



better work, better life



# Interview prep kit



# Win the job you want!

Some people can go an entire career without finding their “dream job”. So, when you have the opportunity to land the perfect position, you have to be sure you are ready. You must excel at presenting your marketable skills and experience to potential employers. In other words, you have to be an effective interviewee.

There are proven ways to get beyond the typical interview and make yourself stand out from all the other candidates. That’s what the professionals at Adecco Finance are all about. And that’s why we’ve developed this guide.

We’ve put together our most valuable tips and guidelines to help you with the interview process. In addition, we’ve provided you with the questions and worksheets to assist you in formulating your thoughts and interview strategy.

After years of experience with the sharpest candidates and the toughest clients, we have a very good idea of what works in an interview and what doesn’t. You’ll find all the information you need to prepare for and win the job you want!

## Interview prep kit

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## Prepare like a champ

Interviews can be tough - even for seasoned veterans. The interview is, however, your best opportunity to gain insight into the position and company, as well as to determine how your experience and talent can contribute to the company's growth and profitability.

In this booklet, we have included a list of things you can do to make your interview as successful as possible.

### Do your homework - on the company.

Find out as much about the company - its history, its current situation and its future - as you can. Sources to use include:

- Your recruit
- The Internet
- Periodicals and trade journals
- Annual reports and 10K reports
- Friends and business associates

### Do your homework - on the position.

Have a thorough understanding of the position, the primary responsibilities, and what is expected.

Be prepared to ask questions:

- Who has been successful and why?
- Who has failed and why?
- Who does the position report to

### Do your homework - on yourself.

Review your career history thoroughly:

- Review all dates, positions, responsibilities, and accomplishments.
- Know your strengths and weaknesses.
- Be prepared to cite specific examples of achievements and how these experiences can help the company solve some of its problems.
- Concentrate on your most recent positions, but don't neglect your early career.
- Reflect on your successes so you can adequately impart your strengths when given the chance! Remember, the prospective employer will make his or her hiring decision based on these key factors:
  - Attitude and business poise
  - Image presentation and communication skills
  - Experience and skill set
  - Education and certifications
  - Transferable industry and technical background

## Interviewing tips to secure your success

Selling yourself to a prospective employer in 45 minutes is enough to make anyone a bit nervous. There's a simple way to overcome nerves: just practice interviewing. Ask your recruiter, a spouse, a relative, a friend - anyone you trust - to conduct realistic interviews and to provide constructive criticism.

### Tell the employer why you are interested in the opportunity/company.

(Use this space to formulate your thoughts and capture your best attributes.)

1 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 2 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 3 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 4 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 5 \_\_\_\_\_  
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### Tell the employer why you are the most qualified person for the position.

(Highlight your areas of expertise and major accomplishments.)

1 \_\_\_\_\_  
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 2 \_\_\_\_\_  
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 3 \_\_\_\_\_  
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 4 \_\_\_\_\_  
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 5 \_\_\_\_\_  
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## Interviewing tips continued

- **Arrive early to the interview.** We recommend you get there at least 15 minutes early.
- Fill out all applications neatly and completely. Write “negotiable” in the salary section.
- **Be enthusiastic about the position and the company.**
- **Ask specific questions.** Respond positively to the interviewer’s questions whenever possible.
- **Do not discuss salary or benefit packages.** Remain open. Let your recruiter handle these sensitive negotiations.
- **Sell your attitude during the interview.** Ask for the position - be proactive at the end of the interview.
- **When meeting the interviewer, mirror their demeanor.**
- **Do not answer questions with a simple “yes” or “no.”** Sell yourself by using examples and paint a clear picture of where, when, how, what, and why you did it.
- **Call your recruiter immediately after the interview.**
- **Stress your achievements and accomplishments.**
- **Answer all questions clearly and succinctly.** Do not ramble on. Role play some responses before the interview. Practice makes perfect!
- **Do not make derogatory remarks about previous or present employers.**
- **Tell your possible employer what you are going to do for them, NOT what they can do for you.**
- **Always represent yourself honestly.**
- **Answer the question that’s asked.** You should not intentionally ignore a question by answering a different question or asking a question yourself. If you are unsure about the question, ask the interviewer to repeat it.
- **Answer questions honestly and directly.** Interviewers want candidates they can trust. Honest and direct answers are extremely disarming and, because they’re relatively rare, are very effective. Remember to play up your strengths. If you have to discuss negative experiences, point out what you learned from them and why you won’t make the same mistakes again.
- **Organize your answers.** Consider ways to give your answer structure, either by organizing your response chronologically or organizing your points in order of their importance.
- **Be brief.** An interview is supposed to be a dialogue, not a diatribe. If you think you’re going on too long, cut your answer short.
- **Be energetic.** If you are not interested in or energized by your response, how can you expect the interviewer to be?
- **Be positive about your reason for leaving your current job or any previous jobs.** The key word to remember is “more.” You want more challenges, more responsibility, more opportunity, etc. If you’ve been fired or laid-off, stress how much you learned from the experience and how it has helped you become even better at what you do.
- **Quantify the confidence other employers have placed in you.** Do this by stressing specific facts, figures and measurable accomplishments.

