strengthen your overall presentation. Don't restrict your message to just core job duties, either. Also highlight personal characteristics that apply to the targeted position, such as your ability to work hard or handle responsibility:

While attending college full-time, I worked part-time during the school year and up to 60 hours a week each summer in order to be totally self-supporting while in college. I can offer your organization the same level of effort and perseverance.

Mention your salary requirements only if the organization has asked you to state them. If you don't know the salary appropriate for the position and someone with your qualifications, you can find typical salary ranges at the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics website, www.bls.gov, or a number of commercial websites. If you do state a target salary, tie it to the value you would offer:

Don't bring up salary in your application letter unless the recipient has asked you to include your salary requirements.

For the past two years, I have been helping a company similar to yours organize its database marketing efforts. I would therefore like to receive a salary in the same range (the mid-60s) for helping your company set up a more efficient customer database.

Toward the end of this section, refer the reader to your résumé by citing a specific fact or general point covered there:

How much are you worth? Find real-life salary ranges for a wide range of jobs. Go to real-timeupdates.com/bct14 and select Learn More in the Students section.

REAL-TIME UPDATES

As you can see in the attached résumé, I've been working part-time with a local publisher since my sophomore year. During that time, I've used client interactions as an opportunity to build strong customer service skills.

Motivating Action

The final paragraph of your application letter has two important functions: to ask the reader for a specific action (usually an interview) and to facilitate a reply. Offer to come to the employer's office at a convenient time or, if the firm is some distance away, to meet with its nearest representative or arrange a telephone or Skype interview. Include your email address and phone number, as well as the best times to reach you:

After you have reviewed my qualifications, could we discuss the possibility of putting my marketing skills to work for your company? I am available at (360) 555-7845 from 2 p.m. to 10 p.m. Monday to Friday or by email at john.wagner462@gmail.com.

After editing and proofreading your application letter, give it a final quality check by referring to "Checklist: Writing Application Letters." Then send it along with your résumé promptly, especially if you are responding to an advertisement or online job posting.

In the final paragraph of your application letter, respectfully ask for specific action and make it easy for the reader to respond.

CHECKLIST ∀ Writing Application Letters

- •• Take the same care with your application letter that you took with your résumé.
- •• If you are *prospecting* using an unsolicited message, do deep research to identify the qualities the company likely
- •• For solicited messages in response to a posted job opening, word your message in a way that echoes the qualifications listed in the posting.
- •• Open the letter by capturing the reader's attention in a businesslike way.
- •• Use specific language to clearly state your interests and objectives.

- Build interest and desire in your potential contribution by presenting your key qualifications for the job.
- •• Link your education, experience, and personal qualities to the job requirements.
- •• Outline salary requirements only if the organization has requested that you provide them.
- •• Request an interview at a time and place that is convenient for the reader.
- •• Make it easy to comply with your request by providing your complete contact information and good times to reach you.
- •• Adapt your style for cultural variations, if required.

Think creatively about a followup message; show that you've continued to add to your skills or that you've learned more about the company or the industry.

FOLLOWING UP AFTER SUBMITTING A RÉSUMÉ

Deciding if, when, and how to follow up after submitting your résumé and application letter is one of the trickiest parts of a job search. First and foremost, keep in mind that employers continue to evaluate your communication efforts and professionalism during this phase, so don't say or do anything to leave a negative impression. Second, adhere to whatever instructions the employer has provided. If a job posting says "no calls," for example, don't call. Third, if the job posting lists a *close date*, don't call or write before then because the company is still collecting applications and will not have made a decision about inviting people for interviews. Wait a week or so after the close date. If no close date is given and you have no other information to suggest a timeline, you can generally contact the company starting a week or two after submitting your résumé.⁶

When you follow up by email or telephone, you can share an additional piece of information that links your qualifications to the position (keep an eye out for late-breaking news about the company, too) and ask a question about the hiring process as a way to gather some information about your status. Good questions to ask include:⁷

- Has a hiring decision been made yet?
- •• Can you tell me what to expect next in terms of the hiring process?
- What is the company's time frame for filling this position?
- •• Could I follow up in another week if you haven't had the chance to contact me yet?
- Can I provide any additional information regarding my qualifications for the position?

Whatever the circumstances, a follow-up message can demonstrate that you're sincerely interested in working for the organization, persistent in pursuing your goals, and committed to upgrading your skills.



REAL-TIME UPDATES

Prepare for your next interview with these Pinterest pins

The Pinterest pinboard maintained by St. Edward's University offers dozens of helpful resources. Go to real-timeupdates.com/bct14 and select Learn More in the Students section.

If you don't land a job at your dream company on the first attempt, don't give up. You can apply again if a new opening appears, or you can send an updated résumé with a new unsolicited application letter that describes how you have gained additional experience, taken a relevant course, or otherwise improved your skill set. Many leading employers take note of applicants who came close but didn't quite make it and may extend offers when positions open up in the future.8

LEARNING OBJECTIVE Describe the typical sequence of job interviews, the major types of interviews, and the attributes employers look for during an interview.

Start preparing early for your interviews-and be sure to consider a wide range of options.

Understanding the Interviewing Process

An employment interview is a meeting during which both you and the prospective employer ask questions and exchange information. The employer's objective is to find the best talent to fill available job openings, and your objective is to find the right match for your goals and capabilities.

