

24-hour Countdown to an Interview¹

A step-by-step plan for the 24 hours before an interview.

The following assumes you have the day before your interview to prepare. If other obligations keep you from this preparation, do your best with it. You can always spread the prep plan over several days rather than implementing it all the day before.

Say the interview is at 9:00 am tomorrow. Say it's in your city but in an unfamiliar location you think is about 45 minutes away. Today:

8:00 a.m., 25 hours before your interview: Get in your car and do a dry run to the interview location. By driving the route at exactly the same time as you'll be driving the next day, you'll simulate the same traffic and road conditions. If you're not driving, use whatever transportation you plan to use.

Doing the dry run lets you to make sure you know how to get to the site, assures that you've estimated the timing correctly, and familiarizes you with traffic and other issues – such as construction – that could be obstacles. You can also check out the interview site. Is it easy to park? Is there a security checkpoint that will take time to pass through?

9:00 a.m.: Ideally, you will have arrived at the site by 8:45. You may want to go through the same parking routine you will do the next day, as well as enter the building to see how easy it will be to find the interviewer's office. If the timing of your dry run reveals problems with timing your drive, plan to make adjustments on interview day.

Spend the drive home visualizing a successful interview. It's the day of the interview, you're on your way home. You were confident, self-assured, had great presence. You aced it!

If you have any questions about interview logistics, call the company when you get home. Questions about directions, parking, office location, or other issues are best asked now. It also doesn't hurt to call and confirm the interview time.

10:00 a.m.: Back home, take out the outfit you plan to wear to the interview. Get out every element of the outfit – shoes, jewelry, hose, tie, accessories. Inspect each element carefully. Ensure that your outfit is clean and neatly pressed. Check for spots and remove them. Check for rips or tears; sew them up or choose another outfit. Ensure your shoes are clean and polished. Be sure to have a backup plan for attire.

¹ Adapted from Hansen, K. and Hansen, R.S. (2012). *The Quintessential Guide to Job Interview Preparation*. Quintessential Careers Press, Kettle Falls, WA 99141

11:00 a.m.: Begin reviewing all the research you've gathered about the organization you're interviewing with. This is a refresher of what you've already collected. As you're reviewing, keep in mind the questions you may be asked that could demonstrate your research:

- What do you think it takes to be successful in this career/position?
- Do you enjoy doing ____ (the kind of work you anticipate doing)?
- What are your plans for future education/professional development?
- Why do you want to work in this industry
- Why are you interested in our company?
- Why are you interested in this position?

Noon: Relax over lunch. Even in the important hours before the interview, you need downtime so you don't get yourself too worked up over the interview.

1:00 p.m.: Review the questions you think you may be asked in the interview. Imagine yourself responding. Review the writing exercises you have already done to compose your responses. You're not trying to memorize your responses but simply reviewing them.

2:00 p.m.: Power pose time. Start with the superman/wonder woman pose for 2 minutes. Then visualize acing the interview. Then finish up with a 2 minute victory pose. Claim the power as belonging to your true, authentic self.

3:00 p.m.: Take some downtime to do something you enjoy, such as reading, running, bicycling, yoga, meditation, listening to music, taking a hot bath, or anything that makes you feel good.

4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.: Make this your time for taking care of business – the activities you'd normally be doing if not preparing for an interview. Return phone calls, check e-mail, do household chores, spend time with family.

6:00 p.m.: Relax over dinner. Eat a filling and nutritious meal but not something that will sit heavily on your stomach. No more than one glass of wine or beer.

8:00 p.m.: Do a final review of your company-research notes and your responses to interview questions. Visualize yourself going through the full interview experience and performing confidently and with self-assurance.

9:00 p.m. – Relax.

11:00 p.m. – To bed for a good night's sleep. If you have trouble falling asleep, try a glass of warm milk or a cup of chamomile tea. If you normally go to bed earlier, that's great.

6:00 a.m.: Wake up. Brush your teeth and use mouthwash. Bathe or shower. Use deodorant soap. Put on deodorant. For confidence, spritz on a tiny bit of cologne if you wish, but DO NOT OVERDO IT! For men, shave and trim your beard or mustache. Style your hair. Women, wear your hair up or back so it's out of your face. Put on makeup conservatively.

6:45 a.m.: Breakfast in your bathrobe. Make sure you eat something for energy and mental acuity, perhaps a banana, oatmeal, a protein bar, with your morning coffee or tea.

Now, get dressed. Take your time. Make sure your outfit is perfect. Check your briefcase for emergency-repair items you might need: small sewing kit, extra pair of pantyhose for the ladies, spot-remover, tissues, comb, brush, breath mints. Be sure you have extra copies of your resume and bring your career portfolio as well. Pack an umbrella, too.

7:30 a.m.: Power pose for two minutes. Make sure your clothing is comfortable and not too tight. Then do a vocal warmup using the exercises in "Your Speaking Voice." Visualize yourself conversing easily and confidently. Feel your voice as a source of personal power.

8:00 a.m.: As you did 24 hours ago, head to the interview site. Leave a little earlier or later, depending on what you learned from your dry run. Be sure you have your cell phone so that if something unexpected happens on the way (such as a bad accident), you can call the employer to let them know.

8:45 a.m.: Arrive at the site. Once in the building, head directly to the restroom for one final inspection of your outfit. Employ your emergency-repair kit if needed. Spend two minutes in the power pose of your choice.

Then, head to the interviewer's office. Pleasantly announce yourself to the gatekeeper – receptionist, secretary, assistant – smile and make friendly small talk; the interviewer will often ask this person about their impression of you. Then, wait calmly for the interviewer to call you.

While waiting, perhaps you've brought a book or magazine to read (in English). There may be magazines out front for you to read. Choose the more serious magazine.

9:00 a.m.: Perform spectacularly in the interview.

10:00 a.m.: Spend your drive home basking in how well you performed!