

Types of Interviews

All job interviews have the same objective, but employers reach that objective in a variety of ways. You might enter the room expecting to tell stories about your professional successes and instead find yourself selling the interviewer a bridge or editing code at a computer. One strategy for performing your best during an interview is to know the rules of the particular game you are playing when you walk through the door.

[Screening](#) | [Informational](#) | [Directive](#) | [Meandering](#)
[Stress](#) | [Behavioral](#) | [Audition](#) | [Group](#)
[Tag-Team](#) | [Mealtime](#) | [Follow-up](#)

The Screening Interview

Companies use screening tools to ensure that candidates meet minimum qualification requirements. Computer programs are among the tools used to weed out unqualified candidates. (This is why you need a digital resume that is screening-friendly. See our resume center for help.) Sometimes human professionals are the gatekeepers. Screening interviewers often have honed skills to determine whether there is anything that might disqualify you for the position. Remember—they do not need to know whether you are the best fit for the position, only whether you are not a match. For this reason, screeners tend to dig for dirt. Screeners will hone in on gaps in your employment history or pieces of information that look inconsistent. They also will want to know from the outset whether you will be too expensive for the company.

Some tips for maintaining confidence during screening interviews:

- Highlight your accomplishments and qualifications.
- Get into the straightforward groove. Personality is not as important to the screener as verifying your qualifications. Answer questions directly and succinctly. Save your winning personality for the person making hiring decisions!
- Be tactful about addressing income requirements. Give a range, and try to avoid giving specifics by replying, "I would be willing to consider your best offer."
- If the interview is conducted by phone, it is helpful to have note cards with your vital information sitting next to the phone. That way, whether the interviewer catches you sleeping or vacuuming the floor, you will be able to switch gears quickly.

The Informational Interview

On the opposite end of the stress spectrum from screening interviews is the informational interview. A meeting that you initiate, the informational interview is underutilized by job-seekers who might otherwise consider themselves savvy to the merits of networking. Job seekers ostensibly secure informational meetings in order to seek the advice of someone in their current or desired field as well as to gain further references to people who can lend insight. Employers that like to stay apprised of available talent even when they do not have current job openings, are often open to informational interviews, especially if they like to share their knowledge, feel flattered by your interest, or esteem the mutual friend that connected you to them. During an informational interview, the jobseeker and employer exchange information and get to know one another better without reference to a specific job opening.

This takes off some of the performance pressure, but be intentional nonetheless:

- Come prepared with thoughtful questions about the field and the company.

- Gain references to other people and make sure that the interviewer would be comfortable if you contact other people and use his or her name.
- Give the interviewer your card, contact information and resume.
- Write a thank you note to the interviewer.

The Directive Style

In this style of interview, the interviewer has a clear agenda that he or she follows unflinchingly. Sometimes companies use this rigid format to ensure parity between interviews; when interviewers ask each candidate the same series of questions, they can more readily compare the results. Directive interviewers rely upon their own questions and methods to tease from you what they wish to know. You might feel like you are being steam-rolled, or you might find the conversation develops naturally. Their style does not necessarily mean that they have dominance issues, although you should keep an eye open for these if the interviewer would be your supervisor.

Either way, remember:

- Flex with the interviewer, following his or her lead.
- Do not relinquish complete control of the interview. If the interviewer does not ask you for information that you think is important to proving your superiority as a candidate, politely interject it.

The Meandering Style

This interview type, usually used by inexperienced interviewers, relies on you to lead the discussion. It might begin with a statement like "tell me about yourself," which you can use to your advantage. The interviewer might ask you another broad, open-ended question before falling into silence. This interview style allows you tactfully to guide the discussion in a way that best serves you.

The following strategies, which are helpful for any interview, are particularly important when interviewers use a non-directive approach:

- Come to the interview prepared with highlights and anecdotes of your skills, qualities and experiences. Do not rely on the interviewer to spark your memory-jot down some notes that you can reference throughout the interview.
- Remain alert to the interviewer. Even if you feel like you can take the driver's seat and go in any direction you wish, remain respectful of the interviewer's role. If he or she becomes more directive during the interview, adjust.
- Ask well-placed questions. Although the open format allows you significantly to shape the interview, running with your own agenda and dominating the conversation means that you run the risk of missing important information about the company and its needs.