As you get ready to begin interviewing, keep two vital points in mind. First, recognize that the process takes time. Start your preparation and research early; the best job offers usually go to the best-prepared candidates. Second, don't limit your options by looking at only a few companies. By exploring a wide range of firms and positions, you might uncover great opportunities that you would not have found otherwise. You'll increase the odds of getting more job offers, too.

THE TYPICAL SEQUENCE OF INTERVIEWS

Most employers interview an applicant multiple times before deciding to make a job offer. At the most selective companies, you might have a dozen or more individual interviews across several stages. Depending on the company and the position, the process may stretch out over many weeks, or it may be completed in a matter of days. 10

Employers start with the screening stage, in which they filter out applicants who are unqualified or otherwise not a good fit for the position. Screening can take place on your

During the screening stage of interviews, use the limited time available to confirm your fit for the position.

school's campus, at company offices, via telephone (including Skype or another Internet-based phone service), or through a computer-based screening system. Time is limited in screening interviews, so keep your answers short while providing a few key points that confirm your fit for the position. If your screening interview will take place by phone, try to schedule it for a time when you can be focused and free from interruptions.¹¹

The next stage of interviews, the *selection stage*, helps the organization identify the top candidates from all those who qualify. During these interviews, show keen interest in the job, relate your skills and experience to the organization's needs, listen attentively, and ask questions that show you've done your research.

If the interviewers agree that you're a good candidate, you may receive a job offer, either on the spot or a few days later by phone, mail, or email. In other instances you may be invited back for a final evaluation, often by a higher-ranking executive. The objective of the *final stage* is often to sell you on the advantages of joining the organization.

COMMON TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

Be prepared to encounter a variety of interviewing approaches. These can be distinguished by the way they are structured, the number of people involved, and the purpose of the interview.

Structured Versus Unstructured Interviews

In a structured interview, the interviewer (or a computer program) asks a series of questions in a predetermined order. Structured interviews help employers identify candidates who don't meet basic job criteria, and they allow the interview team to compare answers from multiple candidates. ¹²

In contrast, in an open-ended interview, the interviewer adapts his or her line of questioning based on the answers you give and any questions you ask. Even though it may feel like a conversation, remember that it's still an interview, so keep your answers focused and professional.

Panel and Group Interviews

Although one-on-one interviews are the most common format, some employers use panel or group interviews as well. In a panel interview, you meet with several interviewers at once. Try to make a connection with each person on the panel, and keep in mind that each person has a different perspective, so tailor your responses accordingly. For example, an upper-level manager is likely to be interested in your overall business sense and strategic perspective, whereas a potential colleague might be more interested in your technical skills and ability to work in a team. In a group interview, one or more interviewers meet with several candidates simultaneously. A key purpose of a group interview is to observe how the candidates interact. Group interviews can be tricky because you want to stand out while coming across as a supportive team player. Be sure to treat your fellow candidates with respect, while looking for opportunities to demonstrate the depth of knowledge you have about the company and its needs.

Behavioral, Situational, Working, and Stress Interviews

Interviewing techniques also vary based on the types of questions you are asked. Perhaps the most common type of interview these days is the behavioral interview, in which you are asked to relate specific incidents and experiences from your past. ¹⁶ In contrast to generic questions that can often be answered with "canned" responses, behavioral questions require candidates to use their own experiences and attributes to craft answers. Studies show that behavioral interviewing is a much better predictor of success on the job than traditional interview questions. ¹⁷ To prepare for a behavioral interview, review your work or college experiences to recall several instances in which you demonstrated an important job-related attribute or dealt with a challenge such as uncooperative team members or heavy workloads. Get ready with responses that quickly summarize the situation, the actions you took, and the outcome of those actions. ¹⁸

MOBILE APP

Add the **Skype** mobile app to your phone to be ready for video interviews.

During the selection stage, continue to show how your skills and attributes can help the company.

During the final stage, the interviewer may try to sell you on working for the firm.

A structured interview follows a set sequence of questions, allowing the interview team to compare answers from all candidates.

In an open-ended interview, the interviewer adapts the line of questioning based on your responses and questions.

In a panel interview, you meet with several interviewers at once; in a group interview, you and several other candidates meet with one or more interviewers at once.

In a behavioral interview, you are asked to describe how you handled situations from your past.

In situational interviews, you're asked to explain how you would handle various hypothetical situations.

In a working interview, you perform actual work-related tasks.

Stress interviews help recruiters see how you handle yourself under pressure.

Expect to use a variety of media when you interview, from inperson conversations to virtual meetings.

Treat a telephone interview as seriously as you would an inperson interview.

When interviewing via email or IM, be sure to take a moment to review your responses before sending them.

In a video interview, speak to the camera as though you are addressing the interviewer in person. A situational interview is similar to a behavioral interview except that the questions focus on how you would handle various hypothetical situations on the job. The situations will likely relate closely to the job you're applying for, so the more you know about the position, the better prepared you'll be.

A working interview is the most realistic type of interview: You actually perform a job-related activity during the interview. You may be asked to lead a brainstorming session, solve a business problem, engage in role playing, or even make a presentation.¹⁹

The most unnerving type of interview is the stress interview, during which you might be asked questions designed to unsettle you or might be subjected to long periods of silence, criticism, interruptions, and or even hostile reactions by the interviewer. The theory behind this approach is that you'll reveal how well you handle stressful situations, although some experts find the technique of dubious value.²⁰ If you find yourself in a stress interview, recognize what is happening and collect your thoughts for a few seconds before you respond.

