

How do I get hired?

# Chapter 12

## Interviewing Skills

### Chapter Objectives

After studying this chapter, you will be able to

- **prepare** for an interview.
- **describe** what to do and what not to do during an interview.
- **write** a follow-up letter.
- **evaluate** a job offer.

### Key Concepts

- Since the interview is the most important step in getting a job, preparation is important.
- Knowing what to do and what not to do can help you during an interview.
- After an interview, take time to review what happened and write a follow-up letter.

### Key Terms

*interview*  
*interviewer*  
*interviewee*  
*telephone interview*  
*personal interview*  
*job description*  
*follow-up letter*

## The Most Important Step

### interview

A talk between an employer and a job applicant.

### interviewer

An employer who talks with a job applicant.

### interviewee

A job applicant who receives an interview.



## Your Reading

Why are first impressions important?

### 12-1

An interview gives a job applicant and an employer a chance to find out how well they might work together.

The interview is the most important step in a job search. It can be a good experience if you are prepared and know just what to expect.

An **interview** is a talk between an employer and a job applicant. It may also be described as a talk between an interviewer and an interviewee. An **interviewer** is an employer. In large companies, an interviewer may be a company representative who has the task of talking with job applicants. An **interviewee** is a person who is looking for a job. This person is also called a *job applicant*.

In large companies, the personnel department or the human resources department often conducts interviews. The function of these departments (or departments with similar names) is to find the right people to fill available positions.

An interview is usually your first chance to meet with an employer. Remember that first impressions are lasting impressions. Your interview is your chance to make a good first impression. See 12-1.

## Preparing for Interviews

Do a little homework to learn about the company. You should know what the company does. Does it make a product



or provide a service? Does the company participate in civic and community projects? Have you ever used the company's product or service? Were you satisfied? Be prepared to say something positive about the company. For example, if you have used its product and are pleased with it, say so. Above all else, be truthful in whatever you say. Never tell a lie to get a job.

Be prepared to tell the interviewer about the skills you have that fit the job. If you are applying for a clerical job, for instance, be prepared to talk about your clerical skills. Think about the questions that the interviewer might ask and be ready to answer them. You may be asked, "Do you have keyboarding skills?" Your answer may be, "Yes, I prepare all my school reports and papers on the computer. I also prepare a monthly newsletter for a student organization."

Think of ways to let the interviewer know you are dependable. Be prepared to talk about anything you have done in the past that would help you do the company's job well. Assemble a portfolio of examples that show the quality of your work. Also, prepare a list of questions that you can ask the potential employer to make sure that this is a good job fit for you.

## Telephone Interviews

A want ad may list only a telephone number. To answer the ad, a job applicant must have a **telephone interview**. This is a telephone conversation between a company representative and a job applicant. It often includes a variety of interview questions. Usually, if a telephone interview goes well, the job applicant is invited for a personal interview.

Before you call for a telephone interview, take paper and pen and go to a quiet room to make the call. Introduce yourself and state your purpose. For instance, say, "My name is John Wright, and I'm calling about your ad in Sunday's paper for a stock clerk. I'm a senior at Franklin High School. I can work in the afternoons and on weekends. I am very interested in working as a stock clerk and coming in for an interview."

When you make the call, be ready to accept a specific day and time for a personal interview. Try to fit your schedule around the interviewer's time schedule. If you can't meet when the interviewer suggests, explain why and offer another



### Your Reading

In what ways can you prepare for an interview?

**telephone interview**  
A telephone conversation between a company representative and a job applicant.



## Your Reading

How can you prepare for a telephone interview?

### personal interview

A face-to-face meeting between an employer and a job applicant.

time and date. Whenever possible, change your schedule to be available for the interview.

