

# New Job Seekers Resource Guide

## Tips to Prepare for the Interview, Differentiate Yourself and Handle Difficult Questions

Your first job search and interviews can be daunting. Take time to prepare in advance. Use the following checklist as a guideline.

### SIX TIPS TO PREPARE FOR THE INTERVIEW

**1 Practice your delivery**

It is extremely helpful to practice before an interview. Do a “dry run,” both verbally and visually, before the actual interview. This enables you to test your answers and modify them if you are not satisfied, confident, nor polished.

**2 Practice the reversal technique**

The goal of an interview is not that it becomes a one-way monologue by the interviewer or an interrogation in which you simply answer questions nonstop; rather the goal is to have a relaxed, two-way conversation in which you both have the opportunity to speak. The reversal accomplishes this. By ending your answer to a question with a question of your own, you indicate that you have been listening and want to know more about the organization. You’ll get some of the information you need, avoid embarrassing silences, and give yourself extra breathing time before the next question.

**3 Make a practice trip**

This can help you gauge the time necessary to arrive at the interview and familiarize yourself with the facility—and any security procedures you may encounter. You might also be able to pick up an annual report, marketing materials, or even a copy of the application form so that you can complete it at home prior to the interview.

**4 Have questions prepared for the interviewer**

The reversal technique is best used when you have thought about the questions to which you would really like answers. Think through the items you’d like to have a more clear understanding of, such as: the direction of the organization, its culture and the management style of the person to whom you would report.

**5 Do your homework**

You want to know as much as possible about the company, the job and the manager before you enter the interview. To do that, thorough research is necessary; however, you’ll want to be careful and tactful in revealing what you know about the company and how you got the information. You want to reveal enough information so that the interviewer realizes you’ve made a good effort to learn about the company, but you don’t want to come across as arrogant or a “know it all.”

**6 Dress for the occasion**

Be sure that you are appropriately dressed for your interview, based on the organization’s culture, as well as the position for which you are interviewing. Try to choose your outfit at least the day before the interview, so that you are sure it is ready to wear and to avoid more stress on the day of the interview.



## SEVEN INTERVIEW QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD EXPECT

To build confidence and market yourself effectively in the interview, review the following seven questions and recommendations for responding:

### 1 Tell me about yourself.

This classic question can be particularly tough to answer if you have not prepared for it. Most interviewers want to know if you are able to give a brief, sequential summary of your life and career that relates to the job for which you are interviewing. You should prepare a brief presentation (about 250 words) that includes a short introduction (perhaps where you were born and raised, your education and your personality strengths), your relevant work experience. Keep in mind that your accomplishments reflect your strengths; your answer to this initial question is your opportunity to point the interview in the direction that you want it to go, by focusing on your strengths.



Remember to maintain a conversational tone, so that you don't sound as if you've memorized your presentation and are just repeating it word for word. When you have finished, ask the interviewer if he/she would like you to elaborate on any points.

### 2 What do you know about our organization?

If you have done your research thoroughly, using both networking and published sources, you should be able to discuss the company's products, services, reputation, culture, mission and goals, history, etc. However, you shouldn't act as if you know everything about the organization: you can't and don't. While your answer should show that you have taken the time to do some research, you don't want to overwhelm the interviewer with your encyclopedic knowledge of the organization.

### 3 Why do you want to work for us?

Here the interviewer is probing for your motivation for joining the company. Indicate that from your study of the company, the business issues they face are the kind that excite you and match up well with your skills, abilities and past experience. Your answer should also reflect your desire to contribute to the company and grow as a professional.

### 4 Why should we hire you?

Your answer here should be based on your knowledge of the job, the company and the "hot buttons" or concerns that you know exist. You also should know exactly what you have to offer that meets the organization's most immediate needs.

Talk about your record of getting things done in areas which relate directly to the most pressing needs in the department and organization—cite specific examples of accomplishments from your resume. If you have a special skill that truly sets you apart from others, now is the time to mention it.

*Seven Interview Questions You Should Expect (continued)*

**5 What would be your ideal job?**

The interviewer is looking to see if you have thought about what you enjoy and what you are best at. He/she also wants to know that there is a reasonably good fit between your skills and interests and the job. Your answer should therefore be made with this job in mind. A good approach is to give a general breakdown of the types of activities in which you'd like to engage, the type of culture in which you work best (giving examples from past experience), and then to relate that to your research of the organization and the department.

**6 Describe a time when you had to make a difficult decision. What were the results of the decision?**

To answer this question, choose a decision that was indeed difficult and challenging; also, be sure it is one that turned out reasonably well.

Describe your thought processes, the people you consulted, and how you integrated their advice. Explain how you worked to magnify the positive results of the decision and reduce any negative consequences or reactions.

**7 Where do you see yourself in three to five years?**

This is one of the most frequently asked questions. Be sure to relate your answer to the company interviewing you rather than giving a very broad, general answer. Keep your ambitions realistic.



It's best to start by saying that your immediate goal is to perform excellently in the position at hand, and that you would hope to be able to grow as you proved yourself and as opportunities opened up in the organization. You might then ask the interviewer, "What kind of career path would be realistic for someone who performs well in this position?"

**Preparation in the job search process is key to success. Do your homework, know your strengths, practice and you will succeed.**