You might encounter two or more types of interview questions within a single interview, so stay alert and try to understand the type of question you're facing before you answer each one.

INTERVIEW MEDIA

Expect to be interviewed through a variety of media. Employers trying to cut travel costs and the demands on staff time now interview candidates via telephone, email, instant messaging, virtual online systems, and videoconferencing, in addition to traditional face-to-face meetings.

To succeed at a telephone interview, make sure you treat it as seriously as an inperson interview. Be prepared with a copy of all the materials you have sent to the employer, including your résumé and any correspondence. In addition, prepare some note cards with key message points you'd like to make and questions you'd like to ask. And remember that you won't be able to use a pleasant smile, a firm handshake, and other nonverbal signals to create a good impression. A positive, alert tone of voice is therefore vital.²¹

Email and IM are also sometimes used in the screening stage. Although you have almost no opportunity to send and receive nonverbal signals with these formats, you do have the major advantage of being able to review and edit each response before you send it. Maintain a professional style in your responses, and be sure to ask questions that demonstrate your knowledge of the company and the position.²²

Many employers use video technology for both live and recorded interviews. For instance, the online clothing retailer Zappos uses video interviews on Skype to select the top two or three finalists for each position and then invites those candidates for inperson interviews. ²³ Recruiters can also use mobile apps for interviews. With recorded video interviews, an online system asks a set of questions and records the respondent's answers. Recruiters then watch the videos as part of the screening process. ²⁴ Prepare for a video interview as you would for an in-person interview—including dressing and grooming—and take the extra steps needed to become familiar with the equipment and the process. If you're interviewing from home, arrange your space so that the webcam doesn't pick up anything distracting or embarrassing in the background. During any

video interview, remember to sit up straight and focus on the camera.

Online interviews can range from simple structured questionnaires and tests to sophisticated job simulations that are similar to working interviews (see Figure 19.4). These simulations help identify good candidates, give applicants an idea of what the job is like, and reduce the risk of employment discrimination lawsuits because they closely mimic actual job skills.²⁵

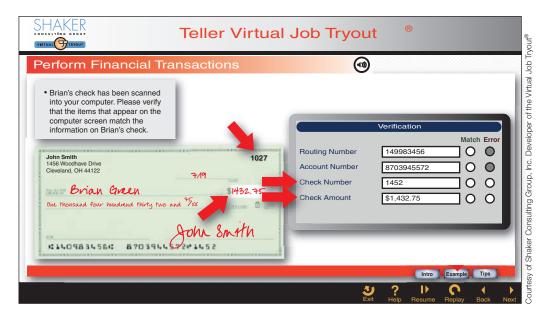


REAL-TIME UPDATES

LEARN MORE BY WATCHING THESE VIDEOS

Five TED talks that will help you prepare for interviews

MIT career advisor Lily Zhang hand-picked these talks for the insights they can give all job hunters. Go to **real-timeupdates.com/bct14** and select Learn More in the Students section.



CHAPTER 19

Figure 19.4 Job Task Simulations

Computer-based job simulations are an increasingly popular approach to testing job-related skills.

WHAT EMPLOYERS LOOK FOR IN AN INTERVIEW

Interviews give employers the chance to go beyond the basic data of your résumé to get to know you and to answer two essential questions. The first is whether you can handle the responsibilities of the position. Naturally, the more you know about the demands of the position, and the more you've thought about how your skills match those demands, the better you'll be able to respond.

The second essential question is whether you will be a good fit with the organization and the target position. All good employers want people who are confident, dedicated, positive, curious, courteous, ethical, and willing to commit to something larger than their own individual goals. Companies also look for fit with their individual cultures. Just like people, companies have different "personalities." Some are intense; others are more laid back. Some emphasize teamwork; others expect employees to forge their own way and even to compete with one another. Expectations also vary from job to job within a company and from industry to industry. An outgoing personality is essential for sales but less so for research, for instance.

Suitability for a specific job is judged on the basis of such factors as

- Academic preparation
- Work experience
- Job-related personality traits

Compatibility with an organizational culture and a position is judged on such factors as personal background, attitudes, and communication style.

PREEMPLOYMENT TESTING AND BACKGROUND CHECKS

In an effort to improve the predictability of the selection process, many employers now conduct a variety of preemployment evaluations and investigations. Here are types of assessments you are likely to encounter during your job search:²⁶

- •• Integrity tests. Integrity tests attempt to measure how truthful and trustworthy a candidate is likely to be.
- •• Personality tests. Personality tests are designed to gauge such aspects as attitudes toward work, interests, managerial potential, dependability, commitment, and motivation.
- •• Cognitive tests. Cognitive tests measure a variety of attributes involved in acquiring, processing, analyzing, using, and remembering information. Typical tests involve reading comprehension, mathematics, problem solving, and decision making.
- •• Language proficiency. You may be asked to take a reading or writing test.
- •• Job knowledge and job-skills tests. These assessments measure the knowledge and skills required to succeed in a particular position. An accounting candidate, for

Preemployment tests attempt to provide objective, quantitative information about a candidate's skills, attitudes, and habits.

MOBILE APP

The **CareerBuilder** app lets you search and apply for jobs from your phone or tablet.

