



Interviewing Techniques Guide



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U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs



Welcome

For Veterans and Military Service Members like you, the Federal government's job-hiring process can be difficult. It is a challenge to:

- Translate your military skills to civilian skills.
- Present your overall military experience in a way that civilian recruiters understand.
- Identify suitable jobs when the same military position may be called something different in civilian terms.

The Internet contains many resources to help navigate the federal recruiting process, but these resources can be confusing. Many websites simply refer you to additional websites with links to other websites. The most helpful resources are those that actually connect you with job openings that fit your background and skills and that honor the sacred pledge that you made to protect our nation.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) created the VA for Vets program for just this purpose: to make the process of finding, applying for and obtaining federal civilian jobs easier.

This Interviewing Techniques Guide prepares you for one of the most important parts of the federal recruiting process, the job interview. It suggests steps you should take prior to an interview, describes different types of interviews and offers ideas on how to effectively answer interview questions.



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The best way to get an interview
is to have a solid resume.

Let the *VA for Vets* Career
Center help you!

About *VA for Vets*

VA for Vets is a comprehensive career development program that assist Veterans and service members to launch or advance their civilian careers at VA. The mission of *VA for Vets* is simple: to create a world-class organization of Veterans serving Veterans. To achieve this, the program's objectives are to:

- Recruit Veterans to work for VA.
- Retain the more than 100,000+ Veterans currently employed at VA.
- Reintegrate VA's service member employees seamlessly after deployments.
- Recognize and honor Veterans' service.
- Educate VA's supervisors, hiring managers, HR professionals and coworkers about Veteran- specific issues and support resources.

The program offers support services tailored to the needs of Veterans and service members like you, including:

- A Career Center to help translate military skills to equivalent civilian skills, assess your skills and job interests, create easy-to-read resumes, apply for open VA positions and save all results into one profile.
- Professional training resources to learn more about deployment and reintegration topics.
- Coaches to address deployment and reintegration issues or questions related to careers at VA.

From dynamic job searches and military skills translation to professional development and deployment lifecycle support—there is something for every Veteran at *VA for Vets* (VAforVets.VA.gov).

Our Mission: To create a world-class organization of Veterans serving Veterans

Introduction

An interview is a conversation in which the hiring manager and the interviewee (you) have some goals.

The Interviewer wants to determine:

- Can the candidate perform the duties associated with the position?
- How does the candidate fit in?
- Is this the best candidate for the position?

You want to determine:

- Do I want this job?
- Can I do this job?
- Does this job offer me the opportunities I want for advancement or experience?

You may encounter several different types of interviews. You probably won't know in advance which type you will be facing, so you should familiarize yourself with the different types to better prepare for the interview.

The three most common types are phone, individual, and group interviews; you may want to pay closer attention to those descriptions.



Phone Interview

The telephone rings. It's for you. An unknown voice provides an introduction and begins a conversation. "I'm pleased to tell you that after reviewing your resume, you were selected to be interviewed."

Is this a moment of excitement or a moment of panic for you?

Employers use telephone interviews as a way of screening job candidates for employment in order to narrow the pool of applicants who will be invited for in-person interviews. It's important to be prepared for a phone interview on a moment's notice. You never know when a recruiter or a networking contact might call and ask if you have a few minutes to talk. Here are a few tips that will make your phone interviews more successful.

- Get a high-quality phone.
- Have your resume and cover letter in front of you.
- Stand or at least sit up straight at a table or desk.
- Treat the phone interview seriously, just as you would a face-to-face interview.
- Make a cheat sheet of questions asked and answers you provided.
- Be prepared to write down the name of the person who called, date, time and next steps.



Individual Interview

During an individual interview you are invited to meet with one person — whether a human resources professional, hiring manager, recruiter, your potential boss, or a coworker — to speak, in depth, about your qualifications and how you might benefit the organization. Sometimes companies use one-on-one interviews to further decrease the size of the applicant pool.

Group Interview

One way companies can save time during the hiring process is to conduct one or more group interviews with a candidate. In a group interview, employers place you in a room with several people at a time rather than have you meet individually with members of the organization. Questions can come from anyone at any time, and each member in the group will evaluate you.

If you are asked a question in a group interview, be sure that you always address the person asking the question, but try to maintain good eye contact with several members of the group when answering a question. The key to

succeeding in a group interview is to remain focused. Don't let the number of people squeezed into the room intimidate you.

Observational Interview

Perhaps the most transparent type of interview is one where you are asked to demonstrate one or more tasks typical of the job. These types of interviews are often used when it is a prerequisite for a job candidate to have the necessary skills or knowledge in order to perform the job and when these skills can be easily and inexpensively tested. This may include giving a demonstration of public speaking ability, answering telephone calls or operating a piece of equipment while the interviewer observes your performance.



Performance-Based Interviewing (PBI)

In performance-based interviewing (PBI) the interviewer will ask you questions about your knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics (KSAs) that are important for you to do the job. This method is also referred to as competency-based or behavioral interviewing.

This type of interview includes competency-based (“How would you do this...?”) questions. These questions make you tell the interviewer how you would approach, handle, deal with, solve, etc., a particular situation, problem, project or challenge that is relevant to the job. Keep in mind that your interviewers will be asking you questions that probe deeply how well you have dealt with situations and challenges in the past.