- **Make the job you’re interviewing for your chief objective.** Frame your answers so that you let the interviewer know that you see this job as a means to achieving your ultimate career goals.

Talk to your recruiter about specific issues that may be addressed in the interview. Learn about the interview style of those with whom you’ll be meeting. Your preparation will allow you to enter the interview relaxed and confident that you can fulfill the needs of the company.

During the interview, you will be asked difficult questions. These questions are designed to see how you will react under pressure and in unfamiliar territory. There are no “pat” answers to these questions. Interviewers ask different questions and look for different responses. However, by being familiar with the types of questions you may be asked, you will give yourself the opportunity to answer these questions comfortably and confidently. We have included a list of typical stress questions and some examples of how they might be answered on pages 6-9.

## Sample questions

The following is a list of typical stress questions, followed by some examples of how they might be answered (see page 9). Use the space we've provided to jot down your thoughts.

What are your short-term objectives? Long-term objectives?

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What do you look for in a job?

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What is the difference between a good position and an excellent one?

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Why are you leaving? Why did your business fail?

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Why did you choose to interview with my organization?

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What can you do for us that someone else cannot do?

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Why should we hire you?

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Do you work well under pressure, deadlines, etc.?

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How are you best managed?

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How has your early career or background influenced your progression and/or current management style?

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How has your management style changed over the years?

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What kind of salary are you seeking and why?

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What are the most important rewards you expect in your career?

---

What are your five biggest accomplishments in your present or last job?

In your career?

---

What is your biggest strength?

Weakness?

---

What business, credit or character references can you give us?

---

What qualifications do you have that make you think you will be successful in this business?

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In what ways do you think you can make a contribution to our firm?

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How long would it take you to make a contribution to our firm?

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How long would you stay with us?

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If you could start again, what would you do differently?

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## Sample questions continued

How do you rate yourself as a professional?

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What new goals or objectives have you established recently?

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Why?

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---

How have you changed the nature of your job?

---

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What qualities have you liked or disliked in your boss?

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---

What was the most difficult ethical decision you ever had to make?

---

What was the result?

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Why have you not obtained a job so far?

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What features of your previous jobs have you disliked?

---

---

Would you describe a few situations in which your work was criticized?

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---

How would you evaluate your present firm?

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**As we indicated earlier, there are no “pat” answers to these questions.**

**Review the questions and your responses. While some of the questions seem difficult, the keys to answering effectively are to be direct, truthful, positive and succinct!**

## Recommended answers



The following are key points you may want to consider when faced with some common interview questions:

### **What is wrong with your present firm?**

Be sure to not come across as negative if asked this question. Explain how you have enjoyed working there and that there are good people in management. Express that you are looking to handle additional responsibilities and those opportunities do not exist in your present position - you are looking for an opportunity that provides more career growth. The key is to come across as positive and upbeat.

### **How long would it take you to make a contribution?**

You want to sound motivated and determined, but be sure to not over-promise. Explain to the interviewer that once you understand the operating environment and the personnel, you have the proven skills and experience to make a contribution in a very short time. Consider asking a question like: “What do you feel will be the main focus of the position for the first six months?”

