position, the company and its needs, so you can show how your background meets those needs. Telephone the receptionist and ask for copies of company brochures. Be friendly and professional on the phone and when you go pick up those brochures. (A receptionist who takes a liking to you can be one of your most important allies in getting a job.) Whenever possible, get a copy of the company's annual report. Research the company at your local library and on the Internet.

### **2. Know yourself.**

Mentally review the skills and character traits you have that will help the company's bottom line. Think in terms of the value you can add to the position and the company.

### **3. Know your job history.**

Mentally review your past achievements and be prepared to describe your work experience in detail. Gather letters of reference and samples of your work to present to the interviewer as proof of your past accomplishments. Practice describing your experience in terms of your responsibilities and accomplishments at each job.

### **4. Know the questions.**

You can almost bet on being asked: "Tell me about yourself." Approach this from the employer's point of view. Ask yourself, "If I were hiring someone for this position, what would I want to know?" Then answer those questions. And be ready for tough ones, too. Think of the worst questions you could be asked about your experience and abilities, then prepare positive responses.

### **5. Prepare questions of your own.**

Employers are as interested in your questions as they are in your answers. And they'll react favorably if you ask intelligent questions about the position, the company and the industry. (Examples: Where does this position fit into the company as a whole? Is there any problem on this job with waste/accuracy/meeting quotas, etc.? What is the largest single problem facing your staff now?)

### **6. Get the big picture.**

Visualize the entire interview, from start to finish. See yourself as performing with style and confidence. How will the interview end? Will you get a job offer or be called back for a second interview? How much salary do you want? What kind of benefits? The research you did in step 1 will give you an idea of what to expect. Be ready for any eventuality.

## **Make a Good First Impression**

The outcome of the interview will depend largely on the impression you make during the first five minutes. To succeed, you must project a professional, competent and enthusiastic image. Your aim is to convince the interviewer that you would be an asset to the company. Keep the following in mind:

### **7. Punctuality.**

Do whatever it takes to arrive a few minutes early. If necessary, drive to the company the night before and time yourself. Allow extra time for traffic, parking and slow elevators.

## **8. Dress.**

Your clothing should be appropriate for the position you're seeking. Attire must fit well within the office and be immaculate. If you don't know what the typical attire at the company is, call and ask! Shoes should be polished; pants/skirts and shirts pressed.

## **9. Grooming.**

Clean hair and fingernails are essential. Hair should be styled conservatively. Avoid excessive make-up, jewelry or cologne.

## **10. Handshake.**

A firm handshake is appropriate and projects confidence. Make eye contact when you shake.

## **11. Body language.**

Send the right message by standing straight, moving confidently, and sitting slightly forward in your chair.

## **Conduct the Interview**

Have your own agenda and know where the interview should be heading. This will give you confidence and help you move from one area of questioning to the next. Remember: Most interviewers are as uncomfortable as you are. They just want the position to be filled as fast as possible. If you can put the interviewer at ease by helping things move smoothly, you'll improve your chances of being hired. Remember the following:

## **12. Enthusiasm and eye contact.**

Show your enthusiasm by making eye contact and keeping an interested expression. Nod and gesture in moderation; excessive body movement can distract and annoy the interviewer.

## **13. Listening skills.**

Listen carefully and ask questions to probe deeper into what the interviewer is telling you. Most interviewers are delightfully surprised by a question such as, "How could I help you solve the problem you've just described?"

## **14. Communication skills.**

Good grammar and articulate speech are essential. If this is an area where you're weak, work on it. Practice on your family, practice in front of a mirror, record your voice, take classes -- do whatever it takes to become a more effective communicator.

## **15. Negative statements about previous jobs or employers.**

NEVER make them. Instead, be diplomatic. No matter how bad your last job or boss was, there's probably something good you learned from the experience. Emphasize the positive -- with a smile.

## **Follow Through**

This is a crucial and often-overlooked final step in the interviewing process. Remember: No home run or 350-yard golf shot was ever hit without a proper follow-through.

## **16. Write a thank you.**

It's essential that you write a thank-you note to every person you met at the company. Your most important letter(s) should go to the interviewer(s). In your letter, be sure to summarize your conversation and re-emphasize the skills you would bring to the position. Thank them for their time and ask if it's all right to call later in the week to see how their search for a candidate is going. That candidate may well be you!

Kevin Donlin is the author of "Resume and Cover Letter Secrets Revealed," a do-it-yourself manual that will help you find a job in 30 days ... or your money back. For more information, please visit <http://www.CollegeRecruiter.com/1dayresumes.html>