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RESUMES**

Thank you for your interest in Advanced Write Resumes and your confidence in allowing me to assist you in your career search!

As a job seeker, I am sure that you have a career direction and a plan for your future. Here to help you reach those goals is an organization that understands your needs, knows the area in which you are interested, and keeps abreast of what hiring managers are looking for.

One of the best ways to set yourself apart from your competition is to be prepared. Being prepared will help you relax and feel confident and comfortable during the interview. It will also help you recall your work experience more efficiently.

Before the interview, make a list of all your responsibilities and duties. Also, list the top three business accomplishments of your career. This is your opportunity to expand on what is NOT listed on your resume. Make a list of questions you have about the company. Don't ask the obvious. Put some thought into these questions. This will set you apart from the other candidates.

These are just some ideas to help you get prepared for the interview. Ultimately, it is you that must answer each question honestly and present yourself effectively. Good luck!

**Sincerely,  
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## ADVANCED WRITE RESUMES – INTERVIEW PREPARATION

### One Pre-Interview Must

Always have a business-appropriate email address and voicemail message.

Remember: First impressions are everything and not everyone has the same taste as you.

### Research the Company

- ▶ Look at their website and relevant press releases on the Internet and in major newspapers and trade magazines.
- ▶ Look up the company profile on the Internet. One resource for you is [www.hoovers.com](http://www.hoovers.com). You should be able to pull up quite a bit of information by just “googling” the company. <http://www.linkedin.com> also can shed some light on the subject.

### Proper Attire (Personal Interviews)

The perceptual experts tell us we have 6 seconds to make a first impression. First impressions are extremely important. The way you present yourself can be as important as what you say. Use your best judgment and always take into account the type of position you’re interviewing for. The following suggestions are helpful and standard:

For a woman: A suit or conservative dress is appropriate. Wear minimal amounts of jewelry and perfume. Stylish low heel shoes are best.

For a man: A conservative blue or gray suit, long sleeved shirt and tie is still best. Jewelry other than a wedding ring and watch is not necessary. Matching socks and polished shoes are preferred.

### Body Language: These things go a long way in an interview:

- ▶ Look confident and enthusiastic – many job offers go to the candidate who is the most enthusiastic if two candidates are equally qualified for a position
- ▶ Make eye contact with the interviewer
- ▶ Have a pleasant attitude
- ▶ Greet the interviewer with a handshake and sit up straight when seated. A serious, professional attitude with a touch of respectful humor is recommended.
- ▶ Close the interview with a handshake, and thank them for their time.
- ▶ SMILE!

### Before the interviewer begins

When you have an opportunity to ask a question before the interview begins, try to establish their specific requirements by asking, “What kind of qualities and characteristics are you looking for in the person you select for this position?” If the interviewer provides an answer, keep this information in mind as you answer questions during the interview. Try to match as many of your relevant strengths to the key qualities they used to characterize their ideal candidate throughout your interview. At the end of your meeting, the interviewer should know why you are the right person for this position. The interviewer should be able to identify at least three relevant skills that you have highlighted during the interview.

### **General Guidelines for the Interview**

- ▶ Arrive early. 15 minutes before the interview is appropriate.
- ▶ Bring extra resumes, notepad, and pen. You never know if you will have more than one interviewer.
- ▶ Be sure you know how to pronounce your interviewer's name correctly.
- ▶ Be polite to everyone you meet there. They all count.
- ▶ Be personable as well as professional.
- ▶ Do not chew gum, smoke, swear or use slang.
- ▶ Assume all questions are asked for a good reason and answer accordingly.
- ▶ Feel free to ask for clarification before answering a question.
- ▶ Take some time to formulate your answers before you speak. Pausing is a sign of thought and concern for what you're about to say. Despite myths, it isn't a sign of "not knowing the answer".
- ▶ Answer all questions honestly, but in the best, most positive light.
- ▶ Do not bad-mouth old employers.
- ▶ ALWAYS TURN OFF YOUR CELL PHONE IN AN INTERVIEW

### **Fundamentals of a Successful Interview**

To a large degree, the success of your interview will depend on your ability to discover needs and empathize with the interviewer. In addition to establishing empathy, there are four intangible fundamentals to a successful interview. These intangibles will influence the way your personality is perceived, and will affect the degree of rapport, or personal chemistry you'll share with the employer.