### **Why are you leaving your present position?**

Again, you do not want to discuss any negative aspects about your past or present employer. Consider including something like this in your answer: “I enjoy my work, but I am anxious to expand my knowledge and take on more. Frankly, these opportunities do not exist in my present position.” If you are interested in the position, ask for it, or ask for the next interview. If you want this job, you may want to say this: “I am very interested in your company. I am confident that I can do an excellent job for you. What is the next step in your hiring process?”



## Questions to ask

An interview involves an exchange of information. Here are some questions you can ask that will help you learn more about the position and the company, and help you better gauge the interest and objectives of the interviewer:

- Who are your major competitors and how do they stack up against you in terms of product, market share, methods of marketing, strengths and weaknesses?
- Tell me about the history/growth of the company.
- In the recent history of the company, what has been the biggest advance and what has been the biggest setback?
- What is your highest priority in the next six months and how could someone like me help?
- Tell me about a typical day.
- Tell me about your training program.
- What are the characteristics of your top people?
- Where do you see your company going in the next several years?
- What are three main qualities you are looking for in a candidate?
- How do you see me fitting in with your company?

- If I were to ask your top person what he/she likes most/least about the company, what type of response would I get?
- How do I compare with other qualified applicants?
- Do you have any hesitations about me being successful with your company?
- What does your interview process entail?
- When may I return and meet some of the people with whom I would be working?
- What are your personal satisfactions and disappointments since you have been with the firm?

### **Closing the interview.**

If the interviewer has failed to elicit some important information about you, make that information known before you leave.

Lastly, always find out what the next steps will be and when they are likely to occur.

## Dress for success

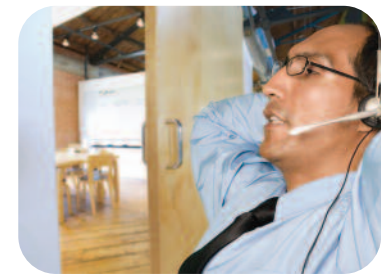
### Men:

- A conservative suit in dark blue or dark gray with a long-sleeved white shirt. The tie should be conservative, but stylish. Dark socks (over-the-calf) with dark, freshly-shined shoes. We recommend that you do not deviate from this unless specifically discussed with your recruiter!
- Jewelry should be limited to no more than a wristwatch and wedding ring.
- Fingernails should be clean and trimmed.
- Facial hair should be clean-shaven.

### Women:

- A business suit in a subdued color is best for first interviews. Natural fibers work best. Dress in today's styles, but keep the hemline close to knee-length and keep blouses modest. We recommend that you do not deviate from this unless specifically discussed with your recruiter!
- Hosiery should be worn at all times, regardless of weather conditions. Shoe heel height should be moderate and comfortable - shoes should be freshly polished.
- A conservative dress or suit is fine for additional interviews.
- Jewelry should be minimal and in good taste.
- Nails should be well manicured and polished in clear or light, conservative colors. If long nails are a part of a personal fashion statement, avoid bright colors and glittered accents for interviewing.
- Hairstyles will vary with each individual. Long hair - pull back; short hair - keep neat.
- Makeup should be tastefully and lightly applied.

## The phone interview



Phone interviews are frequently the first step in the interviewing process.

### Here are a few tips to help you succeed:

- Work with your recruiter to set up a specific time for the call. This will allow you to be fully prepared to conduct an effective interview.
- Treat the phone interview just as you would a personal, face-to-face interview. Just because it is over the phone does not mean that you should take it lightly.
- Make sure the phone you plan to use for the call is of high quality. Avoid using cell phones.
- If you have an answering machine/voice mail, please make sure your recording is both courteous and professional.
- Make sure family members know how to answer the phone and take messages in your absence. Keep a notepad by the phone for messages and reinforce how important their cooperation is to your search success.

- Be aware of any potential distractions (i.e., music, television, background conversations, etc). Plan to sit in a quiet room or area where you can speak and think in a productive manner.
- If you have the "call-waiting" feature on your phone, it is best not to interrupt your conversation to answer a call.
- If you have a bad connection and/or have difficulty hearing the other person, offer to call them back.
- Be fully prepared with your notes in regards to: 1) the company, 2) the position, and 3) yourself (resume). You will come across as an organized and articulate interviewee.