## Personal Interviews

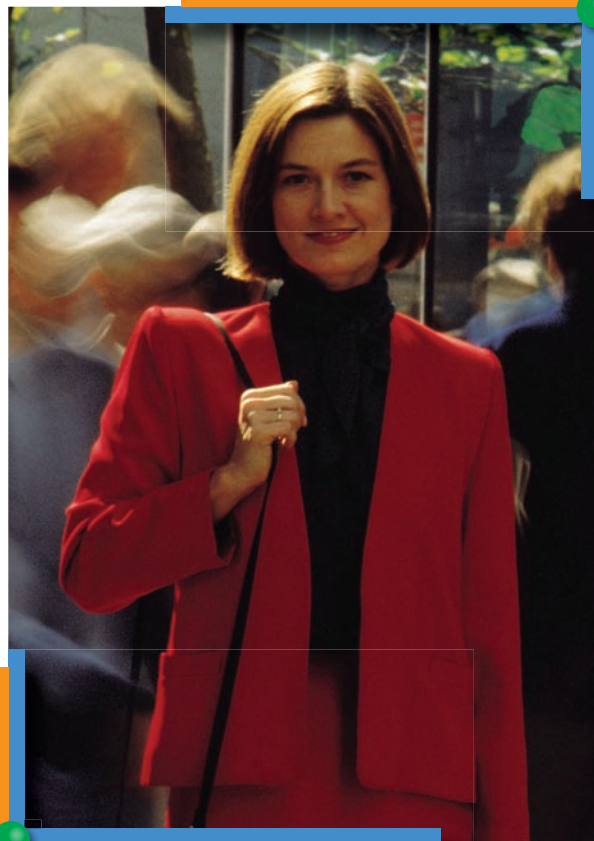
A *personal interview* is a face-to-face meeting between an employer and a job applicant. It usually determines whether or not the applicant will be hired.

Plan what you will wear to the personal interview. Clothes should be clean and pressed. You must look clean, neat, and dressed for the type of job you seek. You should wear businesslike attire for an office or sales position, 12-2. You may wear casual clothes when applying for a construction job. Observe how the employees holding the job you seek are dressed and arrive looking as good or better.

Your shoes should be spotless and polished. Your hair should be styled in a businesslike fashion and neatly combed. Male job applicants should be clean-shaven or have a neatly

### 12-2

A business suit or something similar is appropriate attire when interviewing for an office position.



trimmed beard. Female applicants should have a proper style and size handbag, if they carry one at all. Also, they should not wear heavy makeup or lots of jewelry.

## Be Well Groomed

Proper grooming tells people you care about yourself. A major part of the interview is convincing the interviewer that you're the best person for the job. Take a bath or shower, and brush your teeth before going to an interview. Use a deodorant. Your hair, hands, and fingernails must be clean. Be aware that many employers do not appreciate tattoos or body piercings. Don't let poor grooming spoil your chances for getting a job.

## Be on Time

Get a good night's sleep. You want to be at your best for the interview. If you are tired, it will show. Go to bed early if you have an early morning interview.

Too many times a job is lost because an applicant is late for the interview. Arriving late gives the interviewer the impression that you believe tardiness is okay. If you must depend on public transportation, make sure you know the schedule and the time needed for the full trip. If you are not sure how to get to the interview, practice the drive or commute. Plan to be at least 15 minutes early.

You should know the exact time and place of your interview. If you aren't sure of the time or place, telephone the company. Identify yourself and say, "I am checking about my interview. Where should I arrive and at what time?" See 12-3.

## Plan to Go Alone

The interview is an important step in getting a job. It is something you must do by yourself. Do not bring a friend to the interview. An interviewer expects you to speak for yourself. If your friend wants a job in the same place, it would be better to let your friend set up a separate appointment. An applicant who rushes through the interview for a waiting friend is not likely to get the job.



## Community Connections

Invite workers who conduct interviews as one of their job responsibilities with area employers. Have the guests discuss how they expect the interviewee to dress. What questions do they often ask during an interview? What are helpful hints in preparing for an interview? Prepare questions in advance.

**12-3**

Always arrive at the interviewer's office at least five minutes before your appointment.



## Your Reading

Why should you be well-groomed and on time for an interview?



## Interviewing Tips

The interview is a chance for the company to meet you. It is also a chance for you to learn more about the company. The interviewer is looking for a person who can do the job and work well with other people.

It is natural to be nervous during an interview. However, remember that the interviewer is interested in you. Try to relax and answer all questions honestly. You know your good points, and an experienced interviewer will learn them through your answers. Be yourself!

## What to Do

Knowing what to do will make the interview easier. By knowing how to behave, you will also appear confident. For each interview, prepare to do the following:

- Introduce yourself when you meet the interviewer and smile. Use the interviewer's name. For example, say, "Good morning, Mr. Brown. I'm Josephine Smith."
- Shake hands firmly if the interviewer extends a hand.
- Remain standing until you are offered a seat. Be relaxed, but sit straight in your chair. If you slouch in your chair, you probably won't get the job.