Solid preparation is essential to a successful PBI interview. Follow these steps:

- Find out what skills and attributes are important to the organization conducting the interview. Talk to alumni, read the organization’s literature and website information and, if possible, attend organization-sponsored events. Once you have determined key skills and attributes preferred by the organization, you will be able to tailor your answers to focus on your success in those same skills.
- Think of three to four specific examples that you can use to illustrate your answers to the behavioral interview questions. Think of situations when you succeeded and didn’t succeed, as your interviewer is almost certain to ask you to give examples of both instances. It is okay to discuss mistakes that you have made in the past as long as you can illustrate what you have learned from them. These examples should be from past work experiences, and you should be prepared to provide significant detail.
- Be comfortable with your resume! Interviewers will often ask you to provide additional information pertaining to an activity or accomplishment that you have listed on your resume.

It is very important that your answers be specific and detailed. Listen carefully to the question and ask for clarification, if necessary. You should frame your answers in a three-step process:

- Define the situation
- Explain the action that you took
- Provide the outcome

Example of a good answer to a PBI interview question:

Q: "Give me an example of when you had to deal with a difficult customer. What was the problem and how was it resolved?"

A: "I had worked at a car repair store that was part of a national chain. One morning while I was at the counter by myself, a very angry customer came in and demanded that I give her a refund on a brake service that she'd had done at another store in another state. Even though I was caught off guard by her rudeness, I offered to check the computer to research what had been done to her car. I found out that she had had new brakes put on three separate times at one of our stores in New Jersey in the past year. I began to sympathize with the customer – of course she was angry! The only problem was that my manager wasn't at work yet and I was not authorized to give refunds without his permission. I let the customer know that I understood why she was angry and informed her that I had to get my manager's permission before giving her a refund. I wrote down her name and phone number and let her know that I would speak with my manager as soon as he arrived that day and would call her as soon as I talked to him about her situation. I also gave her my name and the store phone number just in case she had any questions before I was able to call her back. She was very appreciative that I took the time to give her all of that information and thanked me for being so understanding. As it turned out, after I explained her situation to my manager that afternoon, I was able to extend a full refund on her credit card and call her with the news that same day."

Notice in the above example how the respondent defined the situation, explained the action she took and the end result. To be successful in a PBI, you always need to include all three components.

The Interview

The interview process has three phases: preparing for the interview, during the interview, and after the interview. Each phase is important; however, preparing for the interview can make a big impact on how well you do during the interview. You will be less anxious the better prepared you are, which will give you a greater chance to have a positive interview.

Preparing for the Interview

1. Do Your Homework

Thoroughly research the organization and consult your job description. What exactly does this mean, you ask? Your prospective employer's website is a great place to start learning about the organization. While you're at the organization's site, look for a Press Room or Organization News page that links to recent news releases. These press releases will tell you about the most recent achievements of the organization. Make sure you research information about your interviewers. If the organization site has a search tool, use it to search for their names. You may find a section containing employee biographies or press releases that give you insight into their most visible activities at the organization. Then do a general Web search to get some more background information about them.

Now that you've found out everything you can about the organization and the people who will be interviewing you, Google yourself – you can be sure the interviewers will be doing the same. First, make sure that everything a Web search reveals about you presents you in a good light.

2. Anticipate Interview Questions

Anticipate some common questions for a job interview, and prepare impressive, believable answers. To make sure your answers are succinct and cover what you want it to cover, you should write out your answer before the interview, practice it, time it and rehearse it until it sounds natural. The goal is to tell enough to keep the interviewer's interest, not so much that he or she wonders if you will ever stop talking.



The following are some common interview questions for which you should prepare answers:

- **Tell me something about yourself.**

Most people start saying things like, “Well, I was born in Brooklyn, and when I was eighteen I enlisted in the army...” or “What do you want to know...?” These are the wrong ways to respond to this question. This tells the interviewer you have not prepared properly for the interview and are likely to be equally unprepared on the job.

The interviewer wants to know that you can do the job, fit into the team, what you have accomplished in your prior civilian positions, that your military experience has prepared you for this job and how can you help the organization.

In addition, you should highlight your most important accomplishments through a story. For example, if you tell an interviewer that people describe you as persistent, provide a brief story that shows how you have been persistent in achieving your goals. Interviewers tend to remember stories. Just be sure it is a brief, succinct story, not a novel.

- **How has your military experience, skills and training prepared you for the job?**

Retired and transitioning Veterans often downplay their accomplishments, but your military experiences should showcase your dedication, leadership, teamwork, positive work ethic and cross-functional skills — all things that would interest a future boss. Make sure you tout your accomplishments so an average civilian understands the importance of your achievements. Most employers may not be familiar with military ranks, acronyms, terms, awards and branches of service. Therefore, it is important to describe your military experience in civilian terms. The following is an example of a demilitarized accomplishment statement:



Increased employee retention rate by 16 percent by focusing on training, team building and recognition programs. Earned reputation as one of the most progressive and innovative IT organizations in the Army's communications and IT community.¹

The following is an example of incorporating a military award so employers understand its value:

Received the Army Achievement Medal for completing 400+ medical evaluations and developing patient database using

¹ “Out of Uniform: Resume Tips for Making the Transition,” Retrieved December 30, 2011, from <http://www.military.com/veteran-jobs/content/career-advice/military-transition/military-to-civilian-transition-resume-tips.html>

*MS Access. The database improved reporting functions and tracked patient demographics, records, medication, appointments and status*²

To assist you, it is generally a good idea to start by looking at the citation or narrative summary for your award. This will list what you accomplished; what skills, traits, and qualities that it took to reach that achievement; and how that achievement benefited the team, unit, command or branch of service.