The Stress Interview

Astounding as this is, the Greek hazing system has made its way into professional interviews. Either employers view the stress interview as a legitimate way of determining candidates' aptness for a position or someone has latent maniacal tendencies. You might be held in the waiting room for an hour before the interviewer greets you. You might face long silences or cold stares. The interviewer might openly challenge your beliefs or judgment. You might be called upon to perform an impossible task on the fly-like convincing the interviewer to exchange shoes with you. Insults and miscommunication are common. All this is designed to see whether you have the mettle to withstand the company culture, the clients or other potential stress.

Besides wearing a strong anti-perspirant, you will do well to:

- Remember that this is a game. It is not personal. View it as the surreal interaction that it is.
- Prepare and memorize your main message before walking through the door. If you are flustered, you will better maintain clarity of mind if you do not have to wing your responses.
- Even if the interviewer is rude, remain calm and tactful.
- Go into the interview relaxed and rested. If you go into it feeling stressed, you will have a more difficult time keeping a cool perspective.

The Behavioral Interview

Many companies increasingly rely on behavior interviews since they use your previous behavior to indicate your future performance. In these interviews, employers use standardized methods to mine information relevant to your competency in a particular area or position. Depending upon the responsibilities of the job and the working environment, you might be asked to describe a time that required problem-solving skills, adaptability, leadership, conflict resolution, multi-tasking, initiative or stress management. You will be asked how you dealt with the situations.

Your responses require not only reflection, but also organization. To maximize your responses in the behavioral format:

- Anticipate the transferable skills and personal qualities that are required for the job.
- Review your resume. Any of the qualities and skills you have included in your resume are fair game for an interviewer to press.
- Reflect on your own professional, volunteer, educational and personal experience to develop brief stories that highlight these skills and qualities in you. You should have a story for each of the competencies on your resume as well as those you anticipate the job requires.
- Prepare stories by identifying the context, logically highlighting your actions in the situation, and identifying the results of your actions. Keep your responses concise and present them in less than two minutes.

The Audition

For some positions, such as computer programmers or trainers, companies want to see you in action before they make their decision. For this reason, they might take you through a simulation or brief exercise in order to evaluate your skills. An audition can be enormously useful to you as well, since it allows you to demonstrate your abilities in interactive ways that are likely familiar to you. The simulations and exercises should also give you a simplified sense of what the job would be like. If you sense that other candidates have an edge on you in terms of experience or other qualifications, requesting an audition can help level the playing field.

To maximize on auditions, remember to:

- Clearly understand the instructions and expectations for the exercise. Communication is half the battle in real life, and you should demonstrate to the prospective employer that you make the effort to do things right the first time by minimizing confusion.
- Treat the situation as if you are a professional with responsibility for the task laid before you. Take ownership of your work.
- Brush up on your skills before an interview if you think they might be tested.

The Group Interview

Interviewing simultaneously with other candidates can be disconcerting, but it provides the company with a sense of your leadership potential and style. The group interview helps the company get a glimpse of how you interact with peers—are you timid or bossy, are you attentive or do you seek attention, do others turn to you instinctively, or do you compete for authority? The interviewer also wants to view what your tools of persuasion are: do you use argumentation and careful reasoning to gain support or do you divide and conquer? The interviewer might call on you to discuss an issue with the other candidates, solve a problem collectively, or discuss your peculiar qualifications in front of the other candidates.

This environment might seem overwhelming or hard to control, but there are a few tips that will help you navigate the group interview successfully:

- Observe to determine the dynamics the interviewer establishes and try to discern the rules of the game. If you are unsure of what is expected from you, ask for clarification from the interviewer.
- Treat others with respect while exerting influence over others.
- Avoid overt power conflicts, which will make you look uncooperative and immature.
- Keep an eye on the interviewer throughout the process so that you do not miss important cues.

