

# The Interview—Get Ready

What should you do in the 24 hours before you interview? Relax. The research and networking you did will help prepare you. Preparation is definitely the key to a successful interview. Here are a few last minute tips to help you get yourself together before the interview.

Most interviewers will make a decision about you in the first 30 seconds of the interview. However, the level of professionalism and the mannerisms you exude are very important throughout the interview process. The way you enter a room, the clothes and accessories you wear, the way you shake hands and your tone of your voice all create an impression. Preparing will help you identify any problem areas and help you change them before the interview.

## The Day Before

1. Get plenty of sleep. Refrain from staying up too late or partying. Alcohol and smoke aromas linger. You want to impress the interviewer.
2. If you are not sure where the interview is taking place, do a practice run the night before the interview. Check the gas tank or the bus schedule to minimize delays on the day of the interview.
3. Review your organization research and your resume. Make notes on the skills you acquired in each job or activity. Come up with a short list of why your skills and experience match the position. Prepare a small list of questions for the employer. If you have a portfolio of your work, mark relevant pages to refer to during the interview. Think about what makes you stand out from other job candidates.
4. Lay out your clothes. Bring extra stockings or an extra tie, 10 copies of your resume, paper and a pen. Use a professional portfolio or bag to carry your materials.

### Women

- Think professional and reserved.
- Dress in a dark or neutral color suit (matching jacket and skirt/pants), conservative shoes and neutral hosiery.
- Keep make-up as natural as possible. Avoid flashy or bright nail polish.
- Minimize jewelry: leave the nose ring and tongue jewelry at home. Wear one pair of small earrings.

### Men

- Wear a freshly pressed jacket and tie.
- Have your shoes polished.
- Make sure you have a clean shave.
- Your hair should be neat, clean and trimmed—including your sideburns.
- Keep your hands groomed—clean and trimmed nails.

## Interview Day

- Eat a high-protein, high-carbohydrate breakfast to boost your energy.
- Review your resume and notes.
- Practice answering potential questions. This will help you feel comfortable with the process.
- Read the newspaper or check the Internet to be prepared for the “ice breaking” small talk around the day's events.
- Schedule your time to arrive at the interview location ten to fifteen minutes prior to your scheduled interview. You might want to check the traffic conditions to help you plan your commute.
- Avoid perfume/cologne and smoking before the interview.
- Carry a small portfolio to hold your resume and a pen. Women, this will help avoid carrying a purse.
- Do not wear your outerwear into the interview. Overcoats should be taken off before you go into the interview.
- Do not wear sunglasses during the interview.

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## **Ten Minutes Before**

1. Arrive with time to stop by the restroom for any last-minute touch-ups. Check for animal hair, shoulder flakes, and static cling. If you get sweaty palms, this is a good time to wash and dry your hands.
2. Be courteous to all support staff including the security guard. You never know who is providing input for the selection process.
3. While you are waiting for the interview to begin, people watch and pick up clues to office culture. Observe how people dress and interact with one another. How diverse is the workforce? Will you feel comfortable working here?
4. Turn off your cell phone alarms prior to the interview.
5. Still nervous? Try taking slow, deep breaths to help you relax.

## **During the Interview**

1. A firm brief handshake with eye contact and a smile is important to start the meeting.
2. Wait to be seated and sit in the chair in a straight position.
3. Try not to convey nervousness. Playing with items on a desk, swinging legs, or cracking knuckles will distract from your presentation.
4. Maintain eye contact with the interviewer(s).
5. Do not interrupt the interviewer. Listen to the questions carefully and do not respond until the question is asked.
6. Speak with confidence and enthusiasm.
7. If you do not know an answer to a question, do not pretend that you do.
8. Take your time answering questions; be thoughtful in your answers.
9. Remember to ask them what the next step is and when you can expect to hear from them.
10. Be yourself!
11. At the end of the interview ask for business cards.

## **Things to Avoid**

1. Do not take notes during an interview as it prevents you from focusing on your interviewer.
2. Do not welcome yourself to the interviewer's desk space by placing your portfolio on the desk. It is best to keep it on your lap at all times.
3. Do not chew gum or breath mints during the interview.
4. Do not listen in on telephone conversations or read or inspect documents on an interviewer's desk.
5. If someone enters the office during the interview, you do not need to stand. It is only appropriate to stand if you are introduced to the person who has entered the room.
6. Do not call an interviewer "sir" or "madam." Use the interviewer's name in the interview, but do not overdo it.
7. Do not criticize others, including past employers or associates.
8. Do not give one- or two-word answers. It is best to develop answers that use your personal and professional history to prove how well you match the profile of the ideal candidate. To do this, find a way to make small stories, narratives, and examples for each of the possible questions that you might be asked.
9. Remember not to overpower the interview.
10. Do not use profanity, even if the interviewer does.
11. Do not ask "Will I get the job?"
12. Do not discuss salary until later in the process.
13. Sharing jokes or being overly humorous during an interview could cast doubt on the seriousness of your candidacy. You should be reserved, because after all, the interview process is formal.

## **After the Interview**

1. Take some time to write down some impressions of the interview. List the names of the people you met. Did you forget to mention something about your background that you would like to include in a thank-you note?
2. Within 24 hours of completing your interview, write a thank-you note or e-mail to the people you met.
3. Evaluate the interview. What questions were most difficult? Make notes for yourself about how you can improve your interviewing skills before the next interview.
4. If you have additional questions about the employer, stop by the Career Center for a Trojan Network contact within the organization. A call to a fellow Trojan may help you with your next step.
5. If you still have not heard from them by the date they gave you, go ahead and contact them.