- example, might be tested on accounting principles and legal matters (knowledge) and asked to create a simple balance sheet or income statement (skills).
- •• Substance tests. A majority of companies perform some level of drug and alcohol testing. Many employers believe such testing is necessary to maintain workplace safety, ensure productivity, and protect companies from lawsuits, but others view it as an invasion of employee privacy.
- •• Background checks. In addition to testing, most companies conduct some sort of background check, including reviewing your credit record, checking to see whether you have a criminal history, and verifying your education. Moreover, you should assume that every employer will conduct a general online search on you. To help prevent a background check from tripping you up, verify that your college transcripts are current, look for any mistakes or outdated information in your credit record, plug your name into multiple search engines to see whether anything embarrassing shows up, and scour your social network profiles and connections for potential problems.

Preemployment assessments are a complex and controversial aspect of workforce recruiting. For instance, even though personality testing is widely used, some research suggests that commonly used tests are not a reliable predictor of job success.²⁷ However, expect to see more innovation in this area and greater use of testing in general in the future as companies try to reduce the risks and costs of poor hiring decisions.

If you're concerned about any preemployment test, ask the employer for more information or ask your college career center for advice. You can also get more information from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission at www.eeoc.gov.

Preparing for a Job Interview

Now that you're armed with insights into the interviewing and assessment process, you're ready to begin preparing for your interviews. Preparation will help you feel more confident and perform better under pressure, and preparation starts with learning about the organization.

LEARNING ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION AND YOUR INTERVIEWERS

Employers expect serious candidates to demonstrate an understanding of the company's operations, its markets, and its strategic and tactical challenges.²⁸ You've already done some initial research to identify companies of interest, but when you're invited to an interview, it's time to dig a little deeper (see Table 19.2). Making this effort demonstrates

your interest in the company, and it identifies you as a business professional who knows the importance of investigation and analysis.

REAL-TIME UPDATES

LEARN MORE BY READING THIS ARTICLE

The ultimate interview preparation checklist

Prepare for your next interview by following this advice. Go to real-timeupdates.com/bct14 and select Learn More in the Students section.

In addition to learning about the company and the job opening, try to find out as much as you can about the managers who will be interviewing you, if you can get their names. Search LinkedIn in particular. It's also perfectly acceptable to ask your contact at the company for the names and titles of the people who will be interviewing you. ²⁹ Whatever information you can find, think about ways to use it during your interview. For example, if an interviewer lists membership in a particular professional organization, you might ask whether the organization is a good forum for people to learn

about vital issues in the profession or industry. This question gives the interviewer an opportunity to talk about his or her own interests and experiences for a moment, which builds rapport and might reveal vital insights into the career path you are considering. Just make sure your questions are sincere and not uncomfortably personal.

3 LEARNING OBJECTIVE
List six tasks you need to
complete to prepare for a successful
job interview.

Interviewers expect you to know some basic information about the company and its industry.

TABLE 19.2 Investigating an Organization and a Job Opportunity

Where to Look and What You Can Learn

- •• Company website, blogs, and social media accounts; Overall information about the company, including key executives, products and services, locations and divisions, employee benefits, job descriptions
- Competitors' websites, blogs, and social media accounts: Similar information from competitors, including the strengths these companies claim to have
- •• Industry-related websites and blogs: Objective analysis and criticism of the company, its products, its reputation, and its management
- •• Marketing materials (print and online): The company's marketing strategy and customer communication
- •• Company publications (print and online): Key events, stories about employees, new products
- Your social network contacts: Names and job titles of potential contacts within a company
- Periodicals (newspapers and trade journals, both print and online): In-depth stories about the company and its strategies, products, successes, and failures; you may find profiles of top executives
- •• Career center at your college: Often provides a wide array of information about companies that hire graduates
- •• Current and former employees: Insights into the work environment

Points to Learn About the Organization

- Full name
- •• Location (headquarters and divisions, branches, subsidiaries, or other units)
- Ownership (public or private; whether it is owned by another company)
- Brief history
- Products and services
- •• Industry position (whether the company is a leader or a minor player; whether it is an innovator or more of a follower)
- Key financial points (such as stock price and trends, if a public company)
- •• Growth prospects (whether the company is investing in its future through research and development; whether it is in a thriving industry)

Points to Learn About the Position

- Functions and responsibilities
- Qualifications and expectations
- Possible career paths
- Salary range
- •• Travel expectations and opportunities
- Relocation expectations and opportunities

THINKING AHEAD ABOUT QUESTIONS

Planning ahead for the interviewer's questions will help you handle them more confidently and successfully. In addition, you will want to prepare insightful questions of your own.

Planning for the Employer's Questions

Many general interview questions are "stock" queries you can expect to hear again and again during your interviews. Get ready to face these six at the very least:

- •• What is the hardest decision you've ever had to make? Be prepared with a good example (that isn't too personal), explaining why the decision was difficult, how you made the choice you made, and what you learned from the experience.
- What is your greatest weakness? This question seems to be a favorite of some interviewers, although it probably rarely yields useful information. One good strategy is to mention a skill or attribute you haven't had the opportunity to develop yet but would like to in your next position.³⁰ Another option is to discuss a past shortcoming you took steps to correct.
- •• Where do you want to be five years from now? This question tests (1) whether you're merely using this job as a stopover until something better comes along and (2) whether you've given thought to your long-term goals. Your answer should reflect your desire to contribute to the employer's long-term goals, not just your own goals. Whether this question often yields useful information is also a matter of debate, but be prepared to answer it.31

You can expect to face a number of common questions in your interviews, so be sure to prepare for them.

