



# INTERVIEW TOOLBOX

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The Essential Job Interview  
Preparation Guide for  
Sales Candidates

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# Part 1

## Face-to-Face Interview Preparation

Interviews can be tough - even for seasoned veterans. The interview is, however, your best opportunity to gain insight into the position and company, and to determine how your experience and talent can contribute to the company's growth and profitability.





# Do Your Homework

1

## On the Company

Find out as much as you can about the company's past, future, and current situation. Visit the company's website, social media profiles, and perform a Google search. Be prepared to ask strategic questions about the company and its direction - not basic questions that can be found on their website.

2

## On The Position

Have a thorough understanding of the position, its key duties and primary responsibilities, and what is expected. Be prepared to ask good questions: Who does the position report to and what is his/her leadership style? What needs to be done in the first 6 months? 1st year? Your Recruiter will be able to provide insight in these areas prior to the interview.

3

## On Yourself

Review your career history thoroughly - dates, positions, and duties. Know your strengths and weaknesses. Be prepared to site specific examples of accomplishments and how your specific experience can help the company solve some of its problems. Reflect on your successes so you can adequately impart your strengths when given the chance!





# Part 2

## Phone Interview Preparation

Phone interviews are frequently a first step in the interviewing process; companies often opt for an initial phone interview for the screening of potential candidates. These phone conversations are normally your first contact with a company, therefore your first impression. Make your impact!



## Hints for Phone Interviews

Work with your Recruiter to set up a specific time for the call, and find out who you will be speaking to; first and last name and title. This will allow you to research the interviewer prior to your discussion and come fully prepared for the phone interview

Treat the phone interview just as you would a personal, face to face interview. Just because it is over the phone does not mean that you should take it lightly or less seriously!

Make sure the phone you plan on using for the call is of high quality. If using a mobile phone, make sure you are in an area that receives good reception.

If you have a bad connection and/or have difficulty hearing the other person, offer to call them back.

If you have an answering machine/voice mail, please make sure your recording is both courteous and professional.

Be aware of any potential distractions, i.e. radio, television, background conversations, etc. Plan to sit in a quiet room/area where you can speak and think in a productive manner.

Be fully prepared with your notes in regard to the company, the position, and yourself (resume).

You will then be able to come across as an organized and articulate interviewee.



# Part 3

## Interviewing to “Secure Your Success”

Preparation will allow you to enter the interview relaxed and confident which will help you determine if you can fulfill the needs of the company and if they have an opportunity that can enhance your career.





1

Arrive 15 minutes early to the interview. If you arrive any earlier, do not enter the building until 15 minutes prior to be respectful of your interviewer's time.

2

Fill out all applications neatly and completely.

3

Do not answer questions with a simple "yes" or "no". Sell yourself by using examples and paint a clear picture of where, when, how, what, and why you did it.

4

Stress your achievements, records, and accomplishments.

5

When meeting the interviewer, mirror their demeanor.

6

Do not make derogatory remarks about previous or present employers. You will immediately remove yourself from consideration.

7

Answer all questions concisely; do not ramble on. Role play some responses before the interview. Practice makes perfect!

8

Avoid asking questions in regard to salary, commission, bonuses or vacation. Save them for later.

9

Tell your possible employer what you are going to do for them, NOT what they can do for you.

10

Always represent yourself honestly. Talk to your Recruiter about specific issues that may be addressed in the interview. Learn about the interview style of those you will be meeting with during the interview.



# Part 4

## Common Interview Questions

During the interview, you will be asked difficult questions. These questions are designed to see how you will react under pressure and in unfamiliar territory. There are no “pat” answers, but by being familiar with the types of questions you may be asked, you will give yourself the opportunity to answer these questions confidently.



## Sample Questions

- ① What are your short range objectives? Long range objectives?
- ② What is your philosophy of management?
- ③ What do you look for in a job?
- ④ Why are you leaving?
- ⑤ Why should we hire you?
- ⑥ How are you best managed?
- ⑦ What salary are you seeking and why?
- ⑧ What is your biggest strength? Weakness?
- ⑨ Do you work well under pressure, deadlines, etc.?
- ⑩ What can you do for us that someone else cannot do?
- ⑪ How has your early career or background influenced your progression and current management style?
- ⑫ How has your approach to your job changed over the years?
- ⑬ Why did you select my organization to interview with?
- ⑭ What are the most important rewards you expect in your career?
- ⑮ What are your five biggest accomplishments in your present or last job? Your career?
- ⑯ What business, credit or character references can you give us?
- ⑰ What qualifications do you have that make you think you will be successful in this business?



