

INTERVIEW QUICK TIPS

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It's OK to Be Nervous

Not only is it OK to be nervous about an interview, but it is essential for you to accept how you feel. Telling yourself you should feel differently than you do is unrealistic and just makes you feel bad about yourself. What's the worst that can happen at an interview? For many, it would be not getting an offer. Did you ever think that maybe the job wasn't right for you? Try to look at the process as a learning experience.

Keeping Time

Try to arrive early for the interview, but not too early. Get to the site 20 to 30 minutes early to allow for any surprise disasters. Don't enter the building until 10 to 15 minutes before your interview. Arriving too early could throw the interviewer's schedule off and start you off on the wrong foot. Use the time spent sitting in the lobby to get a good feeling for the environment.

Your References

For your reference list, you want three to five people and their contact information. Don't forget to get permission to use your references' names, and while you're at it, ask how they prefer to be contacted. You should also send them a copy of your resume so they'll be aware of what you're saying about yourself.

How to Handle Multiple Interviewers

It might feel like you're facing lions and tigers and bears. There you sit alone in front of the room, waiting for the pack to attack with questions. It's really not quite that bad. In fact, there is an upside to this process. You'd probably have to talk to each of these people individually at some point in the process. This way, you get it over all at once.

But how do you deal with so many interviewers in one sitting? The best way is to take them one at a time. The board or panel is not one entity, but several individuals coming together with the common goal of hiring the best candidate for the job. At the same time, each person has his own agenda or department's interest at heart. For example, the HR manager will be checking to make sure you are a good fit with the culture and people working at this company. The hiring manager will want to know about your technical skills or business know-how. And the person from accounting will want to know if you are savvy enough to operate a business budget.

Board or panel interviews are usually rather formal and organized, using a standard set of questions for all applicants. This type of interview is typically used in academia, government or for high-level executives but can be used for any other type of position in any company.

A female client interviewed for a senior-administrator job at a major health agency, facing a panel of 10 doctors, nurses, technicians and administrators. She felt like it was an inquisition, not an interview. But she had prepared well and was confident when she faced this tribunal. She looked at each person as he or she asked the question, and continued to look at that person for 30 seconds or so. She then shifted her eye contact to each member of the interviewing team. She made sure she made contact with each set of eyes while answering questions. She felt very much in control and her interview went well. The result was a job offer.

Another multiple-type interview is the team or "good cop/bad cop" interview. The team is usually made up of two interviewers, one who asks the questions and one who takes notes. The two typically trade roles, which can be confusing if they have different styles. In fact, one person may be kind and gentle and the other more harsh or pushy.

Just remember, these inquisitors are working together toward the same end. Treat them equally, not favoring one over the other.

Regardless of the type of interview, the best advice is to prepare and practice beforehand. When you have your script and have rehearsed your answers, you will feel prepared and more confident no matter how many people you have to face.

Lastly, a good tip to remember is to make sure you get each person's business card, hopefully at the beginning of the interview, so you can address each person by name.

Follow the Interviewer

During the interview, your interviewer is giving you information that can guide you on how to behave during the meeting. Observe your interviewer's style, and then pace and match it. Listen to what is being said, and let the interviewer know you've been listening by asking good questions and making insightful comments. Answer questions by providing the information asked for. Telling more than needed could be a mistake. Too much information, particularly personal information, should not be discussed during the interview

Face the Feedback

If you ask for feedback from an interviewer, be prepared to hear things that could be upsetting. You should listen carefully, and take notes to refer to -- and react to -- later. Be gracious about what you're told. Don't argue or defend yourself -- this is not a chance for a rebuttal. Be sure to thank the interviewer. Then, take the advice and think about changing some techniques to improve on your next interview.

Be Quiet and Focus

One common mistake candidates make when interviewing is talking too much. It's important to listen to the question asked and answer that question. Keep your answers to two to three minutes at the most. When you limit your time, you tend to stay more focused. It is very easy to stray off the subject and ramble about things irrelevant to the

job if your answer is too long. Watch the interviewer's eyes -- if they glaze over, you've lost them.

Look Them in the Eyes

Eye contact is one of the most important aspects of nonverbal communication and can make a significant difference in how you present yourself. If you look away when speaking to someone, you're viewed as lacking confidence or interest. If you have a problem looking into your interviewer's eyes, try looking at the "third eye" right above and between the eyes.

