

Interview Guide



Congratulations!

You've made it to a pivotal point in the job search process: landing **an interview!** While we understand that interviews can be stressful, if you're prepared, you'll be far more likely to feel at ease and ready to show your star quality.

To arm you with the information you need to ace the interview, Manpower has put together this easy-to-follow guide including information on how to prepare... common questions interviewers ask, what questions you should ask, and much more.

Remember that your primary goal of the interview is to sell yourself. Everything you say should market both your work experience and your personal style as the correct fit for the job and company's environment.

Take a deep breath. Your journey is just starting – *and it's an exciting one!*

Interview Guide Checklist

This interview guide contains the following preparatory materials.

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Interview Overview: The Basics

As the saying goes, “You never get a second chance to make a first impression.” It’s no wonder interviews are bound to put a lot of pressure on you. Below is a list of items to review before your interview to help you make your best first impression.

Before the Interview

Research the Company and Position

Why? Researching the company and the position shows you take an interest. Organizations want to hire people who are passionate about their work and mission.

How? Visit their company website, read recent articles about the organization and note any major changes. Be sure to know basic company information (annual sales, number of employees, geographic location and latest industry trends).

Get Familiar with Common Interview Questions

Why? There are select questions that an interviewer is almost always bound to ask. For example: What are your strengths and weaknesses?

How? Find a thorough list of frequently asked interview questions, starting on page 7.

Prepare Three to Five Questions for the Interviewer

Why? You will be asked the majority of the questions, but to show that you are engaged in the company it is in your best interest to ask questions about the interviewer and the organization.

How? We have provided you with a list of example questions on page 7.

Prepare Answers to Interview Questions

Why? There are several different ways to answer an interview question, but for the most impact we suggest following a CAR (Challenge-Action-Result) format. Using CAR helps ensure that your answer is easily understood by your interviewer and all crucial elements are included.

How? Look for CAR samples and guidelines on page 11.

Dress for Success

Why? An interview (especially a first interview) is your time to make your best impression. To stand out from your competition, dress appropriately for the interview.

How? Before the interview, ask your interviewer or the receptionist about the organization’s dress code. If you feel uncomfortable doing this, it’s always better to be slightly overdressed.

Bring Pertinent Items

Why? It’s important to demonstrate you’re organized and prepared with information that will support the fact that you are the right person for the job.

How? Bring extra copies of your resume, any work samples, reference letters or performance reviews. Place them neatly into a folder to make sure that everything is in one place.

Arrive 15 to 30 Minutes Early

Why? It goes without saying that being early is much better than being late. Arrive early in case there is additional paperwork for you to fill out. You can also use that time to mentally prepare for the interview.

How? Be sure to print out directions and check the local traffic before leaving for the facility.

During the Interview

Make Appropriate Gestures and Eye Contact with the Interviewer

Why: Your posture, body language and eye contact can say a lot about your confidence and interest in the position.

How: If you have difficulties making eye contact, especially in uncomfortable situations, practice your interview questions in a mirror and purposefully make eye contact with yourself.

Tailor Your Answers to Your Audience

Why: Using “technical” terms specific to your position can be difficult for a Human Resources representative to understand.

How: Showcase your work knowledge and experience when speaking is with the hiring manager, but don't get too technical with Human Resources.

Keep Your Responses Relative

Why: Talking about a situation that doesn't relate to work or the position you're applying for can be distracting for both yourself and the Interviewer.

How: Talk thoughtfully and practice your responses. If needed, take a couple of seconds to gather your thoughts after each question. An Interviewer will appreciate your clear response.

Avoid Speaking Negatively about Previous Employers

Why: Criticizing a past employer can give the wrong impression to the Interviewer that you are negative and possibly a difficult employee.

How: When speaking about a situation at your previous employer, spin negative situations into positives by focusing on your actions that made a positive difference.

After the Interview

Send a Follow-Up Letter

Why: Thanking the interviewer for the time he or she spent with you demonstrates you're considerate, respectful – and interested in the position. Follow-up letters always go a long way with Interviewers and could differentiate you from your competition.

How: Sending a thank you note via mail or email is positive either way. Evaluate whether an email would be more appropriate than a letter, and vice versa. Be sure to send it within 24 hours of the interview.

Interview Do's and Don'ts

Here are quick tips for what you can do to make the best impression – and what not to do to avoid making a negative impression.