18 How long would it take you to make a contribution to our firm?

19 How long would you stay with us?

20 How do you rate yourself as a professional? As an executive?

21 What new goals or objectives have you established recently? Why?

22 How have you changed the nature of your job?

23 What qualities have you liked or disliked in your manager?

24 What was the most difficult ethical decision you have had to make? What was the result?

25 What features of your previous jobs have you disliked?

26 Would you describe a few situations in which your work was criticized?

27 How would you evaluate your present firm?

28 Do you feel that you might be better off with a different size firm than ours?

29 Are you a leader? A good manager? Analytical? Give an example.

30 Have you helped increase sales? Profits? Reduced costs?

31 Where do you relate best - up one level, down one level, or with your peers?

32 What do your subordinates think of you?

33 How do you evaluate your subordinates?

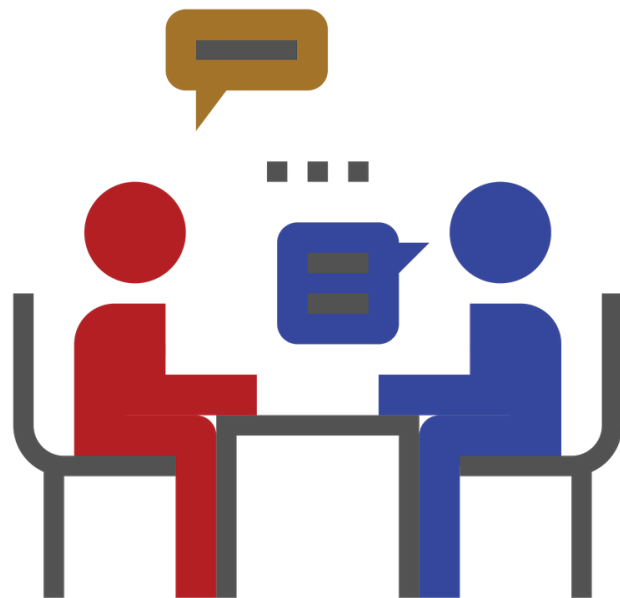




# Part 5

## Questions To Ask In an Interview

During an interview, you should always be prepared with questions to ask the interviewer. You don't want to be caught off guard, so review and memorize some of these questions to ask in your interview.



## Ask These Questions

- 1 Tell me about a typical day.
- 2 Tell me about your training program.
- 3 How do you see me fitting in with your company?
- 4 In the recent history of the company, what has been the biggest advance, and what has been the biggest setback?
- 5 When may I return and meet some of the people with whom I would be working?
- 6 Where do you see your company going in the next several years?
- 7 Tell me about the history/growth of the company.
- 8 Who are your major competitors and how do they stack up against you in terms of product, market share, and methods of marketing?
- 9 What are the three main qualities you are looking for in a candidate?
- 10 How do I compare with other qualified applicants?
- 11 If I were to ask your top person what he/she likes most/least about the company, what type of responses would I get?
- 12 What is your highest priority in the next six months, and how could someone like me help?
- 13 Do you have any hesitations or concerns about me being successful with your company?
- 14 What are the characteristics of your top people?
- 15 What are your personal satisfactions and disappointments since you have been with the firm?





# Part 6

## The Compensation Conversation

The question of compensation can be very sensitive and often requires extended negotiations to reach a figure that is fair and acceptable to both the company and the individual. Remember these points before having a conversation about compensation.



1

Most companies want to make a fair offer. They want to bring new employees on board at a salary level that provides incentive to change jobs that also is consistent with the company's existing salary structure for that position.

2

The days of 20% and 25% increases in compensation are gone. Inflation rates are down; all corporations are more conscious of maintaining consistency in existing salary structures; the economic growth in many industries has leveled off, and the competition for better positions has increased. Be realistic in your expectations.