Again, do not take this step in the interview process lightly. This is a great opportunity to sell yourself and to find out more about the position.

Last, but certainly not least, the phone interview is the opportune time to set up your face-to-face meeting. Don't be afraid to ask for the appointment! Have your calendar at hand so you may suggest dates that would be convenient to interview.



## How to handle the money issue

The question of compensation can be very sensitive and often requires extended negotiations to reach a figure that is fair and acceptable to both the company and the individual. Some points to remember:

- **Most companies want to make a fair offer.** They want to bring new employees on board at a salary level that provides incentive to change jobs - and one that is also consistent with the company's existing salary structure for that position.
- **The days of 20% and 25% increases in compensation are gone.** Inflation continues to be at historical lows and companies remain focused on maintaining consistency in salary structures. With economic growth in many industries leveling off, be realistic in your expectations.
- **The position/opportunity is the single most important element of your decision.** No amount of money will make a poor position or company a good one. A quality position and the opportunity to work with people in a dynamic work environment offers many rewards that money cannot buy.
- **Be flexible!** Compensation packages are a combination of salary, bonus, titles and perks. These elements can be

arranged/re-arranged - sometimes very creatively - to satisfy both the individual and the company.

- **Keep your recruiter involved.** Part of our job is to handle sensitive negotiations and move both parties to a fair and acceptable compensation package. We do this for a living and can often offer alternatives that will satisfy both parties. We are also a good buffer and can keep sensitive negotiations on a professional level.
- **Salary discussions.** If you are asked what salary you are looking for, try to avoid quoting a specific figure. Attempt something like this: "I am very interested in the opportunity and I feel I can make a meaningful contribution. I am currently earning \$\_\_\_\_\_ per year. I would be open to a competitive offer." It is best not to name a figure if at all possible. You don't want to over-price/under-price yourself, so remember to discuss all relevant salary and benefits issues with your recruiter.

If you are asked again later in the process, you may want to restate what you are earning and ask what a person with your experience level is worth in their company.

## 10 reasons for not accepting a counter-offer

Excerpts from a *Wall Street Journal* article

- 1 What kind of company are you working for if you have to threaten to resign before they pay you what you are worth?
- 2 Where is the money for the counter-offer coming from? Is it your next raise early? All companies have strict wage and salary guidelines which must be followed. Are they going to make your increase retroactive in order to compensate for underpaying you over the last several years?
- 3 Your company may immediately start looking for a new person at a cheaper price. In many cases, you could be training your replacement.
- 4 You now have made your employer aware that you are unhappy. From this day on, your loyalty will always be in question.
- 5 When promotion time comes around, your employer will remember who was loyal and who was not.
- 6 When times get rough, your employer will begin the cutback with you.
- 7 The same circumstances that now cause you to consider a change will repeat themselves in the future even if you accept a counter-offer. Things about your position and company rarely change.
- 8 Statistics show that if you accept a counter-offer, the probability of voluntarily leaving in six months, or being let go within one year, is extremely high - 85% of people who accept a counter-offer are gone in six months, and 90% of people who accept are gone in twelve months.
- 9 Accepting a counter-offer is an insult to your intelligence and a blow to your personal pride knowing that you were bought.
- 10 Once the word gets out, the relationship that you now enjoy with your co-workers will never be the same. You will lose the personal satisfaction of peer group acceptance.



## Resignations

While resigning from your current position can be emotional and sometimes stressful, there are several things you can do to make the process go smoothly and quickly.

- Put it in writing. Handing your boss a resignation letter is the most effective way to handle an uncomfortable situation.
  - It is formal and will become a part of your permanent record. It is for your own protection.
  - It will help you keep the focus on the positive aspects of your career move rather than any negative aspects of your old situation.
  - It relieves the pressure of having to speak first. (On the next page you will find a sample resignation letter.)
- The sooner you leave the company, the better. Give fair notice, but ask to be relieved as soon as possible. The company will get by without you, and you owe your energies and loyalty to yourself and to your new opportunity!
- Do not talk about counter-offers; it is the single worst thing you can do during the resignation process.
- Talk to your recruiter. Keep us updated. We can help keep this process as smooth and painless as possible.

