

Interviewing Tips

Shasta County Health and Human Services Agency
CalWORKs Employment Services Program



Interview Tips

1. Do some research before the interview (It is impressive if you have some positive knowledge about the company.)
2. Practice interviewing (in the car, in a mirror, with friends, etc.).
3. Dress for the interview and the job. Don't over- or under-dress.
4. Always go to the interview alone. Arrange for child care and transportation ahead of time (Being prepared will help you relax.)
5. Arrive 15 minutes early. You will look organized and have time to think about what you want to say.
6. Introduce yourself. Greet everyone, including the receptionist, in a courteous and friendly way.
7. Bring only items needed for the interview. Examples: a pen, résumé, licenses, date book, portfolio, "fact sheet," etc. Do not bring anything unrelated to the job interview.
8. Greet the interviewer/employer with a firm handshake. Make frequent eye contact.
9. Smile, be polite and try to relax. Be upbeat and make positive statements.
10. Listen carefully to the questions asked. It is okay to pause and think about your answer (Try to say more than "yes" or "no.")
11. Do not speak negatively of past employers. Do not discuss personal or financial problems.
12. Thank the interviewer for their time. Later, mail, email, or drop off a thank-you note.
13. Write down the name(s) of the people who interviewed you.



Interview Appearance Checklist (How will I look?)

Before my interview...

- Get a haircut, trim or shave beard/mustache
- Clean and iron clothes
- Wash hands and cut nails
- Shower or bathe and use a "mildly scented" deodorant or antiperspirant
- Do not use any perfume or after shave
- Shine or clean shoes
- Conceal body tattoos, and remove piercings if possible
- Eat a light meal before the interview; avoid onions, garlic, etc.
- Brush teeth and use mouthwash
- Do not smoke just before going
- Turn off your cell phone and/or other devices

What I will wear...

- Suit or dress
- Shirt or blouse
- Pants or slacks
- Tie and belt
- Socks or stockings
- Shoes or work boots
- Jacket or coat
- Jewelry (not much)
- Purse or briefcase (not both)
- Makeup (keep it light)
- Light fingernail polish or none at all

What I will bring...

- Notepad
- Two pens (same color)
- Extra copies of résumé
- Application and/or a list of references
- License or certificate (commercial driving, typing, nursing, etc.)
- Datebook or planner
- Portfolio or work samples
- Questions



Questions Job interviewers May Ask

- * Tell me about yourself. *(Reveal something personal about yourself but keep it professional.)*
- * What do you know about our company? *(Research the company prior to interview.)*
- * Why are you interested in working for this company? *(Relate your skills to what you know about the company.)*
- * What education and/or experience has prepared you for this job? *(Match what you know about the job/company to your experience.)*
- * What are your strengths and weaknesses? *(Relate strengths to the job description. Admit a past problem and what you learned from it. Keep it positive.)*
- * Why are you job hunting or planning on leaving your current job? *(Keep it positive.)*
- * What are your salary requirements? *(Think about the salary range you desire, your salary at your most recent job and research the industry-standard salary for the job.)*
- * Describe a time when you were faced with a challenging situation and how you handled it. *(In advance, think of a difficult professional situation you handled and how you did it. Share a positive thing you learned from the challenge.)*
- * What motivates you? *(For example: Doing a good job and being part of a team.)*
- * What would a former boss or co-worker say about you? *(Keep it positive.)*
- * Why should we hire you? *(Because of your knowledge, experience, abilities, and skills.)*



Questions You Might Want to Ask at a Job Interview

Add questions as you research careers and companies.

1. What do you see ahead for your company in the next 5 years?
2. Were there any questions for which I didn't provide an adequate answer?
3. How will I be evaluated at ABC company, and how often?
4. What are the key challenges of this position?
5. What advancement is available, assuming that I meet/exceed the job's responsibilities?
6. What are the company's short and long term objectives?
7. When will a decision be made about this position?
8. What do you see as my greatest strengths and weaknesses pertaining to this position?
9. What are the opportunities for personal growth?
10. What makes your firm different from its competitors?
11. What do you see as the company's strengths and weaknesses?
12. Could you describe a typical day or week in this position? The typical client/customer I would be dealing with?
13. What characteristics does a successful person within your company possess?
14. What are the next steps in the interview process?



Additional Interview Reminders

DO...

1. Wait for the interviewer to ask you to be seated.
2. Speak clearly and loud enough to be heard.
3. Relax if you can (The interviewer may be nervous too.)
4. Sell yourself.
5. Stay focused and answer the question asked; usually in less than 2 to 3 minutes.
6. When the interview is over, smile and shake hands, then thank the interviewer for their time.

DO NOT...

