



# THE INTERVIEW

Georgia Department of Labor

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Looking for a job is a full-time job. Many hours of work go into a successful job search campaign. The interview is a critical step toward the goal of employment. It is at the interview that the job is won or lost. The best test of any job search is the number of interviews you are offered. If you are consistently being interviewed, you should expect job offers. If you are not getting interviews, you need to reevaluate your job search strategy.

An employment interview is simply a meeting between you and a potential employer to discuss your qualifications and see if there is a "fit." The employer wants to verify what they know about you and talk about your qualifications. If you have been called for an interview, you can assume that the employer is interested in you. The employer has a need that you may be able to meet. It is your goal to identify that need and convince the employer that you are the one for the job.

Interviews can be stressful, but when you are well prepared there is no reason to panic. An interview generally lasts from 30 to 60 minutes and most questions fall into standard categories.

## Preparation

Preparation is the key to success in a calculated job search campaign. Preparation will help ace the interview and will improve interview success. Begin by gathering all the information and documents you may need for the interview. Bring extra copies of your résumé, a typed list of references and letter(s) of recommendation. You may also want to bring school transcripts, licenses and certifications. If you have them, work samples are also powerful tools (e.g., designs, drawings, writings, samples). Finally, bring a pen and pad of paper for taking notes.

The more you know about the job, the employer, and the industry, the better prepared you will be to target your qualifications. Up to this point you should have been gathering some of this information. Now is the time to intensify your research

and expand your knowledge. There are many sources of information. Ask the employer for a position description. Research employer profiles at any Chamber of Commerce, local library, or the Internet. Network with anyone you know who works for the company or for a related company.

The next step is to match your qualifications to the requirements of the job. A good approach is to write out your qualifications along with the job requirements. Think about some standard interview questions and how you might respond. Most questions are designed to find out more about you, your qualifications, or to test your reactions in a given situation. If you lack experience or skills in a required area, think about how you might make up for those deficiencies by capitalizing on other strengths.

You should get a good night's sleep and plan your transportation to arrive in plenty of time. Be prepared and answer all questions in a friendly and courteous manner.

## The Interview

The purpose of an interview is for the interviewer and the interviewee to become acquainted and to learn about one another. The employer wants to learn how you "fit into the organization," but it is also an opportunity for you to evaluate the company. Employers use a variety of interview formats. There are series interviews, panel interviews, phone interviews, or the traditional one-on-one interviews. Sometimes staff from the personnel or human resources departments will conduct an initial screening and the hiring authority will conduct the main interview. Whatever the format or process, the interview is a basic effort to learn about your qualifications. During an interview it is important that you relax and be yourself.

## Interview Questions

The interview is a sales meeting and you are both the salesperson and the product. The basic question in every

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interview, whether it is asked or not, is: "Why should I hire you?" All other questions center on this one issue. Basic interview questions can take a variety of forms. Generally, questions will ask about you, your qualifications, experience, skills and motivation. If you have prepared for the interview and are confident about your qualifications, none of these questions should be difficult.

Listen carefully to each question asked in the interview. Take your time in responding and make sure your answers are positive. Express a good attitude and show that you are willing to work, eager to learn, and are flexible. If you are unsure of a question, do not be afraid to ask for clarification. Sometimes a good strategy is to close a response with a question for the interviewer and showcase your skills.

Focus on your qualifications but also look for opportunities to personalize the interview. There is nothing wrong with injecting some personal insight about your life. However, do not get too personal or dwell too long on non-job related topics.

Show your potential to the company. Support your answers with examples from your experience. Avoid "yes" or "no" responses to questions.

Use caution if you are questioned about your salary requirements. The best strategy is to avoid the question until you have been offered a job. Questions about salary asked before there is a job offer are usually screening questions that may eliminate you from consideration.

Keep in mind that the interview is not over when you are asked if you have any questions. Come prepared to ask a couple of specific questions that again show your knowledge and interest in the job. This is not the time to ask about pay or benefits.

## Closing the Interview

Close the interview in the same friendly, positive manner in which you started. If you want the job - ask for it! Summarize your qualifications again before leaving. When the interview is over, leave promptly. Remember you may be monitored as you leave up until when you exit the employer's property.

## After the Interview

Think about the interview and learn from the experience. Evaluate the success and failures by asking yourself these questions:

- What points did I make that seemed to interest the employer?
- Did I present my qualifications well? Did I overlook qualifications that were important for the job?
- Did I learn all I needed to know about the job?
- Did I talk too much? Too little?
- Was I too assertive? Not assertive enough?
- Was I dressed appropriately?
- Did I effectively close the interview?

The more you learn from the interview, the easier the next one will become. You will become more confident. Make a list of specific ways you can improve your next interview.

Finally, write a "thank-you" note or letter to each person who took part in the interview and mail it promptly. Thank the employer for their time, restate your interest and qualifications for the job, and remind them of your intent to follow-up. Mail the letter the day of the interview if possible. Be sure to follow up as indicated in your thank you note.

## Additional Tips

- Maintain good eye contact throughout the interview.
- Do not be a clock watcher.
- Do not discuss illegal or discriminatory subjects such as race, religion, age, national origin, equal rights or gender.
- Dress a step above what you would wear on the job for which you are applying.
- Be aware of nonverbal body language; do not:
  - put your hands in your pockets
  - chew gum; tap a pen or pencil
  - clench or wring your hands
  - fiddle with jewelry
  - jingle keys or coins in your pocket
  - wear dangling, distracting or noisy jewelry

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