

There are many different types of interview methods that are used. Every job is different, so be prepared! You may experience a combination or all of the below interview types throughout your career. Also, remember that in professional interviewing, you will almost always go through a series of interviews. As a general rule, each subsequent interview will become longer and more detailed. Remember that the key to success is to be well prepared for every interview.

Screening Interviews

Screening interviews are generally conducted when an employer has a large applicant pool which they want to narrow down to a more manageable number. The purpose is to “weed out” the applicants who are obviously not a fit. Screening interviews are usually done by phone, tend to be very short, and the questions will focus on basic qualifications.

Phone Interviews

Most screening interviews are done by phone, but phone interviews will also be used for other reasons, such as geographic obstacles – the applicant lives in another city or state. In this case, phone interviews will be longer and more detailed. Never conduct a phone interview in your car or in a public area – you need to focus all your attention on the interview without interruptions. Try and use a land line to avoid the possibility of a cell phone call being dropped or poor reception. Treat the phone interview with the same preparation and commitment as you would an in person interview.

Also, phone interviews are often not scheduled in advance, they may just call you. If you are busy, driving, or in any way not able to focus 100% on the interview, ask to schedule a time later in the day or week. Don’t worry, interviewers know they are calling you without an appointment and are usually flexible – they will work with you.

One-on-One Interviews

This is the most common interview method and involves you and the interviewer alone in a private office. Once you are face-to-face with the interviewer, your dress, appearance, non-verbal communication skills, and other visual factors as well as your verbal communication skills will come into play. Building relationship with the interviewer is usually easiest in this setting.

Panel Interviews

Sometimes the employer will have a “selection committee” or reason there will be multiple people involved in conducting interviews. They may want to conduct a “panel interview” in which you will be interviewed by several people at the same time. Panel interviews are very efficient from the employer’s perspective because it allows them, in effect, to do many interviews all at once. Remember that in a panel interview you must connect with and engage every member of the panel, not just the person asking the question. Make sure you get a business card from every panel member and send each a thank you note afterwards. Always bring extra resumes and offer one to each member of the panel at the beginning of the interview.

Serial Interviews

In a serial interview, you will meet with several people throughout the day, usually back-to-back. One person will interview you, and then pass you to the next person, and so on throughout the day. These interviews are physically and mentally tiring because they can often take the entire day. Remember that each time you are passed onward your chances of being hired improve! Serial interviews are typically used for senior-level positions, but there are exceptions.

Lunch Interviews

Sometimes the employer will take you to an interview lunch or even dinner. Interview lunches are less structured, and they will probably be evaluating your social skills and manners. Research and refresh yourself on basic dining etiquette beforehand. When ordering off the menu, stick with something in the mid-range of prices that's easy to eat and never under any circumstances order an alcoholic drink during a lunch or dinner interview.

Group Interviews

You may be asked to do a "group" interview, which is the opposite of a panel interview. Instead of several interviewers and one candidate, one interviewer will sometimes interview several candidates at the same time. The interviewer will ask questions of no one in particular so make sure that you speak up and provide quality answers to ensure you stand out. Group interviews are not very effective for most situations and are rarely used.

Conclusion

Employers conduct multiple interviews as a filtering or screening process. At each step candidates are eliminated from consideration until at the end only one person remains. Each time you are invited back for a subsequent interview means you are one step closer to a job offer! In all interviewing situations the key to success is good preparation. The more effort you put into it, the better your odds of succeeding.

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