DO	DON'T
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Listen carefully to the questions• Be involved, enthusiastic, friendly and confident• Be well groomed• Answer the questions. Support your answers with examples. Keep your responses 1 – 2 minutes in length• Remain attentive• Fill out paperwork neatly and thoroughly• Showcase your personality• Ask good questions• State your interests• Account for any gaps in your employment history• Turn off any mobile phones or devices before the interview!	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be arrogant• Give one word “yes” or “no” answers• Ask about salary or benefits• Be passive by letting the Interviewer do all of the talking• Show up late• Lose your focus and ramble, or go off on tangents• Mention personality conflicts• Use profanity during the interview• Interrupt the interviewer

Most Common Interview Questions

There are two types of interview questions: **Traditional** and **Behavioral**. **Traditional** questions focus on the position, motivations or work history. **Behavioral** questions are focused on how you reacted to a situation and are intended to predict future work behavior.

The next few questions include a mixture of both types of questions, but are organized by how frequently they are asked. We've included tips to craft your response for the top ten most frequently asked questions.

1. Tell me about yourself.

This is a great question to practice prior to your interview because it's an open question for you to talk about yourself and what makes you a great job candidate. Keep the information relevant to work and don't include too much personal information. Make sure to include as much pertinent information in as short of a period of time as possible. That doesn't mean you should speed-talk your way through your answer; instead, highlight the most relevant points about your education and work history, your goals and your interests.

2. What do you know about ABC company?

This is an opportunity for you to show that you did your homework. Talk about the organization's products/services, revenues, mission and philosophy, but remember that you don't know as much about the company as the Interviewer. Keep the answer short and positive. Do not answer "Everyone tells me that your business is in trouble, and that's why I'm here". Whether it's true or not, it is not what the Interviewer wants to hear.

3. Why do you want to work for ABC company?

Talk about the company's needs, and how you can contribute. Share something along the lines of, "ABC company is doing things (like x, y and z) that I would like to be involved with." For example, if the company stresses financial controls, your answer should mention your respect for cost consciousness. Whatever you do, do not say something general like "because I like people." This answer is vague, generic and generally leads the Interviewer to feel like you are not really interested in the organization.

4. What do you find most attractive about this position? Least attractive?

List three factors of the job that you are excited about and feel like you can contribute toward. Only list one item that may be unattractive and make sure that it's minor.

5. Why are you the best person for the job?

This is your opportunity to talk about what differences you can make in this position and to the company overall. Don't hold back – toot your horn on past accomplishments and be sure to mention specifics. Be sure to make all past references relatable and relevant to this position.

6. What do you look for in a job?

Keep your answers oriented to opportunities with this organization. Talk about your desire to apply your skills, perform your best and be recognized for your contribution.

7. What are your greatest strengths? Weaknesses?

Share your three best strengths that apply to the position you are interviewing for and provide detailed examples of how you impacted a project or the organization. Include measurable results in your response. Shy away from using answers like “hard working,” “quick learner,” “people person,” which are characteristics that aren’t measurable. When it comes to your weaknesses, only share one and discuss how you improved upon it. This demonstrates the ability to think critically of oneself, that you welcome constructive criticism and show progressive thinking.

8. Why are you planning to leave your present job/Why did you leave your previous job?

Although you may have a lot to say, keep this answer short. Be honest but don’t tarnish your previous employer or yourself. If you were laid-off, share that. Otherwise, indicate that the move was your decision. Remember that references will be checked, so be honest.

9. What is your ideal workplace?

Share what is important to you at work. Whether its recognition, being rewarded for good work or opportunity to advance, your opinions are necessary for the Interviewer to make sure that you’re a good fit.

10. What were your most significant accomplishments/problems that you had to overcome in your previous (or current) position?

This is a question that requires practice in advance. Have specific accomplishments prepared. Only give three accomplishments unless asked otherwise by your Interviewer. Make sure to include measurements and impacts that your accomplishments had on the company. For more detail, review the CAR methodology on page 12.

11. What is your salary requirement/How much money are you looking for?

Focus on the overall opportunity. Do your homework and know the fair market value for the position for which you are interviewing. Example: “My current compensation is \$X (or my most recent compensation was \$X). I am exploring the overall opportunity and interviewing for positions in the salary range of \$Y - \$Z. I trust that if I were selected, you would present your best offer.”

Additional Interview Questions

Below are additional questions that you may be asked. We have grouped these by theme to help you find the questions that are most applicable to you.

Theme of Question Question

General

- What is your definition of the position for which you are being interviewed?
- Name three personal characteristics that best describe you
- Do you consider yourself to be a risk taker?
- How do you feel about leaving all of your benefits to find a new position?
- Do you prefer to work with figures or words?
- Why haven't you found a new job before now?
- Do you prefer staff (support function) or line (directly involved in the business) work? Why?
- Do you think that you might be better suited for a different sized (or type of) company?
- If you could choose any job, where would you go?
- Do you have any objections to psychological tests?
- What other jobs or companies are you considering?
- What was the last book you read/movie you saw/sporting event you attended?
- How would people describe you?
- Do you prefer to work alone or in a group?
- If you could start your career again, what would you do differently?
- What career options do you have at the moment?
- How do you define success?
- How successful do you think you've been so far in your career?
- What motivates you at work?
- What did you do to prepare for this interview?
- A sign of a good employee is the ability to take initiative. Can you describe situations like this about yourself?