Just remember to translate military terms into civilian terms, e.g., "NCO of the Quarter" would translate to "recognized as the Manager of the Quarter for achieving. . . ."

If you were in active combat, leave out the details. Defending your country and its interests is among the most admirable of pursuits, but the sad truth is actual references to the horrors of combat leave many employers squeamish. While you might have worked in a short-range air defense engagement zone, this experience might not relate to your future goal. Tone down or remove references to the battlefield.³

As mentioned above, however, if you can "civilianize" the terms and focus on the achievement and what it took, you can relate these experiences and achievements to an interviewer. For example: "Platoon Sgt. or Platoon Commander that led his team on patrols through the streets of Fallujah (Iraq) searching for and disarming IEDs. Successfully identified and defused 35 IEDs during this period." That could be translated to civilians as "Supervisor or Team Leader that lead, trained, motivated and directed a team of 35 members successfully, under intense pressure, to achieve a 92-percent (35 out of 38) success rate of every task."

- **How has any prior civilian work experience helped prepare you for the job?**

You should present your civilian work experience in a way that emphasizes how it will specifically and significantly benefit the hiring organization.

- **What are your strengths? What are your weaknesses?**

Answers such as "my weakness is that I work too hard" or "my strength is that I have no weaknesses" are the wrong way to answer this question. You need to assess your strengths and weaknesses in order to answer this question.

² "Out of Uniform: Resume Tips for Making the Transition," Retrieved December 30, 2011, from <http://www.military.com/veteran-jobs/content/career-advice/military-transition/military-to-civilian-transition-resume-tips.html>

³ "Out of Uniform: Resume Tips for Making the Transition," Retrieved December 30, 2011, from <http://www.military.com/veteran-jobs/content/career-advice/military-transition/military-to-civilian-transition-resume-tips.html>

Assessing Your Strengths ⁴

Assess your skills and you will identify your strengths. This is an exercise worth doing before any interview. Make a list of your skills, dividing them into three categories:

- **Knowledge-Based Skills:** Acquired from education and experience, e.g., computer skills, languages, degrees, training and technical ability.
- **Transferable Skills:** Your portable skills that you take from job to job, e.g., communication and people skills, analytical problem solving and planning skills.
- **Personal Traits:** Your unique qualities, e.g., dependable, flexible, friendly, hard working, expressive, formal, punctual and being a team player.

When you complete this list, choose three to five of those strengths that match what the employer is seeking in the job posting. Make sure you can give specific examples to demonstrate why that is your strength if probed further.

Assessing Your Weaknesses

This is probably the most dreaded part of the question. Everyone has weaknesses, but who wants to admit to them, especially in an interview?

The best way to handle this question is to minimize the trait and emphasize the positive. Select a trait and come up with a solution to overcome your weakness. Stay away from personal qualities and concentrate more on professional traits. For example: "I pride myself on being a 'big picture' guy. I have to admit I sometimes miss small details, but I always make sure I have someone who is detail-oriented on my team."

- **What are your long-term goals? What do you see yourself doing five years from now?**

Saying "I do not plan that far along, my goals are short-term only" or "I don't have any" are not the best responses to this question. When answering this question, keep in mind that your long-term goals are not your personal goals but your career goals, which should relate to or somewhat match those of the organization's open position or mission.

- **Are you willing to travel?**

Be honest or you may have a job where you travel too much or not enough.

- **Do you have any questions you would like to ask? ⁵**

⁴ Carole Martin, "What Are Your Greatest Strengths and Weaknesses?" Retrieved December 28, 2011, from <http://career-advice.monster.com/job-interview/interview-questions/greatest-strengths-and-weaknesses/article.aspx>

⁵ Carole Martin, "What Are Your Greatest Strengths and Weaknesses?" Retrieved December 28, 2011, from <http://career-advice.monster.com/job-interview/interview-questions/interview-do-you-have-any-questions/article.aspx>.

Answering “no” is the wrong answer, and it’s also a missed opportunity to find out information about the organization. It is important for you to ask questions – not just any questions but those relating to the job, the organization and the industry.

Depending on who is interviewing you, your questions should vary.

- If you are interviewing with the hiring manager, ask questions about the job, the desired qualities and the challenges.
- If you are interviewing with the human resources manager, ask about the organization and the department.
- If you are interviewing with management, ask about the organization.
- See Attachment D for some questions you may want to ask.



3. Practice Your Responses

Prepare and practice answers to typical interview questions. Find someone to role-play the interview with you. This person should be someone with whom you feel comfortable and with whom you can discuss your weaknesses freely. The person should be objective and knowledgeable, perhaps a business associate. If you are practicing alone, it is a good idea to use a mirror or to record your answers using a video camera or a voice recorder. This will help you assess your body language and the kind of image you project. Then, work on correcting your weaknesses such as speaking rapidly, talking too loudly or softly and nervous habits such as fidgeting with your hands or inappropriate facial expressions.