## Sample resignation letter

Date  
Former Manager's Name  
Title  
Company

Dear [Former Manager's Name]:

It is with mixed emotions, yet with firm conviction, that I write this letter of resignation from [Company Name].

My association during the past [#] years with this excellent firm and its many fine people has been a wonderful part of my professional and personal life.

Please understand that I have made my decision after considerable deliberation. An outstanding opportunity presented itself that will significantly enhance my career and assist me in achieving my goals.

I am therefore resigning from [Company Name] effective [date]. This will allow sufficient time to complete current commitments prior to commencing with my new employer on [date]. In the interim, I will work with you and the staff to provide a smooth transfer of my current duties.

I hope that you will understand and accept my decision. I will support you in making this change as easy as possible for the staff and department.

Sincerely,  
[Your Name]

## The follow-up letter — your chance to stand out

After the interview is over, it is critical to continue selling yourself by following up and reinforcing your qualifications. Effective follow up gives you a chance to say things you have forgotten to say, or to correct things you wish you had said differently. More importantly, it distinguishes you from other candidates. All too many people do not follow up. This is your chance to stand out.

### To gain full advantage of this opportunity, here are a few points to consider:

- Send the follow-up letter as soon as possible. This allows you to convey a sense of urgency and a high interest level in the opportunity. Ideally, your letter should go out the next day.
- Be as brief as possible. It shows respect for others' time.
- The body of the letter should address four main points:
  1. Thank them for their time.
  2. Express interest and enthusiasm in the company and position.
  3. Using the manager's own words from the interview, highlight your experiences and accomplishments that amplify your qualifications.
  4. Ask for the next interview.

Have someone carefully proofread your

letter, then email it as an attached document to your recruiter for a final proof (we ask you to do this in order to avoid a letter being sent out that does not represent you well). Your recruiter will make any corrections or suggestions. Once you and your recruiter have agreed that the letter is ready to be sent, sign a hard copy and drop it in the mail.

Sending thank-you letters via e-mail is on the impersonal side, so we recommend avoiding it, unless it is necessary due to timing or special circumstances.

If e-mailing is necessary, always try to send as an attachment.

## Sample follow-up letter

Date

Mr. John Smith  
Vice President  
XYZ Company  
1234 South Street  
Anywhere, XX 12345

Dear Mr. Smith:

I appreciate the time spent with you discussing XYZ Company and the \_\_\_\_\_ position. It was a pleasure meeting with you, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. I feel my qualifications and skill set in \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ reflect those necessary to be successful at XYZ Company.

At ABC Corporation, I successfully installed a state-of-the-art \_\_\_\_\_ system on-time and under-budget, as well as managed a staff of up to fifteen professionals. I am confident that I have the experience and drive to successfully manage the \_\_\_\_\_ Department.

I feel an even greater excitement level about the opportunity because it will allow me to attain my goals of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

I look forward to our next meeting to discuss this in greater detail.

Sincerely,  
[Your Name]

## What to avoid


- Poor personal appearance
- Lack of interest and enthusiasm
- Over-emphasis on the money
- Criticism of past employers
- Failure to maintain good eye contact with the interviewer
- Limp handshake
- Being late for the interview
- Not asking detailed enough questions about the position
- Not enough detail when responding to the questions asked by the interviewer
- Not able to express yourself clearly
- Lack of planning for career; no purpose or goals
- Lack of confidence; ill at ease
- Lack of factual information
- Lack of manners, courtesy
- Lack of vitality
- Indecisiveness
- Coming across as merely “shopping around”
- Cynicism
- Being intolerant
- Inability to take criticism / not open to being mentored
- Being overbearing, overaggressive, conceited; “know-it-all”.



**Do you want to learn more about being an effective interviewee?**

**Your Adecco Finance representative can help you develop your interview strategy, give you a tremendous advantage over other candidates and put you on your way to landing your dream job. Contact us today.**

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- Information Technology
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