- ▶ **Enthusiasm** – Leave no doubt as to your level of interest in the job. You may think it's unnecessary to do this, but employers often choose the more enthusiastic candidate in the case of a two-way tie. Besides, it's best to keep your options open – wouldn't you rather be in a position to turn down an offer, than have a prospective job evaporate from your grasp by giving a lethargic interview?
- ▶ **Technical interest** – Employers look for people who love what they do; people who get excited by the prospect of tearing into the nitty-gritty of the job.
- ▶ **Confidence** – No one likes a braggart, but the candidate who's sure of his or her abilities will almost certainly be more favorably received.
- ▶ **Intensity** – The last thing you want to do is come across as "flat" in your interview. There's nothing inherently wrong with being a laid-back person; but sleepwalkers rarely get hired.

Both for your sake and the employer's, try not to leave an interview without exchanging fundamental information. The more you know about each other, the more potential you'll have for establishing rapport, and making an informed decision.



### **The Short and Long of It**

There are two ways to answer interview questions: the short version and the long version. When a question is open-ended, I always suggest to candidates that they say, “Let me give you the short version. If we need to explore some aspect of my answer more fully, I’d be happy to go into greater depth, and give you the long version.”

The reason you should respond this way is because it’s often difficult to know what type of answer each question will need. A question like, “What was your most difficult assignment?” might take anywhere from thirty seconds to thirty minutes to answer, depending on the detail you choose to give. Tailor your answers to what the interviewer needs to know, without a lot of extraneous rambling or superfluous explanation.

### **Talking about money**

Please note that you should NOT ask about salary and/or benefits during a first interview. If the company asks for your current salary level, there is no need to run from the question. Give them the exact amount you currently make including bonuses, commissions, and benefits. It is fine to state the facts but not “what it would take”. When asked about money by the prospective employer, the response should be, “The reason I am here is about an opportunity. Money is not the motive, but I am assuming that you will make me your most competitive offer.” Sell yourself about what you can do for the company!

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

The following is a list of frequently asked questions during an interview. While they may not be phrased in these exact words, you can be sure that in some way, many of the topics listed below will be covered. Following each question is a list of reminders on different things to consider when answering them. There is no standard or “right” way to respond to these questions. Simply use this guide as a reference.

#### **Why are you looking to change jobs and/or why did you leave your previous job?**

Don’t bash your current employer, as it is a surefire way to make a negative impression. Answers that point to a positive progressive career path are best. Hopefully, most of your changes have been for a better career opportunity. If it was because of downsizing, plant closure, or the sale of your company, tell them that. If you have been terminated from your most recent position, make sure you explain what you have learned from the experience and how it has made you a better candidate moving forward.

#### **What do you like most/least about your current job?**

Mention the things about your current position that get you excited and give you the most fulfillment. Be honest, but not overly critical, when asked about least favorite aspects.

#### **Why should we hire you instead of someone else?**

If you sell yourself effectively they won’t want anybody else. Cite specific, concrete attributes and accomplishments. Talk about quantifiable achievements. For instance, the amount of revenue you brought or saved the company.



### What are your strengths and weaknesses?

Focus on the strengths you have that are directly related to the position for which you are interviewing. For weaknesses, pick an attribute you have most recently improved on, giving a positive answer. It is best to mention a “positive negative.” Examples: “I drive myself too hard sometimes”, “I’m a perfectionist”, or “I tend to expect a lot from my subordinates.”

### What would be the first thing you would do if you were in this position?

If you have listened carefully to what they are looking for you should have no problem answering this question. Identify the areas that appear to be important to the company and match them up to your specific skill set and experience.

### What have you done that shows initiative?

Talk about the projects or ideas that you’ve put into action and mention the positive influence they’ve had on the company. Mention the problems that you or the company have identified, the solution you came up with, and the results.

### What would your boss say about you?

Can your boss depend on you? Do you take some work off your boss’s shoulders? What impressions have you made?

### What are you looking for in a job?

This is a simple but thought-provoking question. “The opportunity to build my career” is a good answer.

### What do you know about our company?

Do your homework about the company. The Internet is a great resource.

### Tell me about yourself.

Many people stumble on this question because they don’t know what the interviewer wants to hear. Realize that most interviewers use this question not only to gather information, but also to assess your poise, style of delivery, and communication ability. Don’t launch into a mini-speech about your childhood, schooling, hobbies, early career and personal likes and dislikes. Instead, cite recent personal and professional work experiences that relate to the position you’re seeking. About five to eight sentences ought to do it.

### Where do you see yourself in 1 year? In 5 years?

Be careful not to inadvertently threaten any interviewers by talking too aggressively about advancement, making it seem like you want to advance too quickly, or talking about taking over the interviewer’s position someday. It is better to speak in terms of increased responsibility and value to the company rather than specific moves up the ladder or titles you want to have. You could also mention general career goals you have set for yourself and facets of the business you would like to gain exposure to.