4. Assess Your Overall Appearance

If you ask job recruiters, they will give examples of job candidates wearing jeans, purple sweat suits and spike heels or sneakers. Other applicants weren’t afraid to show pierced body parts and body tattoos. Still others chewed gum or showed up in rumpled clothes or with their pants falling down. Quite simply, if you make the wrong first impression, it doesn’t really matter if you are the top candidate. You are going to be initially judged solely by your appearance. Since you are assumed to be looking your best, if your best isn’t up to par with the organization’s standards, you’ll have a hard time convincing the hiring manager you are right for the job.

Dressing for success does not necessarily mean that you must go out and buy a \$1,000 suit. Your interview attire

should be appropriate for the job, the organization and the industry. Each organization has its own dress code, and it is essential that you know what the guidelines are before starting a new job.

For the interview, your clothes should be clean and pressed, and your shoes polished. You must look like you belong in the position, take your job seriously and are committed to the organization.

During your military career you had to prepare your uniform for an inspection as matter of demonstrating your discipline, attention to detail, personal and service pride. Take the same approach to your appearance in preparing your attire for an interview. See Attachment E, Job Interview Dress Code, for a list of what you should or should not wear.



During the Interview

1. Promote Yourself ⁶

Although you may cringe at the thought, you need to sell yourself during the interview. You have a product (yourself) to offer this organization, and you must make sure that the interviewer understands what you have to offer. If you sit back and dutifully await the interviewer's questions, you may never have the opportunity to mention your best skills and qualities. This doesn't mean that you take over the interview or ignore the interviewer's questions. Remember that although the interviewer controls the flow of the interview, you control the content.

2. Set Yourself Apart from the Competition ⁷

Your interviewer may be bored to tears from interviewing a series of cookie-cutter candidates who speak in the same generalities about their qualifications: "I'm a diligent worker, I'm a team player, I'm a quick learner."

This doesn't mean that you shouldn't use those terms in describing yourself. But you should be able to describe, in detail, previous situations in which you demonstrated those qualities.



3. Enthusiasm is Vital! ⁸

Demonstrate your interest in the job and in the organization. Enthusiasm works best when it is:

- Sincere. Don't gush over a job or an organization that you couldn't give a hoot about. In fact, why are you interviewing with this organization if you're not excited about the job?
- Based in your deep interests. If you start your career and job search with an awareness of your deepest, most compelling interests, you should eventually find yourself in interviews for jobs that you truly are excited about.

⁶ Job Search Online During the Interview Key Concepts, Retrieved December 30, 2011, from <http://www.jobsearchonline.bc.ca/Interviews/duringtheinterview.htm>

⁷ Job Search Online During the Interview Key Concepts, Retrieved December 30, 2011, from <http://www.jobsearchonline.bc.ca/Interviews/duringtheinterview.htm>

⁸ Job Search Online During the Interview Key Concepts, Retrieved December 30, 2011, from <http://www.jobsearchonline.bc.ca/Interviews/duringtheinterview.htm>

In addition to those three things, try to:

- RELAX!
- Answer the questions using the “Prove It” method (see Attachment C).
- Ask intelligent questions about the organization.
- Keep negative information about yourself to yourself.
- Be honest.
- Maintain eye contact with the interviewer(s).
- Be believable, be yourself.
- Find ways to let the interviewer know you are a team player.



Nonverbal Communication

Research shows that the majority of the messages we send are nonverbal. Therefore, you need to be aware of your nonverbal communication. Nonverbal communication, referred to as body language, includes our facial expressions, hand gestures, eye contact, posture, handshake and tone of voice. Use the following body language tips to ensure your nonverbal communication evokes the right message.

Handshake	Eye Contact	Facial Expressions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Practice your handshakeOffer a firm, sincere handshakeUse a firm handshake and adjust your grip to the other person's handSmile and make eye contact as you shake hands	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Make eye contact with the interviewer(s)Use natural eye contactDo not stare	<p>Your face conveys your attitude:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Avoid frowningSmile naturallyShow expressions of interestNatural expressions are best

Challenges

Some of the challenges you may face during your interview:

Stress ⁹

One of your enemies in an interview is stress. Stress could be caused by anything but is usually the product of you simply being at the interview. Stress usually makes it hard for you to find fitting answers to interview questions. However, the most easily avoidable reason for your stress is lack of preparation. You wouldn't take an exam unprepared, so why come to an interview unprepared? Doing your homework means more than just finding answers to interview questions. Learning about the organization will pay off at the interview because the employer will know you take initiative and are serious about the job.

Potential Stereotypes

Many employers worry about employing a Reservist or National Guardsman because of the possibility of deployment. Some employers think that all Veterans want to be in charge or lack creativity because they are

⁹ Robert Sampson, "Answers of [to?] Interview Questions: Know Your Questions and Answers," Retrieved December 30, 2011, from <http://business.ezinemark.com/answers-of-interview-questions-know-your-questions-and-answers-4f28f6c7bc9.html>

used to following orders. In addition, some may think Veterans cannot operate within a budget because the employer believes that the military has unlimited funding. The best way to overcome an employer's stereotype is to reinforce what you bring to the organization and provide examples of thinking outside of the box or staying within a budget.