Theme of Question Question

Conflict

- Describe a specific experience working on a group or team situation where there was interpersonal conflict. Describe how you approached the conflict, what worked well, and what didn't. What was the outcome?

Goals

- Where do you hope to be in five years?
- What are your long range goals?
- Is your goal to take your boss' job?

Industry

- What important trends do you see in our industry?
- What are the "frontier" issues in our industry?
- Why are you interested in this industry?

Management

- What is your management style?
- Do you feel that you have top managerial potential?
- What do you look for when you hire people?
- Have you ever had to fire personnel? Why, and how did you handle the situation?
- What do you think is the most difficult thing about being a manager or executive?
- How many people did you supervise?
- What do/did your subordinates think of you?
- How do you motivate people?
- Describe a time when you resolved conflict between your subordinates.

Measurements

- Have you helped increase sales? Profit? How?
- Have you helped reduce costs? How?
- How much money did you manage?

Overqualified

- Your resume suggests that you may be over-qualified or too experienced for this position. What's your opinion?

Position-Specific

- How long would it take you to make a meaningful contribution to our firm?
- How long do you plan to stay with us?
- Are you applying for other jobs?
- One of our biggest problems is X. What has been your experience with this? How would you deal with it?

Theme of Question Question

Problem-Solving

- Tell me about a complex problem you had to solve and walk me through your thinking as you solved it.

Salary

- What do you feel this position should pay?

Work History

- Did you think of leaving your present position before? If yes, what do you think held you there?
- In your present/previous position, what problems did you identify that had previously been overlooked?
- What do you like most/least about your present job?
- Which of your past jobs was the least interesting? Why?
- Which of your past jobs did you like the most? Why?
- On your last performance evaluation, what did your supervisor criticize you for?
- Have you ever been fired or asked to resign? Why?
- Why have you held so many jobs?
- Why did you stay with one company for so long?
- Tell me about a time when you: had to deal with an irate customer/forced to make an unpopular decision/had to persuade your team members do something your way/made a bad decision?
- How would you evaluate your present (last) firm?
- What do/did you think of your boss?

Work Style

- Can you work under pressure and deal with deadlines?
- Describe a time when you had to change your communication style to deliver a message or get your point across
- How do you typically handle criticism?
- Are you creative?
- How would you describe your personality?
- Do you consider yourself a leader?

How to Answer Interview Questions with the Most Impact

There are many ways to answer interview questions, but all require one important factor: practice. Below is the methodology that our Recruiters recommend when preparing for an upcoming interview.

CAR Stories (Challenge-Action-Results Exercises)

The most recommended approach for sharing your work accomplishments is to communicate your experience using a Challenge-Action-Results (“CAR”) story. This activity will help you prepare a list of the top three business accomplishments of your career. This is an opportunity to expand on what is NOT listed on your resume. This is an effective and easy way to describe your work history.

The CAR structure is:

- Challenge/Circumstance you encountered
- Action(s) you took (alone or with others) to overcome that challenge or problem
- Result(s) you achieved, in as concrete terms as possible

Steps to develop a CAR story

1. **Getting Started:** As you look back at your career you should identify major problems that have arisen, how you’ve taken action and the results of your efforts. Look for achievements that impacted one or more of the following:
 - Costs
 - Customer Base
 - Operations
 - Performance
 - Problems
 - Productivity
 - Reliability
 - Sales
 - Time Management
 - Waste
 - Working Conditions

2. **Developing Your Story:** The following questions can serve as stimuli in identifying and writing your career achievements.

- Did you solve a reoccurring problem for your area, department or section?
- Did you suggest any new procedures or programs for your company?
- Did you make any job easier or more efficient?
- Did you train anyone?
- Did you implement a new procedure or system?
- Did you do a job with fewer people or less time?
- Were you asked to do a special project? Take on new responsibilities?
- Did you receive any awards or special recognition?
- Did you exceed your goals or objectives?
- Did you do anything for the first time at your company?
- Did you help increase sales?
- Did you save the company money?
- What skills and abilities did you demonstrate?

Complete a CAR worksheet (on following page)

CAR Story Examples

Example 1

When I began as a new Human Resource Manager, the IT Department averaged a 38% turnover rate for the last 3.5 years. Employees were being terminated without prior warning, and no formal corrective action was being taken to discipline them and improve their behavior. I created a disciplinary warning system for the department managers. Within an 8-month period of my new system's implementation, it had decreased the IT department's turnover rate by 18%.

C – The IT department's turnover rate averaged 38% over the last 3.5 years.

