



How to get an interview.

When you're job searching, it's not enough just to be noticed by hiring managers – you need to stand out from other candidates.

It all starts with your resume.

A resume introduces you to your prospective employer; it's arguably the most important document in your job search toolkit. Use it to tell the hiring manager who you are and why you're a good candidate for the position. Clearly describe your skills, experience, interest, and qualifications. Fill it with relevant facts and data from your past experience.

It's really important that you make your resume easy to read. Hiring managers are pressed for time. They're looking for specific experience and qualifications that fit the job description. So, keep it simple and direct. Stick with a business-like font such as Times New Roman, Helvetica, or Arial. Avoid flowery language and overstating your skills. Remind yourself that this is your opportunity to earn an interview; you can tell the hiring manager more when you're face-to-face.

As you prepare your resume, keep in mind that there's no room for typos or other errors. There's almost nothing that will lead a hiring manager to dismiss a resume faster than finding a grammar or spelling mistake. The only things worse are job experiences or achievements that are embellished or untrue.

So, before you submit your resume, proofread, and edit. Then proofread and edit. Oh, and run it through an online spelling and grammar checker. Once you've done all that, ask a trusted friend, parent, or mentor (or all three) to look it over; the more "eyes" you have on it, the less likely you'll miss a mistake.





Eight tips for a better resume.

- Use a template. Choose a resume layout template, available online, and in Microsoft Word, that creates visual interest and encourages the hiring manager to read through it.
- Keep contact information simple. List your name, addresses, and phone number near the top. Avoid nicknames or personal emails; if possible, make it an email address that reflects your full name. Don't include a phone number or email address that you don't use or check regularly.
- Include only what's relevant. Avoid flowery language and needless details. If you have a years-long work history that includes long-ago positions that aren't relevant feel free to drop them.
- Put important stuff first. List your experience, qualifications, skills, and accomplishments chronologically. Prioritize important information to draw attention to your key skills and achievements.

- Use active language. Talk about what you've "achieved," "completed," or "accomplished" to communicate what you've done in previous roles and to demonstrate that you're actively growing and developing.
- Reference keywords. Use keywords from the job description to make your resume stand out and boost the chances of getting an interview. As you apply for different jobs, revise the resume based on keywords in each job listing.
- Let your personality shine. While you need to keep things professional and becoming too casual, don't shy away from sharing your interests if they're relevant to the job or the company. For example, if you love music and you're applying for a position at a piano factory, make that clear.
- Be humble. Highlight your experience and accomplishments but avoid being overly boastful or acting as though you have no room to learn.

Write a custom letter for each job.

A cover letter is critical. A letter customized to each job is ideal. It will set you apart from other applicants. Make sure you tailor the letter to complement your resume and to fit the job for which you're applying.

While it's important to be to-the-point and businesslike—remember, the person reading the letter is busy and is seeking a specific skillset for the job—give the reader a reason to call you in for an interview. Be conversational. Allow your experience and career to shine through, along with your personality.

Getting Your Job Interview. And Getting It Right.



Be organized.

As you search, maintain a file of all job-related documents. Include your updated resume, cover letter, and a spreadsheet of the jobs for which you've applied. You'll want to note which potential employers have replied and which ones have scheduled an interview.

These steps help you stay on top of your job search, give insight into what stage of the hiring process you're in for each job, and help keep you from getting overwhelmed.

Be selective.

Rather than filling out mass applications, take time to read job descriptions. While you don't have to match every qualification listed, concentrate on applying for jobs you know are a good fit.

How to prepare for an interview

Interviews can be stressful and can make you anxious. But you can offset the impact with a little mental and physical preparation.

Visualize success.

Research shows that visualization reduces stress and can increase the likelihood of achieving goals. So, to prepare for the interview, picture yourself doing well. Visualize easily giving great responses to questions. Imagine asking a few pointed questions of your own. You can even envision getting a job offer and taking the job.



Take care of yourself.

Get plenty of sleep the night before the interview, and then eat a nutritious meal beforehand. It all helps make you focused, alert, and prepared.

Take care of the logistics.

Before the day of the interview, know where you need to go. Make a plan for how you'll get there.

If the interview is virtual, the last thing you want to happen is for your video connection to drop or the audio to fail. Check the Wi-Fi. Then test the application you'll be using. Most video conferencing apps, including Zoom, allow you to check your video and audio before jumping on a call. You can test this in advance by creating a meeting of your own. If you're at home, you can also avoid problems by asking household members to hop off your network while you're in the interview. You can even boost your connectivity by pulling in an ethernet cord so you're hardwired to your home's internet.



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Dress for success, even if it's a virtual interview.

Whether you're interviewing in-person or remotely, spend the time and energy to dress well for it. It's not that you have to put on a suit or your best dress—think “business-like.” Reduce stress by planning what you'll wear in advance, so you can make sure it's clean and unwrinkled.