Lack of Understanding

Many Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans, leaving the active-duty military, report that employers do not understand the unique strengths of Veterans because Veterans find it difficult to explain how their skills can translate into the civilian world. Avoid this challenge during the interview by making sure you describe your military experience in civilian terms.

Interview Conclusion

Before the end of the interview, make sure you know what will be the next steps in the hiring process, e.g., when and from whom you should expect to hear and what actions, if any, you should take. You should also offer a firm handshake while thanking the interviewer for his or her time (make sure you establish eye contact during the handshake).

After the Interview

The interview may be over but you are not finished yet. After the interview you should:

- Write down the name and title (be sure the spelling is correct) of the interviewer.



- Review what the next step will be.
- Note your reactions to the interview; include what went well and what went poorly.
- Assess how you can improve your performance in future interviews.
- Send a “thank you” note within 24 hours; your thank you note should:
 - Be simple and brief.
 - Express your appreciation for the interviewer’s time.
 - Show enthusiasm for the job.
 - Convey why they should select you for the job.

Most people know that a thank you letter should be sent after an interview, but very few actually send one. Sending a thank you note could give you the edge, so be sure to write one.

Contacting the Employer¹⁰

If they did not tell you when a hiring decision would be made, call after one week. At that time, if you learn that the decision has not been made, find out whether you are still under consideration for the job. Ask if there are any other questions the interviewer might have about your qualifications and offer to come in for another interview, if necessary. Reiterate that you are very interested in the job.

If you learn that you did not get the job, try to find out why. You might also inquire whether the interviewer can think of anyone else who might be able to use someone with your abilities, either in another department or at another organization.

If you are offered the job, you have to decide whether you want it. If you are not sure, thank the employer and ask for several days to think about it. Ask any other questions you might need answered to help you reach a decision. If you know you want the job and you have all the information you need, accept the job with thanks and get the details on when you start. Ask whether the employer will be sending a letter of confirmation, as it is best to have the offer in writing.

¹⁰ “Employment Interviewing.” Retrieved December 30, 2011, from http://www.mcoho.org/services/layoffs/employment_interviewing.html

Illegal Interview Questions

Illegal interview questions include very personal matters like age, marital/family status, disabilities, citizenship, arrest record, affiliations, and military service.

Examples of Illegal Age Questions

- How old are you?
- When is your birthday?
- What is your date of birth?
- In what year did you graduate from high school?

Examples of Illegal Marital/Family Questions

- Are you married?
- With whom do you live?
- How many children do you have?
- Are you pregnant?
- Do you expect to have a family? When? How many children will you have?
- What are your child care arrangements?

Examples of Illegal Disabilities Questions

- Do you have any disabilities?
- Have you had any recent illness or operations?
- Please complete this medical questionnaire.
- What was the date of your last physical exam?
- How's your family's health?
- When did you lose your eyesight, leg, hearing, etc.?

Examples of Illegal Citizenship Questions

- Where were you/your parents born?
- What is your native language?
- What is your country of citizenship?
- Are you a U.S. citizen?

Examples of Arrest Record Questions

- Have you ever been arrested?
- How many times have you been arrested?

Examples of Illegal Affiliation Questions

- What clubs or social organizations do you belong to?
- Do you go to church?

Example of Illegal Military Service

- What type of discharge did you receive?

Handling Illegal Interview Questions

Most interviewers who ask illegal interview questions do so unknowingly. Therefore, any attempt by you to assert your right not to answer the question will make you look defensive and may put an end to any future consideration for employment.

Before responding, assess the situation. Is the interviewer making small talk and is not looking to use the information against you? After you have assessed the situation, you have the following response options:

After you have assessed the situation, you have the following response options:

- Answer truthfully if you feel your response will not ruin your chances of getting the job.
- Inform the interviewer in a manner that has the interviewer assessing the question, such as: "I don't think that question is relevant for the position, do you?"
- Keep your answer on the requirements of the job and your ability to perform it, such as: "Is there an age requirement for the job?" or "Is that information relevant for the job?"



The following are examples of casually asked illegal questions and suggested responses:¹¹

Q: Does your family mind the travel required for this position?

A: I am accustomed to significant business travel. In fact, I find being on the road invigorating, and my track record has been very consistent under these conditions.

Q: Are you religious? Will your religion prevent you from working extra hours or on weekends when we have a big project?

A: I suppose everyone is religious in their own way. I do not foresee any circumstances that would interfere with the quality or commitment of my performance.

Q: You have a very unusual last name. What is its origin?

A: It really is a mouthful, isn't it? I've always used my first name and last initial in my business email address, as it is easier.

Q: Are you planning a family in the near future?

A: Currently, I am focused on my career, and although having a family is always a possibility, it is not a priority at the moment.

Q: How many more years do you see yourself in the workforce (before retiring)?

A: In today's world people don't retire like they used to; some can't. My career and my need to earn an income are priorities that I do not foresee changing in the near future.

¹¹ Heidi M. Allison, "Handling Illegal Interview Questions," Retrieved December 30, 2011, from <http://www.hcareers.com/us/resourcecenter/tabid/306/articleid/592/default.aspx>

Additional Resources

- *VA for Vets* : <http://vaforvets.va.gov>
- One-Stop Career Center: <http://servicelocator.org/>
- My Next Move: <http://www.mynextmove.org/vets/>
- Veterans Job Bank: <https://www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov/jobSearch/index>
- National Resource Directory: <https://www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov/>
- O*Net: <http://www.onetonline.org/crosswalk/>



Attachments

The following attachments have been added to this document to support you in preparing for an interview.