3

The position/opportunity is the single most important element of your decision. No amount of money will make a poor position/company a good one. A quality position, working with quality people in a dynamic work environment offers rewards that money cannot buy.

4

Be flexible! Compensation packages are a combination of salary, commissions, bonuses, and perks. These elements can be arranged/re arranged, and sometimes, very creatively to satisfy both the individual and the company.

5

Keep your Recruiter involved. Part of their job is to handle sensitive negotiations and move both parties to a fair and acceptable compensation package. They do this for a living and can often offer alternatives that will satisfy both parties.



# Part 7

## Sending a Follow-Up Email

A well written and timely follow up email will enable you to make a positive impression and show your genuine interest in the position. It is an example of both your work habits and writing skills.





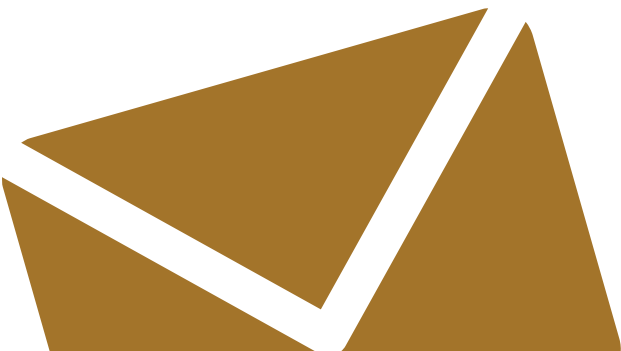
Send the email as soon as possible. Ideally, your email should go out the same day. A rapid follow-up conveys a sense of urgency and a high-interest level in the opportunity.

Be as brief as possible. It shows respect for other's time.

The body of the letter should address four main points:

- 1 Thank them for their time.
- 2 Express interest and enthusiasm towards the company and position.
- 3 Highlight experiences/accomplishments that amplify your qualifications, using the manager's own words from the interview.
- 4 Ask for the next interview.

Have your recruiter or friend carefully proofread your email. They can help make any corrections or suggestions. Once you have made any necessary changes and decided the letter is ready to be sent, email it to the hiring manager.



# Sample Follow-Up Email



Dear Mr. Smith:

I appreciate the time spent with you discussing XYZ Company and the \_\_\_\_\_ position. It was a pleasure meeting with you, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

I feel my qualifications and skill set in \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ reflect those necessary to be successful at XYZ Company. At ABC Corporation, I successfully installed a state of the art \_\_\_\_\_ system on time and under budget, as well as managed a staff up to fifteen professionals.

I am confident that I have the experience and drive to successfully manage the \_\_\_\_\_ Department. I feel an even greater excitement level about the opportunity because it will allow me to attain my goals of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

I look forward to our next meeting to discuss this opportunity in greater detail.

Sincerely,  
Michael Brown





# Part 8

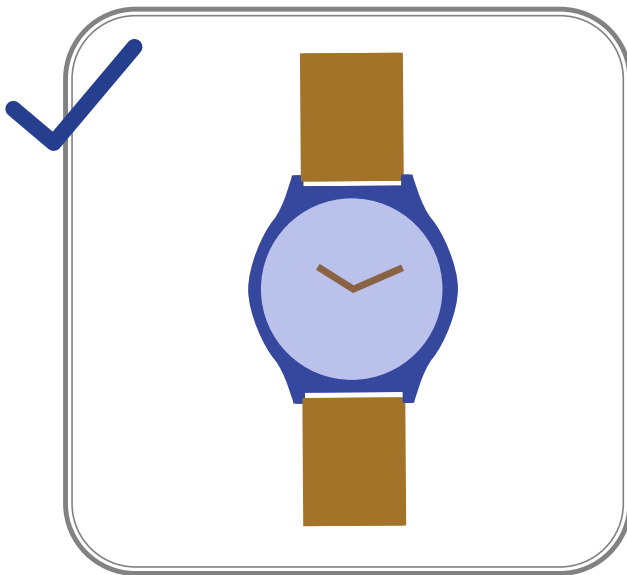
## Dress For Success

Not only is it important to ask the right questions and provide articulate answers, but you also have to present yourself well. Learn how to dress for an interview with the following tips.