Oh, and for virtual calls, do dress your lower half to match your upper half. You never know what the camera will pick up.

What not to wear.

- Heavy perfume or cologne
- Flashy accessories
- Super-casual clothes
- Clothes that are uncomfortable

Remove distractions.

This is critical for virtual interviews.

Avoid using areas of the house that have a lot of traffic. Choose a room where you can close the door and remove anything that could be distracting. (We're talking to you, cat.) Bedrooms are good choices (just be aware of the background.)

Before the interview begins, remember to turn off your phone or leave it in another room. Close the sites, files, conversations, and tabs that are open on the computer you're using. Create an environment that's all about the interview.

Do your research.

It's important to know the company that's interviewing you. So, spend time on the business's website, particularly the “About Us” section. Talk to people who may know the company and what it's all about. Check out social media—the firm's LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Google+, and other pages. Review Glassdoor for reviews, salaries, and interviewing information.

Start to get a picture of how and where you'd fit in.

Don't be afraid to contact your prospective employer for details on the position for which you're interviewing. The more information you have, the more comfortable you'll be.¹

Have some details ready.

When appropriate, it helps to put some data and numbers to your experience. Whether it's the number of parts you built during a shift or the sales you closed in a year, have that information ready. When you back up your resume with hard data, you give the hiring manager a better picture of who you are and how you can help.



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Practice what you'll preach.

It helps to mentally walk through the interview before it happens. Write down possible questions and think through your responses. You don't have to memorize what you'll say, but knowing how you'll answer can greatly reduce stress and make the interview flow smoothly. You may even want to conduct practice interviews with friends and family and ask for feedback. By recording or videotaping responses, you can review your answers and make changes well in advance of your appointment.

The interviewer will check to see if you have any questions. So be prepared with a few.²

Remember. The more you practice, the more self-assured you will feel. Your answers will seem natural, and the interviewer will be impressed.

Be prepared to respond.

- "Tell me about yourself." This is your chance to share how your skills and experience match the job. Start with the present: share your current role, the scope of it, and perhaps offer a recent accomplishment. Then move to the past: previous experiences or skills that are relevant. Finish by talking about the future: what you'd like to do next and why you're interested in the job.

- "What are your biggest strengths and weaknesses?" This question can also be stressful. But don't let fear get the best of you. Start your answer with clear, precise examples of your strengths, using examples to demonstrate them. And weaknesses? Remember, we all have them. So, don't fall back on trite answers about "being a perfectionist." Choose something you're actually working to transform into a strength. No fluff. Go right at it.
- "How do you handle conflict?" Conflict happens. We all know that. If you have an example of a time you were in conflict, share how you handled it. If it didn't go well, tell the hiring manager what you learned through the experience. If it did go well, explain why it did.
- "Why are you leaving your current job?" Fair question. The hiring manager wants to know how long you'll stay with the company and what kind of employee you might be. Rule number one: Don't talk badly about previous bosses or complain about your current job. Instead, take a positive route. Share how the position you're interviewing for would help you reach your next career goal or provide more opportunities for professional growth.
- "Why should we hire you?" Here's where you talk about the company, not just about yourself. Explain how your skills will help the business, how you fit the culture, and how you will solve the issues that this position is designed to solve. Focus on the fact that you'll be an enthusiastic employee.

² Ibid



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How to handle an interview.

When it's finally time to sit down for your chat with a potential employer, things can get moving pretty quickly. Take a deep breath. Remind yourself that there's a reason the hiring manager scheduled the interview. You've prepared and dressed for the occasion. You've got this.

Be on time. (That means early.)

It's a good idea to arrive for your appointment 10-to-15 minutes early. To make sure you do, drive to the business ahead of time or check out all the options and routes for getting there. This isn't just about punctuality. It's about you. You want to arrive in a calm, stress-free state of mind.³

Stay Calm. Yeah, easy for us to say.

Butterflies are fine. And normal. But to ensure they don't get the best of you, take a minute to visit the restroom before your interview. Wash and dry your hands so they aren't (too) sweaty. Take deep breaths. Remind yourself that this is only one interview and you've prepared for it.

During the interview, don't be afraid of uncertainty. Take your time. Back up when necessary. Ask for clarification when you're unsure how to respond. Remind yourself that there's a reason--your background and experience--that this person asked you to come in for an interview.⁴

Think about PIE.

Hiring managers say their highest-rated candidates use the P-I-E (Positive, Interested, Engaged) method during the interview.

By focusing on P-I-E, you stay focused, attentive, and confident. You can have a thoughtful conversation with the interviewer rather than constantly worrying about how you answered the previous question or what's coming next.



Actively engage with the interviewer.

In any job interview, it's important to be attentive and focused. Video interviews make it critical. Sit in your chair with your back straight, feet on the floor, and arms resting on your lap or on the desk. When you're listening, nod, and smile when appropriate. Use active listening skills and body language that shows you're receptive and engaged in the conversation.

