



Preparing 4-Hers for Interview Success

Are you getting ready to interview for your first job or for a 4-H teen leadership position? Interviewing can be intimidating and stressful but being prepared can help you go a long way. Preparing for an interview and having the experience of interviewing will enable you to develop the skills needed as you head off to college or toward your long-term career path. Employers want applicants who are willing to learn, trustworthy, honest, reliable, and punctual.

Search for a Job You are Interested in and then Carefully Complete the Application

If you haven't found a specific job or position you are interested in, completing a search for the right position is your first step. There are several ways you can look for employment. Most job seekers use newspapers and the internet. Once you have decided to apply, completing the application and any other necessary paperwork is a crucial piece of the process. Be sure to answer all questions completely and fill in all required information. If the application is handwritten, it should be neat and free of errors. If you make an error, then start over on a new application form. If you are applying online, carefully review your grammar and spelling. It is distracting and shows lack of attention to detail if you submit a document that is incomplete, has errors or is not neat. A messy application and/or one with errors could take you out of the running for a position.

Even if not Required, it is a Good Idea to Include a Resume with Your Application or Bring it to the Interview

There are many different resume formats so research and use one that is the most appropriate for the position for which you are applying. Follow these guidelines:

- Always use black ink;
- Keep the length to one page;
- Highlight the most important things about yourself; and
- Make sure it is typed and in an easy-to-read format and font.

Preparing for the Interview will Help Ensure Success

Once you have completed the application process and are scheduled for an interview, the following tips will help you get prepared for interview day:

- ▶ **Background Information** - Having some background information about the company or position you have applied for is key, so do some research. It might be as simple as reviewing a website or materials to gain further knowledge.
- ▶ **Sell Yourself** - Selling yourself in an interview is important so complete an inventory of your strengths. What abilities and skills do you have that would be beneficial for the position? Creating a list of these points ahead of time will make it easier to share this information during the interview.
- ▶ **Why this Job or Position?** - Why did you choose this particular position? Think through the simple reasons why you decided to apply for this position and be honest when interviewing.
- ▶ **Practice Interviewing** - Thinking through potential questions that could be asked is a great way to prepare for an interview. Have someone in your family or a friend help you practice interviewing. This will get you prepared and make you feel more at ease when you get to the actual interview.
- ▶ **What Questions Do You Have?** - Creating a list of questions to ask your interviewer(s) is perfectly acceptable. As a matter of fact, this shows preparation and interest in the position. Potential question topics you may want to ask include hours, salary, expectations for the position, and time frame for a start date if hired.
- ▶ **Where is the Interview?** - Familiarize yourself with the interview location. Mapping the directions and completing a practice drive to the location might even be warranted. Knowing exactly where you are going and how much time it will take you to get there will put you at ease the day of your interview.

- ▶ **Hygiene** - Being well groomed makes the right kind of impression. This includes having hair brushed and neat as well as clean hands including fingernails. If you have chipped fingernail polish, either remove completely or repaint. Facial hair should be freshly shaven and groomed.
- ▶ **Professional Dress** - When selecting clothes for your interview, keep in mind that professional attire includes clothes that are not too revealing, are clean, fit well, and do not have words. Avoid selecting clothes that include jeans, have holes or stains, or that are wrinkled. Looking through your closet days or weeks before your interview is recommended so you can make sure your selection is ready for the day of the interview.



- ▶ **Posture** - Sitting in the seat with your back straight and having good posture instead of slumping or leaning over provides a more professional impression.
- ▶ **Eye Contact** - Making eye contact with the interviewer(s) is expected but be sure not to stare or make it uncomfortable. If there are multiple interviewers, be sure to make eye contact with all of them. Staying focused on the interview and not allowing your eyes to roam or be distracted is important.
- ▶ **Answering Questions Asked** - Interviewers have selected specific questions to ask during the interview so they can get to know you better and have a better understanding of whether you are the right fit for the position. If you don't understand the question, it is okay to ask for it to be repeated or reworded. Paraphrasing the question as part of your answer is also suitable. Taking a moment to formulate your answer before speaking is a perfectly acceptable practice as it will help you to create a comprehensive answer instead of a one-word response.
- ▶ **Be a Clear Communicator** - When speaking, be sure to speak loud enough for everyone in the room to hear you. Mumbling is a distraction and the content of what you are saying is lost as well. Also, remember to monitor the rate at which you are talking. Often when people are nervous, they tend to speak faster which means the listener must work very hard to take in what you are saying.
- ▶ **Leave Your Cell Phone at Home** - While there might be separation anxiety, do not bring your cell phone in the interview room. Even if it is set to vibrate, it can make noise and be distracting. Likewise, do not have gum or mints in your mouth for the interview. It can make it difficult to speak clearly and is a distraction.