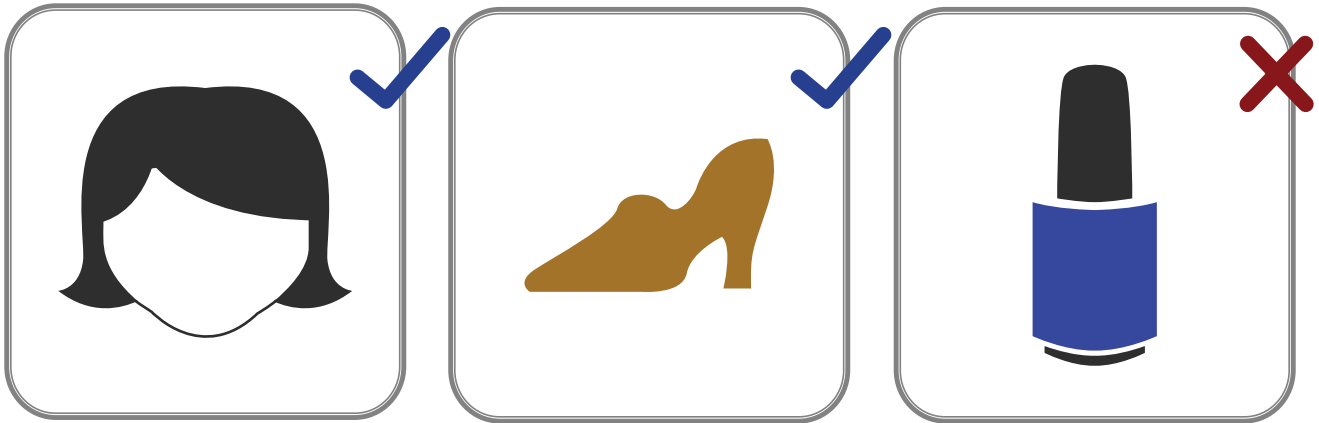


# Tips For Men

- A conservative suit in dark blue or dark gray, with a long sleeved white shirt.
- The tie should be conservative but in style.  
Dark socks (over the calf) with dark, freshly shined shoes.
- Jewelry should be limited to a wristwatch and a wedding ring (if applicable).
- Fingernails should be clean and trimmed. Facial hair should be clean shaven.



# Tips For Women



- A business suit in a subdued color is best for first interviews. Natural fibers work best. Dress in today's styles, but keep the hemline close to the knee length and keep blouses modest.
- A conservative dress or suit is fine for additional interviews.
- Hosiery should be worn at all times, regardless of weather conditions. Shoe heel height should be moderate and comfortable – shoes should be freshly polished. If heel tips are worn get them replaced – so you do not click as you walk.
- Jewelry should be minimal and in good taste.
- Nails should be well manicured and polished in clear or light, conservative colors. If long nails are a part of a personal fashion statement, avoid bright colors and glitter accents for interviewing.
- Hairstyle will vary with each individual. Long hair/pull back; Short hair/neat.
- Makeup should be tastefully and lightly applied.