- Look at the interviewer. Don't stare at the wall, ceiling, or your lap. Making eye contact with the interviewer says you are interested in the job and the company.
- Keep a pleasant smile. Speak clearly and loud enough to be heard. Let the interviewer lead the discussion.
- Talk freely. Give more than just yes and no answers. The interviewer needs information to make a hiring decision.
- "Sell" yourself. Tell the interviewer why you are interested in the company and the job. Talk about your skills and why you're the best person for the job.
- Be prepared to discuss how you can be a quality team member.
- Be polite and have a positive attitude.
- Thank the interviewer for the opportunity to be interviewed.

## What Not to Do

Serious job applicants display their best behavior during an interview. Consequently, they avoid the following behaviors:

- being late
- chewing gum or smoking
- laying things on the interviewer's desk
- acting like a know-it-all
- saying, "I'll take anything," instead of describing the kind of work you want to do
- trying to run the interview by talking too much
- discussing personal problems
- trying to read the material on the interviewer's desk
- answering questions with lies
- tapping pen, playing with a ring on your finger, etc.
- arguing or displaying a negative attitude. See 12-4.

**12-4**

Showing positive characteristics can help you get a job. Showing negative characteristics will encourage the interviewer to end the interview early.

Interview Pluses	Interview Minuses
<p>Some people are hired because they</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● show interest in the company and the job</li> <li>● know about the company's products or services</li> <li>● have clearly defined career goals</li> <li>● are qualified for the job</li> <li>● express themselves clearly</li> <li>● have a record of past accomplishments</li> <li>● are mature</li> <li>● get along well with others</li> <li>● have a positive attitude toward life and work</li> <li>● are well groomed</li> <li>● have good manners</li> </ul>	<p>Some people are not hired because they</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● show no interest in the company or the job</li> <li>● know nothing about the company</li> <li>● have no career goals</li> <li>● do not have the knowledge and skills needed for the job</li> <li>● communicate poorly</li> <li>● appear lazy</li> <li>● are immature</li> <li>● do not get along with others</li> <li>● have a bad attitude</li> <li>● are poorly groomed</li> <li>● have poor manners</li> </ul>

## Questions to Answer

An interviewer gets to know you by asking questions. You will be rated on your answers throughout the interview. Simple *yes* and *no* answers are not enough. Answer the questions completely. How you answer the questions will help to determine whether or not you get the job. Be ready to answer questions such as the following:

- What are your goals for the future?
- What were your favorite and least favorite subjects in school?
- In what school activities have you participated?
- What teaming skills do you have?
- How well can you follow instructions?
- How dependable are you?



- What is your major weakness?
- What salary do you expect?
- Why do you think you might like this particular job?
- What kind of work do you eventually hope to do?

Before you are asked any questions, the interviewer may say, “Tell me about yourself.” This is your opportunity to summarize your best points and emphasize their benefits to the job. Be ready with a brief reply, just in case.

## Questions to Ask

The interviewer is not the only one who can ask questions. You can and should ask questions. Your questions should show the interviewer that you are interested in the job.

At some point during the interview, you should learn more about the job than the brief description provided in the want ad. You will have an opportunity to read (or hear the interviewer read) the job description. A **job description** details the tasks you are to perform. Make sure you completely understand what the job involves.

Don't ask questions unrelated to the job. Do not ask questions just to have something to say. Above all, do not ask questions that the interviewer has already answered in earlier remarks. Some common questions asked by job applicants follow:

- What are the work hours?
- Is much overtime work involved?
- Is there room for promotion?
- What are the job duties?
- Is travel expected?
- What fringe benefits are available?
- Is there flexibility to meet family needs?
- What skills does an employee need to succeed in this job?
- What training does the company provide for employees?

### **job description**

An explanation of tasks to be performed by an employee in a specified position.



## Your Reading

How can you appear confident during a job interview?

Your questions tell the interviewer that you are interested in the job. Your questions and the interviewer's answers also help you decide if you would like to have the job. See 12-5.

## After the Interview

Soon after the interview, find a quiet place and go over the interview in your mind. Write down any questions that gave you trouble. This will help you develop answers if you are asked back for a second interview. It will also help you in future interviews with other companies.

## Evaluate the Job and the Company

You should be ready to accept or reject a job if it is offered to you. In order to make your decision, honestly evaluate the job and the company. The time to do this is right after the interview while the experience is still fresh in your mind.