The Tag-Team Interview

Expecting to meet with Ms. Glenn, you might find yourself in a room with four other people: Ms. Glenn, two of her staff, and the Sales Director. Companies often want to gain the insights of various people when interviewing candidates. This method of interviewing is often attractive for companies that rely heavily on team cooperation. Not only does the company want to know whether your skills balance that of the company, but also whether you can get along with the other workers. In some companies, multiple people will interview you simultaneously. In other companies, you will proceed through a series of one-on-one interviews.

Some helpful tips for maximizing on this interview format:

- Treat each person as an important individual. Gain each person's business card at the beginning of the meeting, if possible, and refer to each person by name. If there are several people in the room at once, you might wish to scribble down their names on a sheet of paper according to where each is sitting. Make eye contact with each person and speak directly to the person asking each question.
- Use the opportunity to gain as much information about the company as you can. Just as each interviewer has a different function in the company, they each have a unique perspective. When asking questions, be sensitive not to place anyone in a position that invites him to compromise confidentiality or loyalty.
- Bring at least double the anecdotes and sound-bites to the interview as you would for a traditional one-on-one interview. Be ready to illustrate your main message in a variety of ways to a variety of people.
- Prepare psychologically to expend more energy and be more alert than you would in a one-on-one interview. Stay focused and adjustable.

The Mealtime Interview

For many, interviewing over a meal sounds like a professional and digestive catastrophe in the making. If you have difficulty chewing gum while walking, this could be a challenge. With some preparation and psychological readjustment, you can enjoy the process. Meals often have a

cementing social effect-breaking bread together tends to facilitate deals, marriages, friendships, and religious communion. Mealtimes interviews rely on this logic, and expand it.

Particularly when your job requires interpersonal acuity, companies want to know what you are like in a social setting. Are you relaxed and charming or awkward and evasive? Companies want to observe not only how you handle a fork, but also how you treat your host, any other guests, and the serving staff.

Some basic social tips help ease the complexity of mixing food with business:

- Take cues from your interviewer, remembering that you are the guest. Do not sit down until your host does. Order something slightly less extravagant than your interviewer. If he badly wants you to try a particular dish, oblige him. If he recommends an appetizer to you, he likely intends to order one himself. Do not begin eating until he does. If he orders coffee and dessert, do not leave him eating alone.
- If your interviewer wants to talk business, do so. If she and the other guests discuss their upcoming travel plans or their families, do not launch into business.
- Try to set aside dietary restrictions and preferences. Remember, the interviewer is your host. It is rude to be finicky unless you absolutely must. If you must, be as tactful as you can. Avoid phrases like: "I do not eat mammals," or "Shrimp makes my eyes swell and water."
- Choose manageable food items, if possible. Avoid barbeque ribs and spaghetti.
- Find a discrete way to check your teeth after eating. Excuse yourself from the table for a moment.
- Practice eating and discussing something important simultaneously.
- Thank your interviewer for the meal.

The Follow-up Interview

Companies bring candidates back for second and sometimes third or fourth interviews for a number of reasons. Sometimes they just want to confirm that you are the amazing worker they first thought you to be. Sometimes they are having difficulty deciding between a short-list of candidates. Other times, the interviewer's supervisor or other decision makers in the company want to gain a sense of you before signing a hiring decision.

The second interview could go in a variety of directions, and you must prepare for each of them. When meeting with the same person again, you do not need to be as assertive in your communication of your skills. You can focus on cementing rapport, understanding where the company is going and how your skills mesh with the company vision and culture. Still, the interviewer should view you as the answer to their needs. You might find yourself negotiating a compensation package. Alternatively, you might find that you are starting from the beginning with a new person.

Some tips for managing second interviews:

- Be confident. Accentuate what you have to offer and your interest in the position.
- Probe tactfully to discover more information about the internal company dynamics and culture.
- Walk through the front door with a plan for negotiating a salary.
- Be prepared for anything: to relax with an employer or to address the company's qualms about you.

Source: ResumeEdge