### How do you handle difficult employees?

Sight specific examples if possible. Try not to bash the employee you have had issues with. Find the positive in the situation.



#### How do you handle difficult situations?

Again, sight specific examples. Be honest. Remember, not everyone can do everything. Cite how you handled the situation and the end result. Try to tailor your response to the position you're interviewing for.

#### What are some of your accomplishments?

Get specific. Have you increased productivity? Cut costs or downtime? Created programs? Helped increase sales?

#### What can you do for our company?

This is your chance to "wow" them. Get them excited about you! Mention the things that you have done for your current employer that you are most proud of and tell them that you can do the same (or more) for their organization. (If you have specific ideas about what you would do, go ahead and talk about those as well.) Tell them what you've done to make the company money, save the company money, and/or improve a process to impact the bottom line.

#### Why do you want this job?

What was it initially about this job that caught your attention? What have you heard about this job/company since then that has increased your interest level? What are the opportunities in this job that you don't see in you current job?

#### You may be overqualified for the position we have to offer.

Strong companies need strong people. A growing, energetic company is rarely unable to use its people talents. Emphasize your interest in a long-term association, pointing out that the employer will get a faster return on investment because you have more experience than required.

#### If applicable: What is your management style?

This is your chance to talk about your management philosophy. Talk about your training methods and how you develop subordinates. (Sight examples: "6 of my line employees have now been promoted to supervisors.") Also mention how you delegate responsibility and empower the people that report to you.

#### Questioning the Interviewer

Even if you don't ask any questions during an interview, many employers will ask you if you have any. How you respond will affect their evaluation of you. Be prepared with insightful (not obvious) questions about the organization. Make a list.

##### Examples:

- ▶ What can you tell me about the culture and environment of your company?
- ▶ What is the management style?
- ▶ What obstacles does the organization anticipate in meeting its goals in the upcoming year/5 years?
- ▶ How have the organization's goals changed over the past three to five years?
- ▶ What is a typical day like in this position?
- ▶ What resources are available from the company and what must be found elsewhere to reach objectives?



Generally, it is not wise to ask about pay or benefits, because you may appear to be more interested in what the organization can do for you. It is also not a good idea to simply have no questions at all. Doing so makes you appear passive rather than curious and interested. Additional questions are provided on a separate document.

**The “ONE” question you must ask them:**

During the interview process there is typically a point near the end where interviewers will give you the chance to ask questions. Ask the general questions you have about the company and the position at this point. Your very last question of an interviewer should be:

***“Do you feel I have the qualifications necessary for this position?”***

Now, listen very carefully to how the interviewer responds. If they give you a resounding “yes”, you have done a good job of covering all the issues that are important to them. If they say something like:

***“You appear to have all the qualifications we’re looking for, but...”***

Listen for that “but”, whatever comes afterwards is an area in which you need to re-strengthen their view of your background. This might be your only one-on-one chance to counter those concerns! Try to go over your strengths and experiences in that area again. It can make all the difference in the world.

**Thank-You Letters:**

Follow up immediately with thank you letters to everyone you interview with. Experts recommend sending them within 24 hours! This means obtaining business cards from each person. THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT AND CAN MAKE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN YOU GETTING THE JOB OR NOT!

**Important tips**

- ▶ Thank you letters are more highly regarded if they are typed or hand-written on a thank-you note/letter and sent through postal mail. Email is acceptable and generally used as a last resort if a) You’re traveling or b) Timing is crucial and you need to get the letter there immediately. In these cases, it would be a good idea to type a letter in a Word document and attach it to your email.
- ▶ Mention specifics from the interview, including ways that you can add to the firm’s bottom-line, ideas for the future, and points of discussion that had arisen during the interview.
- ▶ In addition to your standard “thank you for taking time to meet with me”, include a summary statement of what you will do for them if you get the job, and that you’re very excited about the opportunity.
- ▶ Make the letter personal. Form letters are useless and could be considered insulting.
- ▶ If the interviewer asks you to call at a certain date, do so. But calling doesn’t relieve you from writing a follow-up letter. You still need to follow up immediately in writing. You can refer to the forthcoming call: “I look forward to speaking with you on the 26th as we discussed.”



- ▶ Use the letter to clarify or amplify points that arose in the interview. For example, “In our meeting you mentioned that you were looking for an individual who had the ability to work with all levels. In my position as a machine operator with ABC Manufacturing, I was on a safety committee, which consisted of one supervisor and manager from each department. On that committee, I worked in small teams with those supervisors and managers to come up with new safety incentives for each month. This also involved talking to our Vice President once a month.”

