

## Interview Tips 1: Top 5 Suggestions for Interview Preparation

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The most challenging part of the job search process is undoubtedly the interview. Here the arms-length nature of research, resumes and cover letters shifts to real-time interaction and assessment. Fortunately there are strategies job seekers can use to reduce interview stress – before, during and after– and improve the odds of landing the job. Effective preparation is one key strategy, which includes understanding the different types of interview:

- **One-on-one Interview:** The most common interview type, usually conducted by a direct supervisor or human resource manager. You will be asked a variety of questions with little thinking time, so be prepared for anything and to adjust your answers appropriately.
- **Telephone Interview:** Often used to screen a candidate pool down for in-person interviews. Always be prepared for phone interviews; you never know when a recruiter might call. If timing is not ideal, ask if you can call back; this allows you to prepare and have your resume and other materials in front of you. Choose a quiet place to call from where you will not be interrupted. Speak clearly and vary tone, tempo and pitch to keep the interviewer’s attention. Be concise and do not interrupt the interviewer. Restate questions you have not fully heard or understood. Smile – even on the phone it projects positivity and changes your voice tone.
- **Skype Interview:** Often used for remote candidates. Treat these like a one-on-one interview. Test hardware and software beforehand. Surroundings should be professional – blank or neutral background in a room where you will not be disturbed; well-organized desk with just resume, interview notes and notepad; and lighting from the front (not above or behind). Dress professionally – not just from waist up – and avoid stripes or patterns. Sit straight with face and shoulders framed on screen, relax, and look into the camera (not at the interviewer on screen; this gives the interviewer the impression that you are looking directly at them).
- **Panel Interview:** These are conducted by multiple interviewers. Direct answers to the questioner, but also give attention to other member(s), even if they don’t ask any questions – treat them equally.
- **Group Interview:** These involve several candidates simultaneously, and show the employer your leadership potential and communication style, what you may be like as an employee, and how you would fit into the team. You may be asked as a group to solve a problem. In this type of an interview, treat everyone with respect, give everyone a chance to speak, and do not monopolize the conversation.
- **Sequential/Serial Interview:** These consist of a series of meetings with different individuals in an organization. The candidate either moves from one location to another or stays in one room and the interviewers change. At the end of the process, the interviewers meet to evaluate each applicant and make a hiring decision.

Besides understanding the various interview types, other elements of interview preparation include:

- **Know yourself:** What are your skills? These include technical knowledge, soft skills and unique talents. What have you accomplished? Review the required skills and experience in the job post. Make a list of likely questions, and prepare written answers (see Tip Sheet #2 for question styles and response strategies). Think of examples from work experience, volunteering, extra-curricular, sports or club and community involvement that show how you have developed your skills and expertise.
- **Research the company:** Visit the company website, and review their mission and values, history, products and services, management and culture. Use LinkedIn to check company profiles, see your connections there, new hires, promotions, jobs posted and company statistics. Use other social media like Facebook, Google+ and Twitter. Also check Google and Google news. Tap into your connections for inside information.
- **Look up your interviewer:** Look up your interviewer’s profile on LinkedIn to learn about their background.
- **Your references:** Let them know that you are having an interview, and send them a copy of your application and the job posting so they are prepared to discuss your candidacy with the recruiter.

In the remaining 3 interview tip sheets we’ll examine question types and response strategies, performing in the interview, and following up effectively after a meeting.