- ▶ **Nervousness** - While you may be nervous, try to limit the distractions that this may cause. Often when nervous, people will tap their feet or hands or move around in the seat often. Limiting this type of distraction will only benefit you in the interview.



Take a Deep Breath and Try to Relax

The day of your interview is a big day. If you have prepared using the tips in the previous section, you will feel more comfortable and organized.

Now it's time for the actual interview.

The following tips will help to assure a positive interview experience.

- ▶ **Arrive Early** - Arrive at your interview appointment at least 15 minutes ahead of your scheduled time. This illustrates your ability to be punctual.
- ▶ **Make a Good First Impression** - "It takes just a quick glance, maybe three seconds, for someone to evaluate you when you meet for the first time. In this short time, the other person forms an opinion about you based on your appearance, body language, demeanor, mannerisms, and how you are dressed." (Mind Tools 2019)

When you meet your interviewer(s), be sure to shake hands. Using a firm handshake that doesn't feel like a noodle or isn't bone breaking is important. A solid, firm handshake will do.

RESUME TEMPLATE

HEADING:

Name
Address
Contact Information

OBJECTIVE:

A statement of your resume objective. The statement needs to be short, and include a good description of yourself. No more than two lines or two sentences long.

EDUCATION:

List your education, grade or degree, high school, place and expected graduation date, or graduation date.

QUALIFICATIONS: Use bullet points and short sentences to list the skills you have that qualify you for the position for which you are applying.

EXPERIENCE:

- List all previous work experience;
- List the most current positions/most relevant positions first;
- Make sure to list the time frame of each work experience; and
- If this is your first job, include experiences such as volunteering, certification classes or workshops taken, including dates.

REFERENCES:

- List people who the potential employer can contact. Make sure these individuals will give you a positive review.
- Do not use family members.
- Make sure to contact the person you list to ask permission to use them as a reference.

Interview Do's and Don'ts

INTERVIEW DO'S	INTERVIEW DONT'S
Be well groomed. That includes clean hands, hair, body, shaved and fingernails.	Poorly groomed on day of interview Not having clean hands, hair, body, unshaved or fingernails.
Always dress professionally for your interview. Wear clean dress pants or skirt, a nice dress shirt, close-toed shoes, and clothes that fit you well.	Unprofessional dress for a job interview. Don't wear jeans, word phrase shirts, short or revealing clothes, open toe shoes, and clothes that don't fit well.
Make sure you have nothing in your mouth during the interview to allow clear communication.	Don't chew gum or mints which may be cause problems when communicating in an interview.
Good posture when taking a seat for the interview. Use good posture--sit and stand straight and tall.	Poor posture when taking a seat for the interview. Slouching or leaning back in your chair.
During the interview always be calm, collected, and confident, smile and be enthusiastic!	Don't be overly nervous or shy and try not to let it show in your facial expression during the interview.
Be polite and use your best manners. Always thank the interviewer for their time. Remember, the real purpose of interviewing is sharing and learning.	Don't be rude or short with answers even if interviewer is not displaying good manners.
Don't take a cell phone with you on an interview. There is nothing that can't wait till interview is over.	Cell phone ringing or vibrating in the middle of an interview. Can show poor judgement and that other things take priority, even if an honest mistake.
Be prepared for an interview and do your research on the position and company you're interviewing for. Think about possible questions and practice responses.	Don't wait till the day before to get ready for your interview. Don't go to an interview unprepared for possible questions.
During your interview, maintain good eye contact by look directly at the interviewer. Give him/her your full attention.	Don't have roaming eyes or allow distractions by other people or noises around you during the interview.
Greet interviewer with a firm handshake and introduce yourself.	Greeting your interviewer with no kind gestures or a death grip handshake and not introducing yourself.
When answering the interviewer's questions, speak clearly and loudly enough for the interviewer to hear your answers.	Answering interview questions with low volume or by mumbling makes it hard for the interviewer.
Make sure you take time to consider every question before formulating your response. Always consider sharing experiences or providing more details for complete understanding for the interviewer.	No quick, short or one word responses to interview questions. Don't assume that interviewer knows information you are sharing. Avoid using acronyms or abbreviations.
Be able to identify what went wrong and what went right. ALWAYS consider interviews as a learning experience.	Don't reflect on an interview experience negatively or overly positive.

References

The Mind Tools Content Team. "Making a Great First Impression" October 3, 2019. <<https://www.mindtools.com/CommSkill/FirstImpressions.htm> >.

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