### 12-5

By asking relevant questions, you show the interviewer that you are interested in the job.



How can you tell if a job is right for you? Make a list of what is important to you. Consider your needs, career goals, and the type of work you want to do. Compare your list with the opportunities and working conditions offered by the employer. Do you like the results?

Your list of positive and negative feelings will help you make a final decision about the job. The following sample questions provide a starting point in making your own list:

- Does the job seem right for you?
- Are the working conditions comfortable?
- Did the other employees seem to like their work?
- Does the company offer training and opportunities for promotions?
- Is the salary right?
- Are fringe benefits available?
- Would this job help you in your long-range career goals?
- Do you have enough information to make a decision?

## Write a Follow-Up Letter

Shortly after the interview, write a follow-up letter to the interviewer. A **follow-up letter** is a brief letter written in business form to thank the interviewer for the interview, 12-6. Your letter should include the following points:

- a short thank-you for the interview
- a statement about your interest in the job
- additional points that are important but were not discussed, such as job qualifications you possess and failed to mention
- a request to hear from the interviewer about the company's decision

If your evaluation has made you realize that you would be interested in the job, state this in your letter. Likewise, if your evaluation has shown that you would not be interested, you should politely indicate this. A follow-up telephone call can be made within a week if you have not heard from the interviewer.



## Making a Difference

Publish a brochure on what you have learned about searching for a job, filling out a job application, and interviewing. (Ask your teacher to verify its accuracy.) Then give your brochures to a school counselor, local shelter, welfare-to-work program, or some other group of local job seekers.

### follow-up letter

A brief letter written in business form to thank an interviewer for an interview.



## Your Reading

What steps should you take following an interview?

**12-6**

Sending a follow-up letter shows an interviewer that you are a serious job candidate.

32 Ashland Avenue  
Mountain View, CA 94043  
August 10, 20XX

Ms. Judith Samson  
Goodright Company  
117 Main Street  
Oceanport, CA 94702

Dear Ms. Samson:

Thank you for taking the time yesterday to talk with me about the maintenance job with the Goodright Company. The information you provided was very helpful.

During my interview, we discussed my experience as a carpenter's assistant with the Build-It Construction Company last summer. However, I didn't have an opportunity to mention the plumbing and electrical systems classes I've taken at the Mountain County Area Career/Technical School. I believe the skills I've learned in these classes have prepared me for many of the maintenance tasks I would perform if employed by your company.

I am excited about the possibility of joining your company, and, if offered the job, I will do my best to be a good employee. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

*Michael King*  
Michael King

## Receiving a Job Offer

You may be offered a job at the end of an interview. However, do not be upset if the interviewer does not offer you a job on the spot. The interviewer may want to check your references or interview others. You should be told when to expect an answer. If you have not been told, ask if you can call back in a few days.

When a job offer is extended to you, you may wish to ask for a day to think about it. The interviewer will usually say yes, but you might be asked to decide right away. The job may need to be filled quickly, and more interviews may be necessary.

If you still want the job, tell the interviewer you are pleased to accept. Be sure to ask *where*, *when*, and *to whom* you should report for work. Some companies offer specific orientations for new employees. Find out if you will need to bring anything with you to the work site. If you will need a uniform, ask where and when you should get it.

Find out everything you need to know to feel ready for your first day at work. If the interviewer doesn't know the answers to your questions, he or she will refer you to your supervisor. Your supervisor will be able to tell you anything else about the job you may need to know.

If you decide not to accept a job offer, thank the interviewer. Be polite. The interviewer will appreciate your honesty. Remember, the company wants employees who want to work there. They know that every job does not appeal to everyone, and they are looking for the right person for the job.

## Steps to Follow if You Do Not Get the Job

It is rare to get a job after only one interview. You may have many interviews before you get a job. This is true for most people throughout their careers.

You should learn from each interview, especially if you do not get the job. Think about what happened during the interview. Did you have a specific job in mind when you applied? Did you know about the company's business? Were you able to give good answers to all the interview questions? Would you have hired yourself for the job?

If the answer to any of these questions is no, then perhaps you already know why you did not get the job. Sometimes the reasons are not so simple. You could politely ask the interviewer to tell you why you did not get the job. This information might help you on your next interview.