Attachment A – Job Interview Checklist

Attachment B – Typical Phone Interview Questions

Attachment C – “Prove It” Method

Attachment D – Questions You May Want to Ask

Attachment E – Job Interview Dress Code

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Attachment A – Job Interview Checklist

The following is based on the Job Interview checklist in the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) participant manual.

Job Interview Checklist	YES	NO
Before the Interview:		
1. Thoroughly researched the organization and the job which I am interviewing.		
2. I am aware of the logistics, parking, office location, paperwork, attire, and the type of interview that will be conducted.		
3. I have called to confirm the interview time.		
4. Prepared to talk about my accomplishments in non-military terms.		
5. Reviewed the questions I think I may be asked in the interview and practiced my responses to them.		
6. I have composed my responses in writing.		
7. Planned interview attire that is appropriate for the job, the organization and the industry.		
8. Bring pens, notepad and extra copies of my resume.		
9. Other items I might need: extra pair of pantyhose, spot-remover wipes, tissues, comb and brush, hairspray or gel, makeup for touchups, breath mints, and an umbrella.		
Day of the Interview:		
1. Got a good night's sleep.		
2. Bathed and put on deodorant.		
3. Stopped smoking 2 hours prior to interview (if applicable).		
4. Plan to arrive 15 minutes early.		
5. Turn off my cell phone.		
6. Speak with a strong, forceful voice to project confidence.		
7. Ensure that my strong points come across to the interviewer in a factual, sincere manner.		
8. Thank the interviewer(s) for their time.		
9. Request business cards from each person or get the correct spelling of their first/last names.		
After the Interview:		
1. As soon as possible, write down the notes from the interview so no crucial details are missed.		
2. Write and send "thank-you" letters within 24 hours to each person with whom I interviewed.		
3. Follow up within a week		

Attachment B – Typical Phone Interview Questions

1. Are you currently employed?
2. What are your salary expectations?
3. Will you relocate?
4. Will you travel? What percentage of overnight travel would you be willing to do on a monthly basis?
5. On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rank your skill level of_____? (fill in the blank)
6. What are your career goals?
7. What are your greatest strengths?
8. What was your greatest accomplishment?
9. When could you start working here?

Attachment C – “Prove It” Method

Use the “Prove It” method to display your accomplishments that are pertinent to the job for which you are being interviewed.

The “Prove It” method:

1. Pick a skill.
2. Explain how you used it, giving specific examples, i.e., quantify and qualify the skill.
3. Use accomplishment statements to describe how you used this important skill.
4. Explain how it links up to the interviewer’s needs. Explain how this skill/accomplishment will benefit the office/organization where you would like to work.

Attachment D – Questions You May Want to Ask

Since the interview is a two-way exchange, you may want to be prepared with some questions of your own. Consider the questions that follow but be sure to identify other questions that are important to you.

- 1. What would you consider the ideal job experience for this position?**
- 2. If you had an ideal candidate, what skills and personal qualities would that person have?**
- 3. What are the primary results you want to see from this position in the next year?**
- 4. What are the criteria for measuring success for this position?**
- 5. In what way does this position fit into the broader mission of this office?**
- 6. Tell me about the reporting relationships involved with this position. To whom will I report and, in turn, to whom would they report?**
- 7. What is the next step in the hiring procedure?**
- 8. When can I expect to hear from you?**
- 9. When will a decision be made?**
- 10. When would you want me to begin working in this position?**

Attachment E – Job Interview Dress Code¹²

The first impression you make is when you walk into the room with the interviewer. The interviewer will more than likely make some assumptions about you based on how you look and what you are wearing. Therefore, it is important to dress professionally for a job interview.

Do:

- Wear neutral colors – black, white, brown and gray are staple colors that will carry forward each season regardless of the position for which you are applying . For men, a suit jacket and dress shirt with a colorful tie will work wonders. Full button-up suits are needed only if you are applying for a position requiring full-business attire.
- Wear layers – this allows for comfort if giving a presentation or cooling off when you get nervous.
- Wear comfortable shoes – Heels should be no more than 2 inches and can be any color as long as it matches appropriately with your outfit.
- Accessorize lightly – good quality earrings or a nice necklace can go far if balanced right with your outfit depending on length of skirt or the lapel of a suit jacket.
- Small bag or portfolio – this can be of any color as long as it ties into your outfit and the job for which you are applying.
- Neutral makeup – a little goes a long way. Wear simple colors, light on the eye liner and shadow for optimal appearance.
- Clean your hair and nails – unkempt hair and dirty fingernails will make you look sloppy and unorganized.

Don't:

- Wear jeans – no matter what the profession, this is not suitable for an interview. Save this for when you land your perfect job. For men, a suit jacket, dress shirt, tie, and comfortable pants will work for most interviews.
- Overdo it – less is more. Watch how much you accessorize. Bracelets, multiple necklaces and piercing should reflect your style but not in excess. We want the interviewer to pay attention to you, not what you're wearing.
- Wear stiletto's – no matter how fashionable you are or want to show you are, there is no need to trip on your face in front of your soon to be boss. The only exception is a modeling job, and then you will need to bring these along with you.
- Wear heavy eye makeup – the smoky eye is a great evening look but shouldn't be used for the interview process. No matter what the size or shape of your eye, this will hinder your chance of getting in.
- Use oversized bags – taking a beach bag or large couture bag with you won't count in your favor. Keeping it neutral or small is one less thing you have to keep your eye on.
- Tease up your hair or add too much hair gel – it makes your hair look greasy.
- Wear hats.

