

INTERVIEW PREPARATION HANDBOOK


2025-2026





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TYPES OF INTERVIEWS 01



PHONE SCREEN

A call is a screening to see if you're fit to come in for a full interview. If you receive a spur-of-the-moment call, ask to schedule a more appropriate time.



TRADITIONAL

Sit down with a solo interviewer and focus on highlighting how your skills, experiences, and accomplishments, prove you're a great candidate for the job.



VIDEO

Meet the interviewers virtually. Prepare the right on-screen look and make sure all of your tech systems are a go.



GROUP

In a group interview, the hiring team interviews a number of candidates at the same time. This is not as common for most professional positions.



PANEL

Panel interviews consist of numerous interviewers from different perspectives in the organization such as HR, your potential manager, and other employees.



LUNCH/DINNER

Lunch/Dinner interviews are when an employer invites you to discuss your qualifications over lunch/dinner. Have something light and clean.



STRENGTH-BASED

Strength-based interviews are meant to uncover your passion and interests. The employer wants to know what you *love* to do rather than what you can do.



BEHAVIORAL

Behavioral interviews are more in-depth. The employers might ask about specific situations in your previous role, your actions, and the results.

Before the interview: Research the company, prepare your outfit, key points, and practice interviewing. Have physical copies of your resume ready and bring a notebook and pen.

During the interview: Listen carefully and make sure you answer the questions that are asked. Be aware of your body language.

After the interview: Send a Thank You email/card and follow up as specified by the employer.

INTERVIEW DOs

Do come prepared by researching the company and role—this shows genuine interest and helps you tailor your responses to align with the employer's needs.



**PREPARE QUESTIONS
FOR THE INTERVIEW**



**INTRODUCE
YOURSELF**



TELL YOUR STORY



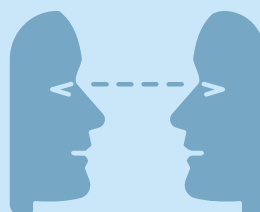
**RESEARCH THE
COMPANY
BEFOREHAND**



**BRING EXTRA
COPIES OF YOUR
RESUME**



**BRING
NOTE-TAKING
MATERIALS**



MAKE EYE CONTACT



EXPRESS INTEREST



SHAKE HANDS



BE POSITIVE



DRESS TO IMPRESS



**SEND A FOLLOW-UP
"THANK YOU" EMAIL**

DRESS FOR SUCCESS

As a general rule, dress how you would for a day at the job you are interviewing for. If you do not know what this looks like, aim for business casual.



VISIT THE STAND

The Stand is San Diego Mesa College's **FREE** food pantry and clothing closet available to all students!



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INTERVIEW DON'Ts

Don't come unprepared by arriving late and dressing inappropriately — these are examples that can be seen as unprofessional and can create a negative impression to the employer.



ARRIVE LATE



**USE INAPPROPRIATE
LANGUAGE**



CHEW GUM



RAMBLING



**BRING A FRIEND OR
FAMILY ALONG**



**LIE DURING THE
INTERVIEW**



**SPEAK POORLY ABOUT
PAST EMPLOYERS**



**DRESS
INAPPROPRIATELY**

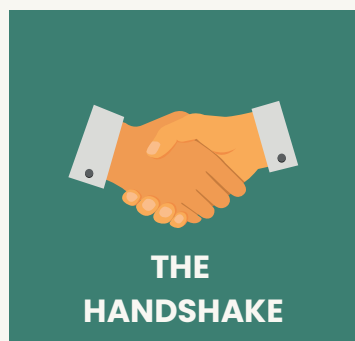


ADMIT A FLAW

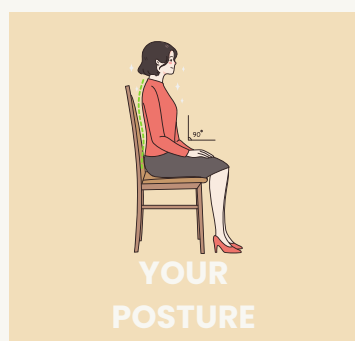


**GLANCE AT YOUR
WATCH/PHONE**

NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION TIPS



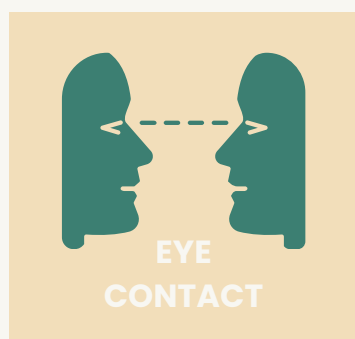
Give a confident handshake. A handshake lacking confidence can tell the employer that you are nervous and maybe lacking communication skills while too strong of a handshake can project arrogance.



Stand and sit up straight. Good posture shows energy and enthusiasm. A slouching posture looks tired and uncaring.



Be calm and collected. There is nothing worse than someone playing with their hair, clicking a pen top, tapping a foot, or unconsciously fidgeting.



Make eye contact with the interviewer. Looking around the room while you are talking can convey a lack of confidence, a lack of interest, or discomfort with the discussion.

HOW TO APPROACH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

06

Q. Tell me about yourself

Start with a confident, compelling statement of who you are, emphasizing recent and applicable experience and achievement. Then, plan in advance and outline which details will impress the employer. Remember, the employer only has a limited amount of time.

Q. Why are you interested in this position?

Research the company and the role, and discuss how your skills and experience align with the company's objectives. Showcase your motivation and enthusiasm. Explain how you believe the role will challenge you, enable you to learn new skills, and contribute to your long-term career goals.

Q. Tell me about a time when you...

Approach behavioral-based questions with story-telling. Employers are more likely to be engaged with information that is presented in the form of imaginative and thought-provoking stories. The STAR method is an effective format to structure your answer for behavioral-based questions.

The STAR Method



Situation

An event, project, or challenge faced



Task

Your responsibilities or assignment for the situation



Action

Steps or procedure taken to relieve the situation



Result

State the impacts or results of your actions

Q. What are your greatest strengths?

Embrace this question as an opportunity to talk about your best qualities. Avoid choosing generic strengths that anyone can claim. Avoid general statements such as "hard worker" or "people person." Be specific and prepare an example to demonstrate each strength.

Q. What are your weaknesses?

Don't try to play a strength off as a weakness. Don't choose a weakness that could limit your performance at the job. Don't be defensive or dwell on the negative. Always show that you are aware of the weakness and striving to improve.

PREPARING QUESTIONS FOR THE EMPLOYER

It is important to ask questions towards the end of the interview in order to make sure that the position is the right fit for you. The questions you choose to ask depend on the job, the company, and your goals. Below are some example questions.

1. What are the biggest challenges I might face in this position?

2. What learning and development opportunities will I have in this role?

3. How would you describe the company's environment and values?




4. What would my daily tasks consist of in this position?

KEEP IN MIND!

Some of the questions you prepare may be answered throughout the interview. Ensure that they are constructive to your interview and always exude professionalism.

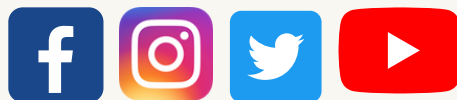
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