- •• What didn't you like about previous jobs you've held? Answer this one carefully: The interviewer is trying to predict whether you'll be an unhappy or difficult employee.³² Describe something that you didn't like in a way that puts you in a positive light, such as having limited opportunities to apply your skills or education. Avoid making negative comments about former employers or colleagues.
- •• Tell me something about yourself. One good strategy is to briefly share the "story of you" (see page 563)—quickly summarizing where you have been and where you would like to go—in a way that aligns your interests with the company's. Alternatively, you can focus on a specific skill you know is valuable to the company, share something business-relevant that you are passionate about, or offer a short summary of what colleagues or customers think about you. 33 Whatever tactic you choose, this is not the time to be shy or indecisive, so be ready with a confident, memorable answer.
- How do you spend your free time? This question can pop up late in an interview, after the interviewer has covered the major work-related questions and wants to get a bet-



REAL-TIME UPDATES

Prepare your answers to these tough interview questions

Use this advice to get ready for five guestions you're likely to encounter. Go to real-timeupdates.com/bct14 and select Learn More in the Students section.

ter idea of what sort of person you are.³⁴ Prepare an answer that is honest and that puts you in a positive light, without revealing more than you are comfortable revealing or suggesting that you might not fit in the corporate culture. Sports, hobbies, reading, spending time with family, and volunteer work are all "safe" answers.

Continue your preparation by planning a brief answer to each question in Table 19.3.

TABLE 19.3 Twenty-Five Common Interview Questions

Questions About College

- 1. What courses in college did you like most? Least? Why?
- 2. Do you think your extracurricular activities in college were worth the time you spent on them? Why or why not?
- When did you choose your college major? Did you ever change your major? If so, why?
- 4. Do you feel you did the best scholastic work you are capable of?
- 5. How has your college education prepared you for this position?

Questions About Employers and Jobs

- 6. Why did you leave your last job?
- 7. Why did you apply for this job opening?
- 8. Why did you choose your particular field of work?
- 9. What are the disadvantages of your chosen field?
- 10. What do you know about our company?
- 11. What do you think about how this industry operates today? 12. Why do you think you would like this particular type of job?

Questions About Work Experiences and Expectations

- 13. What was your biggest failure?
- 14. What is your biggest weakness?
- 15. Describe an experience in which you learned from one of your mistakes.
- 16. What motivates you? Why?
- What do you think determines a person's progress in a good organization?
- 18. What have you done that shows initiative and willingness to work?
- 19. Why should we hire you?

Questions About Work Habits

- 20. Do you prefer working with others or by yourself?
- 21. What type of boss do you prefer?
- Have you ever had any difficulty getting along with colleagues or supervisors? With instructors? With
- What would you do if you were given an unrealistic deadline for a task or project?
- 24. How do you feel about overtime work?
- 25. How do you handle stress or pressure on the job?

Sources: "50 Most Common Interview Questions," Glassdoor blog, 25 March 2016, www.glassdoor.com; Alison Green, "The 10 Most Common Job Interview Questions," U.S. News & World Report, 27 April 2015, money.usnews.com; Carole Martin, "10 Most Common Interview Questions," Monster, accessed 14 May 2016, www.monster.com.

As you prepare answers, look for ways to frame your responses as brief stories (30 to 90 seconds) rather than simple declarative answers.³⁵ Cohesive stories tend to stick in the listener's mind more effectively than disconnected facts and statements.

Look for ways to frame your responses as brief stories rather than as dry facts or statements.

Planning Questions of Your Own

Remember that an interview is a two-way conversation: The questions you ask are just as important as the answers you provide. By asking insightful questions, you can demonstrate your understanding of the organization, steer the discussion into areas that allow you to present your qualifications to best advantage, and verify for yourself whether this is a good opportunity. Plus, interviewers expect you to ask questions, and they look negatively on candidates who don't have any questions to ask. For good questions that you might use as a starting point, see Table 19.4.

Preparing questions of your own helps you understand the company and the position, and it sends an important signal that you are truly interested.

BOOSTING YOUR CONFIDENCE

Interviewing is stressful for everyone, so some nervousness is natural. However, you can take steps to feel more confident. Start by reminding yourself that you have value to offer the employer and that the employer already thinks highly enough of you to invite you to an interview.

If some aspect of your appearance or background makes you uneasy, correct it if possible or offset it by emphasizing positive traits such as warmth, wit, intelligence, or charm. Instead of dwelling on your weaknesses, focus on your strengths. Instead of worrying about how you will perform in the interview, focus on how you can help the organization succeed. As with public speaking, the more prepared you are, the more confident you'll be.

The best way to build your confidence is to prepare thoroughly and address shortcomings as best you can. In other words, take action.

POLISHING YOUR INTERVIEW STYLE

Competence and confidence are the foundation of your interviewing style, and you can enhance them by giving the interviewer an impression of poise, good manners, and good judgment. You can develop a smooth style by staging mock interviews with a friend or Staging mock interviews with a friend is one good way to hone your style.