A – I developed a formal verbal and written warning policy for department managers to follow. It required managers to provide each employee with a written copy of their job description. Furthermore, it directed managers to review these job descriptions with their employees and verify that their employees understood them. I also incorporated a requirement for all managers to write a development plan for each employee, with goal setting in mind, to be addressed during their semi-annual performance appraisals.

R – Within an 8-month period, I had decreased the turnover rate in the IT Department by 18%.

Example 2 Accomplishment

I joined the management team of a magazine after its subscriber numbers had decreased from 11 million to 8 million. Unless we took a detour fast, we were on our way over the cliff. Under my leadership, the century-old organization was re-invigorated by shifting up to new sources of revenue. We adopted newsstand distribution, foreign language editions, a cable-TV channel, an online store, and new corporate partnerships. These strategic decisions helped us increase our subscriber base to 20 million.

C – After 10 years of declining revenue and a shrinking subscriber base, a once venerable magazine was threatened with extinction.

A – I made a series of strategic decisions that included the development of new corporate partnerships, and expansions into new media channels such as newsstands, foreign language editions, a cable-TV channel, and an online store. This in turn refurbished the magazine's identity.

R – My strategic decisions helped the magazine increase its subscriber base from 8 million to 20 million.

CAR Worksheet: Your Achievement (CAR) Stories

Name of Success:	
<p>Problem or Situations: <i>What problem did you solve?</i></p> <p><i>Describe the project, situation or circumstances in which events occurred and why actions were taken.</i></p>	
<p>Actions: <i>How did you do it?</i></p> <p><i>Briefly organize the actions you took in logical sequence.</i></p>	
<p>Results: <i>What happened?</i> <i>How were the benefits measured?</i></p> <p><i>Think results, measure the results, quantitatively or qualitatively.</i></p>	
<p>Written Success Story</p>	

Questions to Ask the Interviewer

Below are good, probing questions to ask the Interviewer(s).

- Company Questions**
- What's the mission of the organization?
 - What future plans does the company have?
 - What are the challenges the company is facing?
 - What is the company culture? What are the values?
 - How would you describe the atmosphere of this department?
 - Can you tell me about this recent article I saw in the newspaper?
 - Where would you like this department to be in five years?
 - What are the most critical factors for success in your business?
 - What is the organization's philosophy with respect to growth, chance, and personal development?

- Position Questions**
- What are the most critical aspects of this position?
 - How does this position fit within the company's structure?
 - What are the two/three most important things you would want the person in this position to accomplish? What is most pressing? What would you like to have done within the next two or three months?
 - What are some of the longer-term objectives that you would like completed?
 - What would you like to be done differently by the next person who fills this job?
 - What are some of the more difficult problems facing someone in this position?
 - What freedom would this person have in determining their work objectives, deadlines and methods of measurement?
 - Is there an opportunity for growth and advancement? If so, what other career opportunities might be open here? What is the logical career path?

Position Questions continued

- What are the most important objectives for the person filling this position?
- What characteristics – both personal and technical – must an individual possess to be successful?
- To whom would I report?
- How many people will I be supporting?
- What is an average day like?
- Based on my background, how well do you think I would fit in with the organization?
- What criteria are used to judge successful performance in this position?
- How does this position interact with the rest of the organization, and how important is it to the organization's objectives?
- What are typical problems and frustrations inherent in this position?
- Assuming, overtime, I show true potential and success in this position, through hard work and determination, what future opportunities would be available within the organization?
- Could you describe the general corporate policies and goals, or mission, and how this position affect this objective?
- How would your employees characterize your management style?
- May I have your business card?

Closing an Interview

You're rounding the final corner of your interview, but how do you end it professionally? Here are a few points to help you.

- Prepare a brief summary of your competencies and strengths, related to the position
- Ask about "Next Steps", which will reiterate your interest in the position and the company
- Thank the Interviewer for his/her time and consideration. Be sure to smile and make appropriate closing gestures

Once you've ended the interview, be sure to send a thank you letter within 24 hours of the interview. Use your best judgment to decide whether the Interviewer would prefer to receive a note via email or mail. Be sure to send one to all of those whom interviewed you.

Remember that hiring decisions can take some time, so don't feel discouraged if immediate next steps aren't disclosed during the interview. The Interviewer may need to see other Candidates and discuss with colleagues before making any commitments.



About Manpower

Manpower is the leader in contingent and permanent talent resourcing, workforce programs, and workforce insight and innovation. For more than 60 years, we have helped our clients succeed by leveraging our industry-leading network, providing them with access to a deeper talent pool, unique market knowledge, and actionable workforce programs to help them enhance their efficiency and profitability. Manpower is part of ManpowerGroup™ the world leader in innovative workforce solutions.

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