Another question you might ask yourself is, "Do my skills need improvement?" If so, you may want to talk to your career counselor or teacher. Most importantly, do not get discouraged. Recognize the importance of being a good match for the existing work environment. The job needs to be a good match for you as well as for the company. There is a job out there for you. You just need more time to find it.



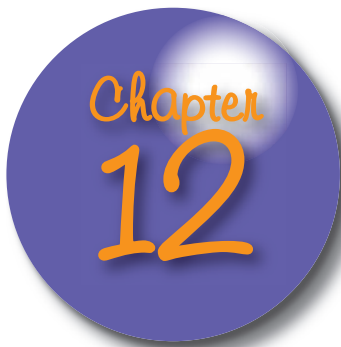
### Your Reading

What should you do if you receive a job offer?



### Your Reading

What should you do if you don't receive a job offer?

A circular graphic with a purple background and a white glow effect. The word "Chapter" is written in a light orange, cursive font above the large number "12" which is in a bold, orange, sans-serif font.

## Chapter 12

### Summary

The interview is the most important step in getting a job. Prepare for it carefully. Find out about the company's products or services. Be ready to discuss your skills and other job qualifications.

Pay attention to your clothes and grooming when you get ready for an interview. Plan to go alone and arrive on time. Be positive, pleasant, polite, and truthful. Be prepared not only to answer questions, but also to ask them.

After the interview, take time to review what happened. Be sure to write a follow-up letter. If you are offered a job, evaluate the offer carefully. Think about your needs and career goals before you make a decision. If you are not offered a job, do not be discouraged. Learn from the experience and try again.

### Reviewing Key Concepts

1. What usually happens if a telephone interview goes well?
2. True or false. A personal interview usually determines whether or not the job applicant will be hired.
3. Why is it important to be on time for an interview?
4. True or false. If both you and your friend are applying for jobs at the same place, you should go to your interviews together.
5. List five behaviors you should demonstrate during an interview.
6. List five behaviors you should *not* demonstrate during an interview.
7. List five questions to ask an interviewer during an interview.
8. If you accept a job offer, what should you be sure to ask?
9. What four points should be included in a follow-up letter?
10. List five questions you would ask yourself when evaluating a job offer.

### Building Academic Skills

1. **Speaking.** Practice public speaking and telephone skills. Invite an English teacher from your school to play the role of an employer. Pretend to place a phone call to this teacher to inquire about a part-time job advertised in the newspaper. When you finish the telephone inquiry, ask the English teacher to critique the phone call.
2. **Speaking.** Prepare for a successful job interview by practicing answers to interview questions, such as “tell me about yourself” and “what do you have to offer my company?” Present a one-to-two minute presentation on selected interview questions.

### Building Technology Skills

1. Search the Internet for a company at which you would consider working. One Web site to check is [hoovers.com](http://hoovers.com). Document the information you learned about the company. Based on your findings, what new questions might you ask at an interview?
2. Select three “interview pluses,” as indicated in 12-4. Illustrate them with a drawing or a piece of clipart from a software program. Use the artwork to create one-page flyers that tell why the “interview pluses” are important and how to accomplish them.
3. Conduct an online search for examples of follow-up letters from the cover-letter library of this Web site: [careerlab.com](http://careerlab.com). Also, check [careercity.com](http://careercity.com) and [monster.com](http://monster.com). Ask students to document some ideas proposed by these Web sites for writing follow-up letters.

### Building Career Knowledge and Skills

1. Write an article for your school newspaper about what you should and should *not* do during interviews.
2. Discuss how you would prepare for interviews for the following jobs: gas station manager, file clerk, and salesperson in a fashion shop. (Remember that dressing appropriately is part of the preparation process.)
3. Work with a partner to practice telephone interviews.
4. Prepare a list of questions that an interviewer might ask you in an interview.
5. Write a sample follow-up letter to an interviewer.

### Building Workplace Skills

Practice your job interview skills with two classmates. Plan to have each person of the team interviewed jointly by the other two in separate sessions. Together, schedule appointment times for the three interviews. Also, determine what type of position you seek as “interviewee” and let the interviewers know. (This will allow the two interviewers enough time to develop questions related to the position you seek.) Carefully record the job positions your teammates plan to seek so you can develop appropriate questions when you interview them. Interviewers should take notes during the interviews and, after each interview, discuss the strengths and weaknesses observed. As a team, share your reactions to the interview process with the class.