### **Behavioral Interviewing:**

Behavioral interviewing is a strategy used by companies to determine if you have the appropriate traits to succeed in the position based on your past experiences. In these types of interviews, you aren't going to be asked closed ended questions that you can answer with a yes or no response. The questions will be open ended and the interviewer will be looking for specific situations where you used the skills that they are trying to determine that you have.

Don't expect the questions that are traditional in nature. For example, the following questions would be asked in a traditional interview:

- ▶ What did you like about your last job?
- ▶ What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- ▶ What were your job responsibilities in your last position?

These types of questions can be answered the same way by most job candidates. They don't provide a lot of detail and quite honestly, the job candidate could just make up what they feel their strengths and weaknesses are. Without having to provide specific details of when they used those strengths, there isn't a lot of value to the answers of these questions.

Behavioral interviews are based on the premise that your past performance is the best predictor of future potential in a position. You **MUST** be prepared to back up your answers with specific examples that fall in line with the question that is being asked. Stating that you don't recall an example will not produce strong results in these types of interviews.

The issue with behavioral interviewing is that you won't know what type of interview you will have until you are in front of the interviewer. So you have to be prepared for both a behavioral interview and a traditional interview. Here are some tips on how you can prepare for a behavioral interview.

In order to anticipate what questions will be asked, review the job posting if you have one. Look for the skills that are required and try to determine what types of questions might be asked. For instance if the job posting states that strong analytical problem solving is required, a couple behavioral questions might be:

- ▶ Give me an example of a time when you used your fact-finding skills to solve a problem.
- ▶ Describe a time when you anticipated potential problems and developed preventive measures.





Reviewing the sample questions below and others that you can find by googling “sample behavioral questions” will also give you an edge in these types of interviews. Ask yourself the questions and try to frame your responses based on what you have done in the past.

The biggest mistake in a behavioral interview is not providing the specific details of the situation that relate to the question being answered. Below I have listed several behavioral questions so you can be prepared with what may be asked of you.

- ▶ Describe a situation in which you were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to see things your way.
- ▶ Describe a time when you were faced with a stressful situation that demonstrated your coping skills.
- ▶ Give me a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.
- ▶ Give me an example of a time when you set a goal and were able to meet or achieve it.
- ▶ Tell me about a time when you had to use your presentation skills to influence someone’s opinion.
- ▶ Give me a specific example of a time when you had to conform to a policy with which you did not agree.
- ▶ Please discuss an important written document you were required to complete.
- ▶ Tell me about a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.
- ▶ Tell me about a time when you had too many things to do and you were required to prioritize your tasks.
- ▶ Give me an example of a time when you had to make a split second decision.
- ▶ What is your typical way of dealing with conflict? Give me an example.
- ▶ Tell me about a time you were able to successfully deal with another person even when that individual may not have personally liked you (or vice versa).
- ▶ Tell me about a difficult decision you’ve made in the last year.
- ▶ Give me an example of a time when something you tried to accomplish and failed.
- ▶ Give me an example of when you showed initiative and took the lead.
- ▶ Tell me about a recent situation in which you had to deal with a very upset customer or co-worker.
- ▶ Give me an example of a time when you motivated others.
- ▶ Tell me about a time when you delegated a project effectively.
- ▶ Give me an example of a time when you used your fact-finding skills to solve a problem.
- ▶ Tell me about a time when you missed an obvious solution to a problem.



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- ▶ Describe a time when you anticipated potential problems and developed preventive measures.
- ▶ Tell me about a time when you were forced to make an unpopular decision.
- ▶ Please tell me about a time you had to fire a friend.
- ▶ Describe a time when you set your sights too high (or too low).

**Summary:**

Your goal on a personal interview should be to make them want to offer you the job. Remember that an interview is not a fishing trip. If you go in with that approach you will be so focused on gathering information for yourself that you have forgotten to sell yourself effectively.

**GOOD LUCK!**

P.S. The next two (2) documents can be used during the interview preparation process.





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## **POTENTIAL POST INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

**What do you look for in your employees?**

**What determines success for your company?**

**What does the typical work day resemble?**

**Describe the sales cycle? How long?**

**What is insert company name competitive advantage?**

**Why would someone want to work for this company? What sets it apart?**

**What opportunity for growth exists?**

**What training is available?**

**What do your top performers earn?**

**What other benefits (vacation/holidays/other than health) are available and when?  
(This should be asked in 2nd interview)**

**What is your time frame for making a hiring decision?**

**Based on this interview, do you feel like I am a fit for this organization?**