TABLE 19.4 Ten Questions to Consider Asking an Interviewer

Question	Reason for Asking
1. What are the job's major responsibilities?	A vague answer could mean that the responsibilities have not been clearly defined, which is almost guaranteed to cause frustration if you take the job.
2. What qualities do you want in the person who fills this position?	This will help you go beyond the job description to understand what the company really wants.
3. How do you measure success for someone in this position?	A vague or incomplete answer could mean that the expectations you will face are unrealistic or ill defined.
4. What is the first problem that needs the attention of the person you hire?	Not only will this help you prepare, but it can also signal whether you're about to jump into a problematic situation.
5. How well do my qualifications align with the current and fu- ture needs of this position?	This gives you the opportunity to address any unspoken concerns the interviewer might have.
6. Why is this job now vacant?	If the previous employee got promoted, that's a good sign. If the person quit, that might not be such a good sign.
7. What makes your organization different from others in the industry?	The answer will help you assess whether the company has a clear strategy to succeed in its industry and whether top managers communicate this to lower-level employees.
How would you define your organization's managerial philosophy?	You want to know whether the managerial philosophy is consistent with your own working values.
9. What is a typical workday like for you?	The interviewer's response can give you clues about daily life at the company.
10. What are the next steps in the selection process? What's the best way to follow up with you?	Knowing where the company is in the hiring process will give you clues about following up after the interview and possibly give you hints about where you stand.

Sources: Jacquelyn Smith and Natalie Walters, "The 29 Smartest Questions to Ask at the End of Every Job Interview," Business Insider, 28 January 2016, www.businessinsider.com; Heather Huhman, "5 Must-Ask Questions at Job Interviews," Glassdoor blog, 7 February 2012, www.glassdoor.com.

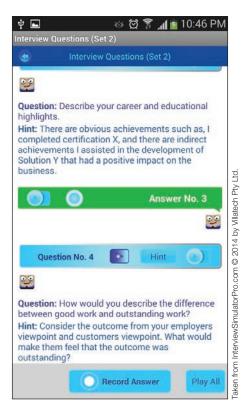


Figure 19.5 Interview Simulators

A number of mobile apps are available to help you practice and polish your interviewing skills.

Evaluate the length and clarity of your answers, your nonverbal behavior, and the quality of your voice.

using an interview simulator on your phone or tablet (see Figure 19.5). Record these mock interviews so you can evaluate yourself. Your college's career center may have computer-based systems for practicing interviews as well.

After each practice session, look for opportunities to improve. Have your mock interview partner critique your performance, or critique yourself if you're able to record your practice interviews, using the list of warning signs shown in Table 19.5. Pay close attention to the length of your planned answers as well. Interviewers want you to give complete answers, but they don't want you to take up valuable time or test their patience by chatting about minor or irrelevant details.³⁶

In addition to reviewing your answers, evaluate your non-verbal behavior, including your posture, eye contact, facial expressions, and hand gestures and movements. Do you come across as alert and upbeat or passive and withdrawn? Pay close attention to your speaking voice as well. If you tend to speak in a monotone, for instance, practice speaking in a livelier style, with more inflection and emphasis. And watch out for "filler words" such as *uh* and *um*. Many people start sentences with a filler without being conscious of doing so. Train yourself to pause silently for a moment instead as you gather your thoughts and plan what to say.

PEAL-TIME UPDATES LEARN MORE BY READING THIS ARTICLE Details that can make or break a job interview You can't control every variable, but it helps to be aware of the sometimes surprising factors that can influence who gets hired and who doesn't. Go to real-timeupdates.com/bct14 and select Learn More in the Students section.

PRESENTING A PROFESSIONAL IMAGE

Dress conservatively and be well groomed for every interview.

Clothing and grooming are important elements of preparation because they reveal something about a candidate's personality, professionalism, and ability to sense the unspoken "rules" of a situation. Your research into various industries and professions should give you insight into expectations for business attire. If you're not sure what to wear, ask someone who works in the same industry or even visit the company at the end of the day and see what employees are wearing as they leave the office. You don't need to spend a

- 1. Poor personal appearance
- 2. Overbearing, overaggressive, or conceited demeanor; a "superiority complex"; a know-it-all attitude
- 3. Inability to express ideas clearly; poor voice, diction, or grammar
- 4. Lack of knowledge or experience
- 5. Poor preparation for the interview
- 6. Lack of interest in the job
- 7. Lack of planning for career; lack of purpose or goals
- 8. Lack of enthusiasm; passive and indifferent demeanor
- 9. Lack of confidence and poise; appearance of being nervous and ill at ease
- 10. Insufficient evidence of achievement
- 11. Failure to participate in extracurricular activities
- 12. Overemphasis on money; interest only in the best offer

- 13. Poor scholastic record
- 14. Unwillingness to start at the bottom; expecting too much too soon
- 15. Tendency to make excuses
- 16. Evasive answers; hedging on unfavorable factors in record
- 17. Lack of tact
- 18. Lack of maturity
- 19. Lack of courtesy and common sense, including answering mobile phones, texting, or chewing gum during the interview
- 20. Being critical of past or present employers
- 21. Lack of social skills
- 22. Marked dislike for schoolwork
- 23. Lack of vitality
- 24. Failure to look interviewer in the eye
- 25. Limp, weak handshake

Sources: Donna Fuscaldo, "Seven Deadly Interview Sins," Glassdoor blog, 4 April 2012, www.glassdoor.com; "Employers Reveal Outrageous and Common Mistakes Candidates Made in Job Interviews, According to New CareerBuilder Survey," CareerBuilder, 12 January 2011, www.careerbuilder.com; The Northwestern Endicott Report (Evanston, III.: Northwestern University Placement Center).