1. Chew gum or smoke, even if the interviewer does.
2. Put anything on the interviewer's desk – NO elbows, purse, keys, etc.
3. Play nervously with your keys, ring, pen, tie, etc.
4. Tap your fingers or feet.
5. Use slang or swear.
6. Talk too much (ramble) or too little (Avoid yes or no answers.)
7. Slouch or look tired.
8. Argue or act defensively. NO negative talk – NO personal problems.
9. Wear a hat or dark glasses.



Pitfalls (Why People Don't Get Hired)

- Being late for the interview.
- Untidy or unclean personal appearance.
- Unable to give clear information (Practice before the interview.)
- Answers to questions were vague (Practice before the interview.)
- Lack of interest or enthusiasm or a negative attitude.
- Not being willing to start at the bottom.
- Not willing to accept entry-level wage.
- Lack of eye contact.
- Incomplete or sloppy application.
- Talked about personal problems.
- Too aggressive.
- No purpose or goals (No career plans.)
- Negative attitude about past employers.
- No sense of humor.
- Did not ask questions about the job or the company.
- Lack of courtesy.
- Lack of maturity.
- Did not thank the interviewer for their time.



How to Prepare for a Telephone Interview

DO...

1. Be reachable. Both your home phone and cell phone number should be on your résumé. Answer all calls promptly. If an employer has difficulty reaching you, he may lose interest.
2. If an employer calls at an inconvenient time, ask tactfully to call him/her back. When you return the call, apologize again for having to do so. Call at the exact scheduled time.
3. Prepare as you would for a regular interview.
4. Dress in business attire to make you will feel and sound professional.
5. Review the requirements for the job and list your qualifications that match. Have this list and your résumé nearby so you can view these while being interviewed.
6. Open the company's website in your browser so you can refer to information about the company if necessary.
7. Have a pen and paper ready for brief note taking.
8. Ensure the room will be quiet and you will be alone. Arrange for a babysitter. Turn off the radio, TV and stereo. Close the door.
9. Have a glass of water handy in case you need to moisten your mouth.
10. Focus on the interview by listening carefully to the question. Speak slowly, carefully and clearly when you answer.
11. Make an effort to sound enthusiastic and interested.
12. Smile and sit up straight as this will change the tone of your voice and project a positive image.
13. If you are losing confidence, stand up to make your voice sound more powerful.
14. Have someone conduct a mock interview and tape record it so you can hear how you sound over the phone. Practice, practice, practice!
15. Use a land line unless your cell service is effective at all times. You don't want to risk a dropped call and getting disconnected!
16. Turn off call-waiting so you are not interrupted.
17. Thank the interviewer and ask if it is possible to interview in person.
18. Follow-up with a thank you note/letter, phone call or an email.

DO NOT...

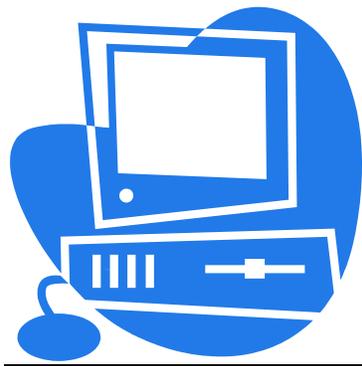
1. Eat, drink, or smoke during the interview.
2. Interrupt the interviewer.



How to Prepare for a Video Interview

DO...

1. Send any pertinent materials such as a résumé ahead of time to the recruiter.
2. Review the previous page on “How to Prepare for Phone Interview” for tips on how to avoid distractions, how to set up your desk; eliminate background noise, and other applicable information.
3. If interviewing at a job center or at the company’s office, arrive early so you have time to get situated.
4. Ask for a quick overview of how to use the equipment for optimal performance.
5. If at home, ensure that your internet connection is working properly to avoid interruptions and technological difficulties; shut down other applications (e.g., email).
6. Securely plug your computer or other device into a port and plug your headphones into the computer’s port. (Wired is better than wireless.)
7. Headphones are better than speakers. You have to decide if the advantage of using the headphones overrules the need to look professional.
8. When using a microphone, be aware that it picks up noise; don’t shuffle papers, tap your pen, fingers, sit in a squeaky chair, etc.
9. The camera on your computer should have a good shot of your head and shoulders.
10. Sit up straight, lean forward so your facial expression can be read, and do not sit too close to the camera.
11. Make eye contact by looking into the camera; do not focus on the computer screen.
12. Video interviews downplay your personality. Act pleasant, smile, and show interest. (Remember that your body language and other non-verbal clues reveal a lot about you.)
13. Ensure that your background looks neat, uncluttered, no people moving around, etc.
14. Dress as you would for a regular interview; avoid wearing stripes or small patterns for a video interview as they may appear as strobe lights. Dress dark with a touch of color.
15. Correct lighting is important. Have two adjustable task lights on either side of the computer/webcam. Adjust the lights so they are evenly lit and flattering.
16. When the interview begins, take a moment to ensure you look good on the screen. Use the Picture-in-Picture feature if available.
17. Make sure your user name or “handle” on a videoconferencing app is professional.



Sources

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