

How interviews work

Moderate · 1–2 hours to prepare · Free

Most interviews move through the same stages: introduction, their questions, your questions and the close. Research the employer, rehearse a short "tell me about yourself" and a few STAR stories out loud, and arrive or sign on 10 to 15 minutes early. Answer honestly, never bad-mouth a past boss, ask your own questions, and end by asking about next steps. You don't have to answer questions about your health, marital status or arrests.

YOU'LL NEED

- ☐ The job posting
- ☐ A notebook and pen
- ☐ Clothes that fit the workplace, clean and ready the day before
- ☐ A friend to practice with, if you can

DO IT LIKE THIS

- 1 **Research the employer and the job.** It helps you answer their questions, show you're interested and come up with questions of your own. Re-read the job description and your resume.
- 2 **Prepare "Tell me about yourself." Have one or two sentences about your background.** One structure: who you are now, the past experience that's relevant, and why you want this job.
- 3 **Prepare stories for "Tell me about a time when..." questions using the STAR method.** See Story answers (STAR).
- 4 **Write three or more questions to ask.** Not asking any can look like you're not interested. Good ones: "What's a typical day like in this job?" "How is performance measured, and by whom?" "What training is offered?"
- 5 **On the day, plan to arrive 10 to 15 minutes early, or be signed on 10 to 15 minutes early for an online interview.** Bring a notebook and pen, leave the coffee in the car and mute your phone. The interview starts when you arrive, so be polite to everyone you meet.
- 6 **During it, let the interviewer start.** Give honest, direct answers, and ask them to repeat or clarify any question you don't understand. Don't bad-mouth past employers. Speak clearly and not too fast.
- 7 **Close strong.** Thank them, restate your interest ("After learning more, I think I'd be an asset to your team"), and ask about next steps or when to follow up.
- 8 **Send a thank-you within 24 hours.** See Following up after an interview.

Watch out Some questions employers can't ask, mostly about your health, marital status or legal history, like "Have you ever been arrested?" or "Are you taking any prescribed drugs?" You don't have to answer them.

DAD NOTE *Early is on time. On time is late. And ask them one question. It shows you were listening.*

Full lesson: aptkeys.com/work/interviews/how-interviews-work/

Checked October 2, 2026. Sources: CareerOneStop (U.S. Department of Labor); LSU Olinde Career Center; U.S. Department of Labor.