¹² by Krystal Kochendorfer, "Getting the job: Dressing do's and don'ts," Retrieved December 30,2011 from <http://www.examiner.com/fashion-in-sacramento/getting-the-job-dressing-do-s-and-don-ts>

Attachment F – Ten Questions You Should Never Ask In a Job Interview¹³

- 1. What does your organization do?** If you ask questions about the organization that could have easily been answered with a small amount of research, you'll come across as unprepared, unmotivated and lazy.
- 2. What benefits do you offer?** You don't want to ask about benefits at this stage, and you definitely don't want to ask about the nitty-gritty details of those benefits — who the health care provider is, if dental coverage is offered, how many vacation days employees receive, and so forth. The time to inquire about benefits is when you're negotiating the details of an offer. At this stage, your questions should center on the job itself and the organization.
- 3. Can I leave at 3:00 on Thursdays?** If you start asking for special treatment before you even get the job, employers will assume you're going to be regularly asking for exceptions to be made. Whether it's requests to work different hours, have a specific day off or telecommute, now's not the time to be making requests. Once you have a job offer, then you can negotiate for what you want.
- 4. Do you drug test?** If they do, you'll find out soon enough. Asking about it raises some obvious red flags.
- 5. Would I be able to play a role in [something unrelated to the job you're applying for]?** You might be really excited about the organization's social media operation or that big event they throw in Hollywood every year, but if it doesn't relate to the job you're applying for, don't imply that it's more exciting to you than the work that you're actually interviewing to do.
- 6. Do employees get a discount on your product?** This stage of the conversation is about whether you'll be a good fit for each other. The answer to this question is unlikely to determine that for you, and you'll come across as interested only in what they can do for you.
- 7. Do you check references?** Assume that most employers do check references. Asking about it implies that you have something to hide.
- 8. How long do you get for lunch?** Anything that implies that you're focused on getting away from work rather than excelling at the job itself is going to reflect badly on you.
- 9. Why should I take this job?** If you can't figure out on your own whether or not the job is one you want, the interviewer is unlikely to try to figure it out for you.
- 10. How did I do?** This question puts your interviewer on the spot. Good interviewers will be taking time to process your conversation and compare you to other candidates. Don't end the interview on an awkward note.

¹³ Alison Green, "Questions You Should Never Ask in a Job Interview," Retrieved December 30, 2011, from <http://money.usnews.com/money/blogs/outside-voices-careers/2011/11/09/10-questions-you-should-never-ask-in-a-job-interview>

Attachment G – Phone Call for Interview Checklist

Remember, this is your first chance to make a good impression. Your interview begins here. When you receive a call for an interview, be sure to find out the following information.

Organization name:	
Position you are interviewing for:	
Name(s) and title(s) of person(s) conducting the interview:	
Where and when to report:	
Anything special to bring to the interview:	
Who is calling:	
Position of caller:	
Return phone number:	
Additional information:	

Attachment H – Types of Interviews

Individual Interview
<p>An individual interview is like an in-depth conversation. The interviewer may be the person who will be your supervisor. Hiring decisions are often made based on this type of interview. Count on discussing your skills, experience, training and how they all relate to the duties and opportunities of the job. There will usually be time for you to ask questions. You must sell your skills, enthusiasm, interest and understanding of the job.</p>
Structured Interview
<p>A structured interview format is a standardized method of comparing job candidates. A structured interview format is typically used when an employer wants to assess and compare candidates impartially. If the position requires specific skills and experience, the employer will draft interview questions focusing exactly on the abilities the organization is seeking. By requiring the interviewer to follow a specific list of pre-determined questions, the focus of the interview will be on what is required for the position. With interviews based on specific questions, there should be a greater chance of the employer being able to select the best candidates based specifically on qualifications, rather than on other factors like personality.</p>
Unstructured Interview
<p>An unstructured interview is a job interview in which questions may be changed based on the interviewee's responses. While the interviewer may have a few set questions prepared in advance, the direction of the interview is rather casual, and the flow of questions is based on the direction of the conversation. Unstructured interviews are often seen as less intimidating than formal interviews. Because each interviewee is asked different questions, however, this method is not always reliable.</p>
Multiple Interviews
<p>During a multiple interview process an employer is looking to answer three questions. First, can you do the job? Do you have the necessary combination of experience and education to do the work? Secondly, are you motivated? Will you complete the task you've been asked to do in a timely manner? And thirdly, are you going to fit in. This is about analyzing if there is a good match between your values and work style and the organization's corporate culture.</p> <p>The first interview is really to determine the answer to question one. Often, the interview questions focus on having you describe how your past work demonstrates what you'll bring to the company. This is usually done by conducting a behavioral-based interview with questions such as, "Tell me about a time when...?" Generally, a decision to hire someone is not made after the first interview. Rather, the decision is made to create a "short list" of a small group to bring forward to the next round. Usually, a short list consists of three or four candidates.</p> <p>At this stage in the process, an employer has decided (at least in a preliminary way) that the short-listed candidates have the necessary skills to do the job. This means that follow-up interviews now become an issue of determining the answers to questions two and three. Any candidate who is invited back for additional interviews should go in with the confidence of knowing that the potential employers think they have what it takes. So your job is to convince whomever you meet next that their initial impression is correct. Focus on building a personal connection with those you meet and emphasize your willingness to be successful in the new role.</p> <p>Multiple interviews also allow for a number of organization representatives to be involved in the decision-making process. In some cases, initial interviews may be with a human resources representative, or you may meet with the hiring manager right away. Follow-up interviews usually mean you're meeting more people. It may be your potential coworkers or perhaps senior managers. In some organizations the final hiring decision rests with the president.</p>
Stress Interviews
<p>Stress interviews are another format that some employers, frequently law enforcement organizations, use to evaluate candidates. The interviewers' job is to intimidate you. They want to find out how you handle stress. The rationale behind the tactic is that if you're unable or unwilling to handle conditions of imposed stress, it's unlikely you'll have the ability to maintain your composure under conditions of real stress. In response to this tactic, it's important that you don't react defensively, but remain calm and respond appropriately.</p>