Don't fidget or let your gaze drift away from the screen. This will look not only like you're uninterested in what the interviewer is saying, but it's also unprofessional.



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You be you.

Be authentic. While hiring managers expect you to be respectful and business-like, they also want to see you as you are. Don't fake it. Being yourself will not only be helpful to the interviewer, it will help you find a position that's right for you.

Keep basic etiquette in mind.

It's not only the hiring manager that decides who to hire. So be professional and polite to everyone you meet at the company. They're all potential future employees and can influence the hiring decision.

When you arrive, introduce yourself to the receptionist. Make sure you know the interviewer's name and use it as soon as possible during the interview. If you're not sure of the name, call, and ask prior to the interview.⁵

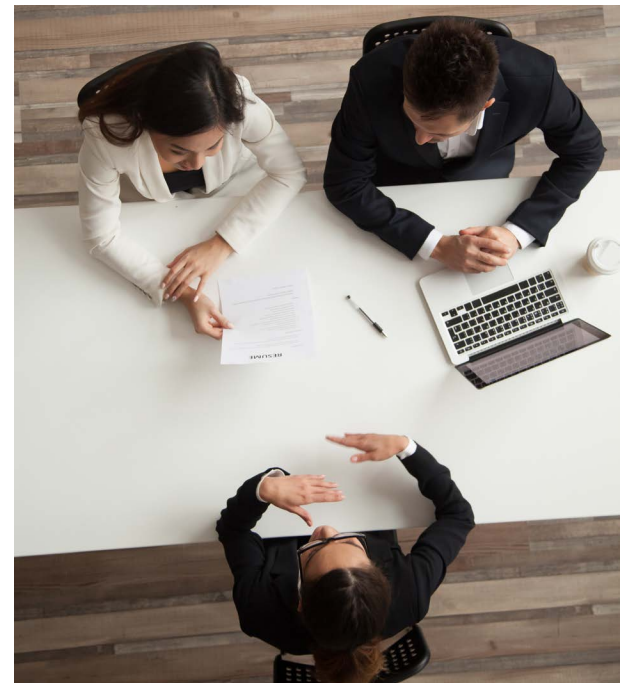
What to bring. And what to leave at home.

For an in-person interview, bring a copy of your resume, a list of references, and any appropriate work samples you want to show the prospective employer. It's also a good idea to bring a notepad and pen to take notes. Don't bring coffee, gum, or anything else not related to the job.

Oh, and turn off that phone before you walk into the office.⁶

Group interview? No problem.

- For a group interview. Before interviewing with a group of people, practice answering questions and being a good listener. Show by your body language and demeanor that you're listening to all concerned.⁷



⁵ "Learn How to Ace a Job Interview"
<https://www.thebalancecareers.com/job-interviews-4161912>

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Ibid



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The interview follow-up

Once the interview is over, and you've released all that pent-up nervousness, congratulate yourself. Then, well, get to work.

Send a thank-you.

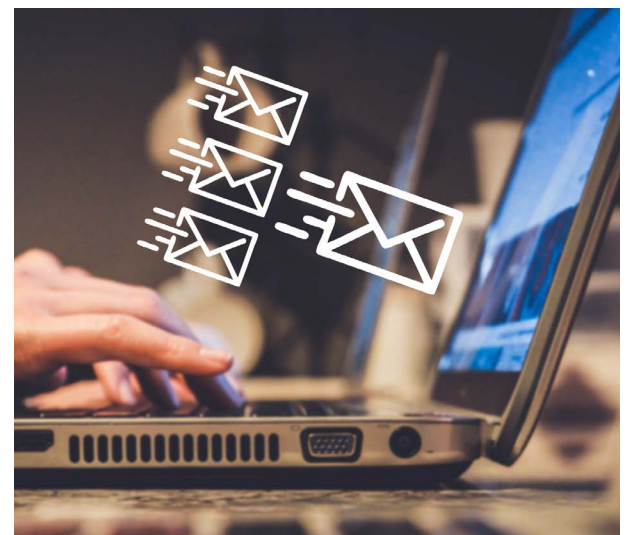
Don't wait longer than a day to thank the hiring manager via email. It's always best to show your appreciation and reaffirm your interest while the time together is still fresh in both of your minds. The follow-up is your opportunity to remind the prospective employer of your qualifications, and to include any details you forgot to mention in the interview.

In a world that is overconnected, here's a tip that will help you stand out: Take a few minutes to also send a handwritten thank-you note. You'd be surprised how much impact your signature on real paper can have.

Now for the hard part.

It's tough to wait. But you'll need to give it some time. Don't pester the hiring manager with emails and phone calls. Let the process play out.

That doesn't mean you should take silence as a "no." If you haven't received a response within a week of the job listing closing, consider sending another follow-up email. Express your continued enthusiasm for the position and explain that you're ready to take the next step in the hiring process.⁸



⁸ <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/interviewing/how-to-ace-your-next-interview>