CHAPTER 19

fortune on interview clothes, but your clothes must be clean, pressed, and appropriate. The following look will serve you well in most interview situations:³⁷

- Neat, "adult" hairstyle
- •• For more formal environments, a conservative business suit (for women, that means no exposed midriffs, short skirts, or plunging necklines) in a dark solid color or a subtle pattern such as pinstripes; white shirt and understated tie for men; coordinated blouse for women
- For less formal environments, smart-looking "business casual," including a pressed shirt or blouse and nice slacks or a skirt

COMMUNICATING ACROSS CULTURES

Cross-Cultural Employee Selection

Migration across the borders of the world is increasing in frequency and ease, whether temporary or permanent. This means that the diversity in employment of individuals is increasing and so recruitment processes need to reflect this diversity. You may be considering moving to a different cultural environment to seek employment or, at some stage in your career, you may well be involved in the recruitment of individuals from cultures that are quite different to your own.

You are very likely, currently, to live in a multi-cultural society and so meet with the effects of cultural differences and realize that, at times, there may well be a need for some adjustments to be made by all parties involved to accommodate the apparent differences. Recruiting and selecting employees are processes that, likewise, need to accommodate cultural difference from both the perspective of the recruiter and the prospective candidate.

Whether interviewing or being interviewed, a way of avoiding the offence and mis-understanding that can be the result of cultural clashes is to research comparative cultural norms. There are numerous sources of cultural analysis that can be used to help you research the cultural backgrounds of individuals. You could try, as a start, http://geert-hofstede.com/ to look at cultural differences.

You will discover that you need to consider, particularly in an interview situation, aspects such as how to dress, some cultures require very formal attire, and others require you to avoid being too well dressed so that you do not appear too elite or arrogant. As an interviewee, you may be expected to ask questions in some cultures and yet in others only respond to questions. Tone of the interview can make a huge difference with some cultures expecting a serious and formal approach whilst others might be tolerant of a more relaxed style.

Whatever the cultural norms, you can expect that lack of cultural accommodation will result in no hire being completed.

CAREER APPLICATIONS

- 1. In order to practice your research and develop your understand of how cultures can differ, imagine you are working with another interviewer from two different countries to your own. This would mean that there would be three different cultural backgrounds to be considered. What would be the differences in tone of the interview process and, if no attention had been paid to cultural differences, how might you expect each person to dress? If there were also gender differences, how would the process be affected?
- 2. What is the importance of eye contact and body language, particularly in relation to eastern cultures compared to western cultures?



REAL-TIME LIPDATES

LEARN MORE BY VIEWING THIS PRESENTATION

Simple tips for a professional interview look

Not sure how to get the right look? Follow this advice. Go to real-timeupdates.com/bct14 and select Learn More in the Students section.

- •• Limited jewelry (men, especially, should wear very little
- No visible piercings other than one or two earrings (for women only)
- No visible tattoos, although this expectation is changing in some industries
- Stylish but professional-looking shoes (no extreme high heels or casual shoes)
- Clean hands and nicely trimmed fingernails
- Little or no perfume or cologne (some people are allergic and many people are put off by strong smells)
- Subtle makeup (for women)
- Exemplary personal hygiene

An interview is not the place to express your individuality or to let your inner rebel If you want to be taken seriously, run wild. Send a clear signal that you understand the business world and know how to adapt to it. You won't be taken seriously otherwise.

dress and act seriously.

Be ready to go the minute you arrive at the interviewing site; don't fumble around for your résumé or your list of questions.

BEING READY WHEN YOU ARRIVE

When you go to your interview, take a small notebook, a pen, a list of the questions you want to ask, several copies of your résumé (protected in a folder), an outline of what you have learned about the organization, and any past correspondence about the position. You may also want to take a small calendar, a transcript of your college grades, a list of references, and a portfolio containing samples of your work, performance reviews, and certificates of achievement.³⁸ Think carefully if you plan to use a tablet computer or any other device for note taking or reference during an interview. You don't want to waste any of the interviewer's time fumbling with it. Also, turn off your mobile phone; in a recent survey of hiring professionals, answering calls or texting while in an interview was identified as the most common mistake job candidates make during their interviews.³⁹

Be sure you know when and where the interview will be held. The worst way to start any interview is to be late. Verify the route and time required to get there, even if that means traveling there ahead of time. Plan to arrive early, but don't approach the reception desk until 5 minutes or so before your appointed time. 40 Chances are the interviewer won't be ready to receive you until the scheduled time.

If you have to wait for the interviewer, use this time to review the key messages about vourself you want to get across in the interview. Conduct yourself professionally while waiting. Show respect for everyone you encounter, and avoid chewing gum, eating, or drinking. Anything you do or say at this stage may get back to the interviewer, so make sure your best qualities show from the moment you enter the premises. To review the steps for planning a successful interview, see "Checklist: Planning for a Successful Job Interview."

Planning for a Successful Job Interview

- •• Learn about the organization, including its operations, markets, and challenges.
- •• Learn as much as you can about the people who will be interviewing you, if you can find their names.
- •• Plan for the employer's questions, including questions about tough decisions you've made, your perceived shortcomings, what you didn't like about previous jobs, and your career plans.
- •• Plan questions of your own to find out whether this is really the job and the organization for you and to show that you've done your research.
- Bolster your confidence by removing as many sources of apprehension as you can.