Attachment H – Types of Interviews

Targeted Interviews
<p>Targeted selection is a behavioral approach to improved hiring decisions. The goal of every targeted selection interviewer is to collect job-related behavior from an applicant's past history. Interviewers are trained to focus their interview skills and selection decisions on five basic interview principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Use past behavior to predict future behavior▪ Interview for the critical job requirements▪ Organize your interview into a system▪ Apply effective interviewing skills and techniques▪ Exchange information with the other managers involved in interviewing
Phone Interview
<p>The phone interview is another strategy that some employers use. In this situation the hiring manager or selection committee interviews job applicants over the telephone as a screening technique. Phone interviews are used to make a first round of cuts to the applicant pool. If the employers are interested in candidates, they will then schedule face-to-face interviews. Remember, as soon as you pick up the telephone you are making an impression.</p>
Observational Interview
<p>An employer may use the observational interview format. In this format the candidate is asked to demonstrate his or her abilities with some of the skills required for the position. This may include giving a demonstration of public speaking ability, answering telephone calls or operating a piece of equipment while the interviewer observes your performance.</p>
Panel Interviews
<p>A panel job interview takes place when an applicant for employment is interviewed by a panel (group) of interviewers. In some cases the candidate will meet separately with the panel. In other cases there will be panel of interviewers and multiple candidates all in the same room.</p> <p>During a typical panel interview where there are multiple candidates interviewing for the same job, the applicants sit behind a long desk and the interviewers sit facing the desk.</p> <p>Each interviewer asks each candidate several questions and possibly asks a follow-up question</p>
Situational Interviews
<p>Interviewing technique that places an applicant in a conflict or problematic situation in which he or she has to make assessments and decisions to resolve it. The job seeker is placed in a hypothetical situation so that the interviewer is able to judge his reaction. This is sometimes referred to as a scenario-based (problem-solving) interview, where the job seeker may have to handle a hypothetical situation such as dealing with an irate customer.</p>
Group Interviews
<p>A group interview takes place when a candidate is interviewed by more than one interviewer at the same time. Alternately, it can mean that a group of candidates are interviewed at the same time by a hiring manager. The first type of group interview is when each job applicant is interviewed by multiple interviewers. The group (or panel) of interviewers typically includes a Human Resources representative, the manager, and possibly coworkers from the department in which the applicant would be working, if hired. The other type of group interview is when a group of applicants for the same position are interviewed together by the hiring manager. In this scenario, you and other candidates would be interviewed together as a group.</p>
Behavioral Interview
<p>Behavioral interviews are based on the premise that a person's past performance on the job is the best predictor of future performance. When an organization uses behavioral interviewing, they want to know how you act and react in certain circumstances. They also want you to give specific real-life examples of how you behaved in situations relating to the questions. In a behavioral interview, an employer has decided what skills they need for the job, and the questions you will be asked will be geared toward finding out if you have those skills. The interviewer wants to know how you handled a situation, rather than just gathering information about you.</p>

Attachment I – Military Terms/Civilian Equivalent

Military Term	Civilian Equivalent
NCOIC	Supervisor, Manager, Coordinator
TDY/TAD	Business Related Travel
PCS	Relocation
NCO Academy	Leadership or Management Training
War College	Executive Military Leadership School
Command and Staff College	Senior Military Leadership School
Basic Officers Course	Entry Level Officer Leadership Course
Basic Training	Introductory Military Training
O7 and above	President, Senior Director, Chairman of the Board, Managing Director
O5 and O6	Chief Executive Officer, Chief Operating Officer, Program Director
O4	Senior Administrator, Department Head, Program Manager
O1 to O3	Executive, Administrator, Manager, Project Officer
WO1 to WO5	Director, Specialist, Facilitator, Technical Manager, Technical Specialist
E7 to E9	Director, Supervisor, Department Manager, Operations Manager, Senior Advisor
E4 to E6	Assistant Manager, Line Supervisor, Section Leader, Task Leader, Supervisor, Foreman
E1 to E3	Production Worker, Assembler, Technician, Assistant, Apprentice, Team Member