Prove What You Could Do

Always put a positive spin on your answers to difficult questions. If you lack a particular skill or don't know a certain computer program, be sure to emphasize how quickly you learn. Give an example of a time when you were able to get up to speed in a similar situation. Companies are interested in people who can hit the ground running.

Sell Yourself

Interviewing is about selling.

1. The product you are selling is you. Give them reasons to buy.
2. Tell them what you can do for them. Emphasize what you can bring to the company, department and position.
3. Convince them that your product is better than the competition's.

Know What You Offer

Prepare answers for open-ended questions, like, "Tell me about yourself," by making a list of your skills and traits that match the employer's requirements. The closer your skills and traits are to the job description, the better chance you have of landing the job. You should leave the interviewer with a clear picture of what you have to offer.

Don't Forget to Listen

Most candidates are so nervous about answering interview questions correctly that they forget to listen. Listening is one of the most underused interview skills. Follow these tips:

- Listen through eye contact -- stay with the person.
- Listen with nonverbal expressions -- nod and appear interested.
- Listen until the speaker is finished -- do not interrupt.

By focusing on what is being said, you can gather valuable information that will help you formulate better, more intelligent answers and questions of your own.

Talking Salary

Timing is everything in the interview. Let them bring up the subject of money. If you are asked what your [salary expectations](#) are too early in the process, just say you would

rather postpone that discussion until you have more information about the position. Ask, "Could you tell me the [range](#) budgeted for the position?"

Ask the Power Questions

by [Marty Nemko](#)

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Great questions to ask early in a job interview: "What are you most hoping to find in the person you hire?" and "What would be my first priorities on the job?" The earlier you can ask these questions, the sooner you can start tailoring your answers to the employer's priorities. At the end of the interview, ask, "Based on what we've talked about today, I feel good about the position. Do you have any concerns about my ability to do the job?" Often, that gives you a chance to counter any objections.

Group Interview

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There are two types of job interviews commonly called group interviews. For one type, you'll gather with other job candidates to meet with one or more interviewers. The second type is more accurately called a panel group interview or just a panel interview. It's where two or more interviewers team up to ask you questions. Descriptions of both types follow.

The simplest form of group interview is little more than a presentation about the company conducting it, perhaps with open discussions and question and answer sessions. It's also the company's chance to initially screen candidates, by observing how individuals behave and stand out among their peers. Interviewers will likely also observe

- [Attire, manners and body language](#)
- Communication skills
- Group interaction and participation

But it's a two-way street: It's also your chance to observe and screen, to decide if you want to work for the company.

Other matters aside, group interviewers may favor candidates who have meaningful questions, because it shows that the candidates are truly interested and maybe worth one-on-one interviews later. It's also one of the good ways to stand out among the group, as some candidates will arrive unprepared. To help you formulate [questions to ask](#), study the job description and [research the company](#) beforehand. Natch, it's also a good idea to [prepare otherwise](#), as you should for any interview. That'll help you to stand out too.

Some companies take a group interview to another level, by conducting exercises that simulate a work environment. For example, the interviewers might split the group into

teams, and give each a work-related, hypothetical situation or "case" to resolve. The interviewers will then ask the teams to present their results (e.g., in role-plays) in front of the whole group or later as individuals.

During group interview exercises, interviewers might closely observe and eavesdrop, ask and elicit questions, take notes, and maybe even interject a twist or two. Although the interviewers formed teams, you can bet that they're scrutinizing individuals. The skills measured during these exercises include

- Interpersonal
- Persuasion
- Communication
- Teamwork
- Leadership
- Organizational
- Stress management

Group interviewers might be looking to see who takes charge, how well he or she delegates tasks, and how the other members react to his or her leadership. They might also observe how well all individuals

- Improvise
- Handle stress
- Plan
- Involve other team members
- Give constructive criticism
- Take criticism, constructive or otherwise
- Assist in resolving the issue at hand

And so on. During group interview exercises, it's better to be among the leaders than the followers, or at minimum, an active participant vs. a casual observer.

As indicated, a group interview might consist of exercises designed to test one's improvisational skills, in addition to others. Studying behavioral- and case-interview flavored [tips](#) in advance might be helpful. But because group interview exercises typically consist of *hypothetical* situations, there are few canned questions and cases one can practice in advance, other than the [common questions](#) most interviewers ask. For the hypothetical, you must already have the answers on the tip of your tongue or the ability to manufacture solutions in your head. That's what it's all about.