



Interview Preparation Checklist

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You have worked hard to get to the interview stage. You have passed the resume and maybe a telephone interview screening process. Now it is time to meet the employer face-to-face. The interview process can be the most stressful step in your job search. A big part of a successful interview is avoiding simple mistakes. If you arrive at an interview with confidence and you follow the tips below, you will be on your way to a successful interview.

1. **Arrive On Time.** Get detailed directions from the interviewer - or a map, wear a watch, and leave home or your hotel early enough to arrive approximately 15 to 20 minutes early. If the worst happens and you can't make it on time, call the interviewer and arrange to reschedule.
2. **Research the Hospital, Position and Community.** Get information on the hospital and community it is in before the interview. Visit their web page and take notes, particularly on new things happening or about to take place at the hospital.
3. **Be Professional, Confident and Look Your Best.** The first impression is a lasting impression, and you make your greatest impact on the interviewer in the first fifteen seconds. Dress in a conservative suit: subdued colors, no jewelry (unless real gold, silver or pearls), and low heels (polished). Hygiene includes combed hair, brushed teeth, deodorant, and a low-key scent. Check everything the night before, again before walking out the door, and once again in the restroom just before the interview.
4. **No Smoking, Gum Chewing or Drinking.** Employers are more likely to hire non-smokers, so be sure that when in an interview you do not smoke or smell like smoke. Also, do not chew gum during an interview, and if it is a lunch or dinner interview do not order alcoholic drinks even if others do.
5. **Bring a Pen and Pad (notebook) with Questions Written Down Pertaining to the Position.** (i.e. What is expected of me? What happened to the prior incumbent? How long has the position been open?)
6. **Be Confident and Friendly.** Walk into the interview with the feeling like you are about to impress them so much that they will have to make you an offer. Smile, and keep eye contact during the entire interview. Slightly lean towards them to show interest in what they are saying, maintain good posture, and answer questions with enthusiasm.
7. **Have the Interviewer Talking 60 to 70% of the Time.** Have a list of probing questions pertaining to the job responsibilities of the position, division and hospital goals, company culture, etc. Answer questions with questions. For example: If you are asked about a specific qualification, answer the question fully, then inquire as to how that fits with what the company is looking for. Don't be afraid to probe into the duties of the position. When a requirement is mentioned that fits one of your strengths, bring it out. An excellent question to ask is: *"If you have two candidates with almost identical backgrounds, what quality or qualities would make you choose one over the other?"* Or, you might say: *"If the perfect candidate was standing in front of you, reporting for work, could you describe that candidate?"* Remember, the interviewer should be talking 60 to 70% of the time. Don't talk yourself out of a great job opportunity!!!

One of the toughest interview questions that you can be asked is, *"Tell me about yourself."* Rather than guess where the interviewer wants you to begin, use this very simple response: *"I'd be happy*



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to. *Where would you like me to begin?*" Once you have the interviewers reply, you have a point of reference and can begin answering the question.

8. **Trend of Performance Over Time.** Indicate the impact you have had with your current and previous employer(s) over the past five to ten years. This would include major accomplishments and organizational changes that you have implemented. This is a good time to share what you can do for the interviewer's facility. Have a plan before the interview! Do not simply "wing it."
9. **Experience, Education and Industry Background.** Use this along with the past accomplishments category. Strong education and experience can sometimes offset a weaker accomplishments rating.
10. **Problem Solving and Thinking Skills.** Express that you have the ability to solve job-related problems and you can anticipate what needs to be done.
11. **Character: Values, Commitment and Goals.** Summarize your integrity, honesty, responsibility, openness and fairness in dealing with others. Express your commitment to the organization, and have a plan as to what you can do for the hospital. This topic should be saved for the end of the interview, or wait for the second interview.
12. **Stay Positive!** Even if you decide that you don't feel the position is right for you, NEVER communicate that during the interview. Once you get home, you may change your mind. After you have considered it, if you still feel the position is not for you, let us know and we can withdraw you gracefully, but keep the door open for future consideration.
13. **NO Bad-Mouthing Anyone!** Whether you are talking about your present employer, former employer or the competition. You don't ever want to look like a complainer.
14. **Ask for the Job.** At the conclusion of the interview, state that you are very interested in pursuing this position, and then ask, *"Where do we go from here?"* or *"What is the next step?"* If you really think you hit a home run, ask, *"When do I start?"* What you are doing is asking for feedback on how well you did. Another excellent "closing" question would be, *"Is there any reason that you could not offer me this position today?"*
15. **DO NOT DISCUSS SALARY!** If asked about your current salary, DO NOT discuss it or the amount of salary you are looking to receive. Just like you wouldn't want to buy a car without knowing all about the options available, you wouldn't want to commit too early on your "price." You might say: *"Compensation is extremely important to me, and I will consider your best offer; but, frankly what is most important at this point is what I can offer your hospital and what the future will hold for both of us in a long-term relationship."* Also, explain to him/her that you would prefer they discuss job offers with _____ of Stern & Associates. If you are asked to complete an application, be sure you enter "N/A" in all spaces that ask about current salary, prior salary, or expected salary. Remember, if you give in on this point and tell them your current salary, you are also sending them a clear message that you are NOT a strong person (manager). We have had many good candidates lose out on "a sure thing" by caving in on this one question alone.
16. **Have available a list of four professional references you can present, IF REQUESTED.** These references should include names of former supervisors in previous jobs who would be willing to discuss in detail your work performance, usually for positions covering only the last ten to fifteen years. Be sure that you have checked your references thoroughly so that you can be assured that they will provide positive feedback to the inquirer. Stern & Associates will check your references and will provide responses and contact information to the hospital; however, some clients prefer to check references themselves.



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17. **Call Your Recruiter.** As soon as possible after the interview, call your recruiter to advise him/her how things went. We will then call our client for their feedback and advise you of their impression.
18. **Send a Thank You Letter or Card.** Point out your strong points that were brought out in the interview and that you are indeed very interested in pursuing the opportunity. This is VERY important and should be done immediately after the interview (definitely within 24 hours of the interview). Consider taking cards and postage with you and mailing them the same day as the interview. A card/letter should be sent to each person you interviewed. As you are interviewing, be sure to request a business card from each interviewer. This way you will have their correct name spelling, title, and mailing address.
19. **Email Thank You.** In addition to the thank you letter/card (not in place of it), if possible send each person a "thank you" email note. Again, bring out any strong points and clearly state that you are very interested in pursuing the opportunity. Keep the email to the point, brief, and professional. Read the message over several times and use spell check before clicking the send button.
20. **Last Question.** The last question you need to ask before completing your interview with the "hiring authority" is: *"Assuming you make me an employment offer and I accept, what is the one most important thing I can do to make an immediate contribution to the hospital?"* This one question alone will set you apart from all other candidates being interviewed that are still asking about parking spaces, benefits, etc. It shows you would be a serious "company" employee . . . exactly what every employer is looking for.

Be sure to read the following additional articles to help you have a *winning interview*:

- *Why Use A Search Firm?*, by Max W. Mitchell
- *Pitfalls Of Using Online Resume Job Banks*, by Max W. Mitchell
- *How To Master Telephone Interviews*, by Max W. Mitchell
- *How to Dress For Success*, by Max W. Mitchell
- *Five Skills You Must Convey During An Interview*, by Max W. Mitchell
- *Thank You Letter Tips*, by Max W. Mitchell
- *Sample Thank You Letter For A Job Interview*, by Max W. Mitchell
- *Sample Email Thank You Letter*, by Max W. Mitchell