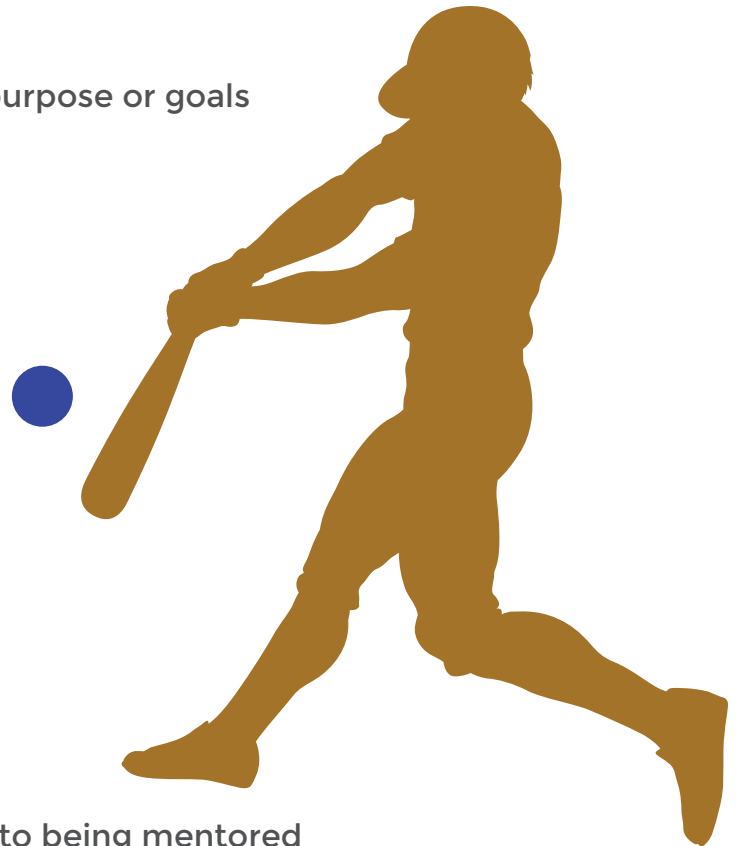
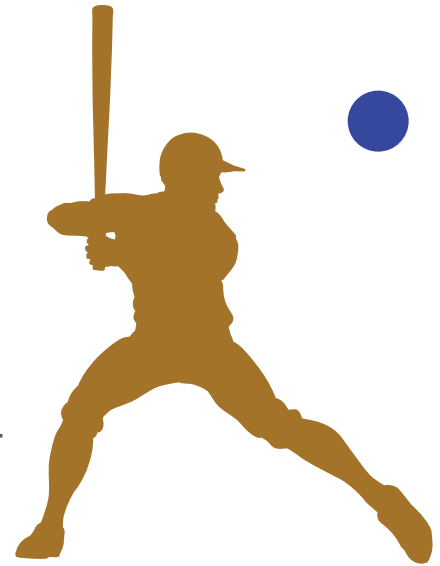
# Part 9

## Common Interview “Strikeouts”

A good resume will get you the interview, but it's up to you to make a good impression from there. A survey of companies, who were questioned as to why they did not hire a qualified candidate, resulted in a list of 25 common reasons candidates strikeout in interviews.

# 25 Ways to Strikeout

1. Poor personal appearance
2. Lack of interest and enthusiasm
3. Over-emphasis on money
4. Criticism of past employers
5. Failure to have good eye contact with the interviewer
6. Limp, “dead fish” handshake
7. Late for interview
8. Failure to express appreciation for the interviewer’s time
9. Does not ask enough detailed questions about the position
10. Lacks sufficient detail when responding to questions asked by interviewer
11. Overbearing, over-aggressive, conceited, “know-it-all” complex
12. Inability to express oneself clearly
13. Lack of planning for career and no purpose or goals
14. Lack of confidence, ill at ease
15. Lack of factual information
16. Lack of manners, courtesy
17. Lack of maturity
18. Lack of vitality
19. Indecisive
20. Merely shopping around
21. Cynical
22. Lacks a strong work ethic
23. Intolerant
24. Inability to take criticism/not open to being mentored
25. High-pressure type





# Common nonverbal mistakes made at a job interview

From a survey of 2000 bosses

In a survey of 2000 bosses **33%** claimed that they know within the first **90 seconds** of an interview whether **they will hire someone**



The average length of an interview is **approximately 40 minutes**

Statistics show that when meeting new people the impact is:

**21%** — Playing with **hair** or touching face

**47%** — Having little or **no knowledge** of the company is the most **common mistake** job seekers make during interviews

Failure to make **eye contact** **67%**

Lack of smile **38%**

Bad posture **33%**

**21%** — Crossing arms over their chest

Using too many **hand gestures** **9%**

Handshake that is too weak **26%**

**33%** — Fidgeting too much

**7%** From what we **actually say**

**38%** The quality of our **voice grammar** and overall **confidence**

**55%** The **way we dress, act** and **walk** through the door

## Clothes

**Bright colors** are a turnoff

**70%** Employers claiming they don't want applicants to be **fashionable or trendy**.

**65%** Of bosses said **clothes** could be the **deciding factor** between two similar candidates.

