

Going to a job interview can be nerve-wracking. Remember that the person interviewing you just wants to get to know you better. So relax, make good eye contact and be yourself. Ask questions and be ready to answer questions they'll ask you.

Here are some tips to improve your interviewing skills

Plan ahead

- Learn as much as you can about your future employer. Look at their website and visit their store if possible to observe other employees working. Be ready to answer the question, “Why do you want to work here?”

Be on time

- Locate the place of your interview the day before. Then be sure to be 10-15 minutes early.

What to wear

- Dress neatly and professionally, as you would for going to work. Don't wear an outfit that is a distracting. Don't chew gum. And, be sure to turn off your cell phone!

How to present yourself

- Be confident. Introduce yourself, smile, and shake hands. Sit up straight, make eye contact, and relax. Speak clearly and ask questions to show your interest. Take a small notebook and pen to write questions and answers.

Explain why you should be hired

- This is your chance to explain why you want the job and why you are qualified. Practice what you will say before the interview. Your responses should be at least a few sentences long but concise. Describe classes and work experiences that are relevant and why this job is important to you. It is important to explain how your skills will help their business do well. You might say, “I understand you're looking for these skills and this is how I think I can help.” Then explain how you can use your skills to help their business.

Be positive

- Don't make any negative remarks about people, whether they are your past friends or employees. Be positive and enthusiastic.

Ask questions

- Be prepared to ask questions about the job. It shows your interest. Ask about job responsibilities, work schedules, and opportunities for increasing your skills. Wait until you are offered the job to ask about salary and benefits.

Know when you can work

- You may be asked what days and hours you are available to work, so have your schedule available when you apply.

Take your resume

- It is always good to take a copy of your resume to leave with the person interviewing you. This may make it easier for them to review your education and work experience, contact your references, and call you when you are hired!

Below are typical questions you might be asked during an interview

Tell me about your work experience.

Example: For the last three summers I held a summer job in the customer service department at a clothing store. I also worked there as a cashier. This allowed me to interact with people from many walks of life. I was able to respond to customers' questions and resolve their complaints. I also handled money, made change, issued receipts, and redeemed coupons.

How do your skills fit this job?

Example: I believe my communications skills are key to fitting the needs of this position. With my work experience, I have learned how to be a good listener and a good communicator. These skills are necessary for serving customers well and coordinating work tasks with co-workers.

Why did you leave your previous job?

Example: Even if you left your previous job because of problems or poor pay, never be negative. You can say, "I am interested in this job as it will give me new experiences and skills. I am looking for a job where I add to my skills and assume more responsibility."

What are your strengths and weaknesses?

Example: One of my strengths is that I am able to help a business do well. I interact well with a wide variety of people. In my past job I helped create a set of suggestions for our staff to use on ways to make customers feel welcome in our store. One of my weaknesses is taking on too much work. However, I have learned to work well with other co-workers and develop schedules that have allowed us to accomplish our work efficiently.

What are your future plans and how do they fit with this job?

Example: My goal is to become a manager in the customer service department. I believe the best way to do this is to learn from the ground up where I can gain experience from each level of customer service.