- •• Polish your interview style by staging mock interviews.
- •• Present a professional appearance with appropriate dress and grooming.
- •• Be ready when you arrive and bring along a pen, paper, a list of questions, copies of your résumé, an outline of your research on the company, and any correspondence you've had regarding the position.
- Double-check the location and time of the interview and map out the route beforehand.
- •• Relax and be flexible; the schedule and interview arrangements may change when you arrive.

Interviewing for Success

At this point, you have a good sense of the overall process and know how to prepare for your interviews. The next step is to get familiar with the three stages of every interview: the warm-up, the question-and-answer session, and the close.

4 Explain how to succeed in all three stages of an interview.

THE WARM-UP

Of the three stages, the warm-up is the most important, even though it may account for only a small fraction of the time you spend in the interview. Studies suggest that many interviewers make up their minds within the first 20 seconds of contact with a candidate. Don't let your guard down if the interviewer engages in what feels like small talk; these exchanges are every bit as important as structured questions.

Body language is crucial at this point. Stand or sit up straight, maintain regular but natural eye contact, and don't fidget. When the interviewer extends a hand, respond with a firm but not overpowering handshake. Repeat the interviewer's name when you're introduced ("It's a pleasure to meet you, Ms. Litton"). Wait until you're asked to be seated or the interviewer has taken a seat. Let the interviewer start the discussion, and be ready to answer one or two substantial questions right away. The following are some common openers:⁴²

- •• Why do you want to work here?
- What do you know about us?
- Tell me a little about yourself.

The first minute of the interview is crucial, so stay alert and be on your best business behavior.

Recognize that you could face substantial questions as soon as your interview starts, so make sure you are prepared and ready to go.

THE QUESTION-AND-ANSWER STAGE

Questions and answers usually consume the greatest part of the interview. Depending on the type of interview, the interviewer will likely ask about your qualifications, discuss some of the points mentioned in your résumé, and ask about how you have handled particular situations in the past or would handle them in the future. You'll also be asking questions of your own.

MOBILE APP

The **Monster** mobile app offers helpful tips to help you prepare for your next job interviews.

Answering and Asking Questions

Let the interviewer lead the conversation and never answer a question before he or she has finished asking it. Not only is this type of interruption rude, but the last few words of the question might alter how you respond. As much as possible, avoid one-word yes or no answers. Use the opportunity to expand on a positive response or explain a negative response. If you're asked a difficult question or the offbeat questions that companies such as Zappos and Google are known to use, pause before responding. Think through the implications of the question. For instance, the recruiter may know that you can't answer a question and only wants to know how you'll respond under pressure or whether you can construct a logical approach to solving a problem.

Whenever you're asked if you have any questions, or whenever doing so naturally fits the flow of the conversation, ask a question from the list you've prepared. Probe for what the company is looking for in its new employees so that you can show how you meet the firm's needs. Also try to zero in on any reservations the interviewer might have about you so that you can dispel them.

Listen carefully to questions before you answer.



REAL-TIME UPDATES

LEARN MORE BY LISTENING TO THIS PODCAST

Expert tips for successful phone interviews

Recruiting experts offer invaluable advice on nailing a phone interview. Go to **real-timeupdates.com/bct14** and select Learn More in the Students section.

Listening to the Interviewer

Paying attention when the interviewer speaks can be as important as giving good answers or asking good questions. Review the tips on listening offered in Chapter 2. The interviewer's facial expressions, eye movements, gestures, and posture may tell you the real meaning of what is being said. Be especially aware of how your answers are received. Does the interviewer nod in agreement or smile to show approval? If so, you're making progress. If not, you might want to introduce another topic or modify your approach.

Paying attention to both verbal and nonverbal messages can help you turn the question-and-answer stage to your advantage. Federal, state, and local laws prohibit employment discrimination based on a variety of factors, and well-trained interviewers know to avoid questions that could be used to discriminate in the hiring process.

Think about how you might respond if you were asked a potentially unlawful question.

Handling Potentially Discriminatory Questions

A variety of federal, state, and local laws prohibit employment discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, age (at least if you're between 40 and 70), marital status, religion, national origin, or disability. Interview questions designed to elicit information on these topics are potentially illegal.⁴³ Table 19.6 compares some specific questions that employers are and are not allowed to ask during an employment interview.

If an interviewer asks a potentially unlawful question, consider your options carefully before you respond. You can answer the question as it was asked, you can ask tactfully whether the question might be prohibited, you can simply refuse to answer it, or you can try to answer "the question behind the question." For example, if an interviewer inappropriately asks whether you are married or have strong family ties in the area, he or she might be trying to figure out if you're willing to travel or relocate—both of which are acceptable questions. Only you can decide which is the right choice based on the situation.

Even if you do answer the question as it was asked, think hard before accepting a job offer from this company if you have alternatives. Was the off-limits question possibly accidental (it happens) and therefore not really a major concern? If you think it was intentional, would you want to work for an organization that condones illegal or discriminatory questions or that doesn't train its employees to avoid them?

If you believe an interviewer's questions to be unreasonable, unrelated to the job, or an attempt to discriminate, you have the option of filing a complaint with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission or with the agency in your state that regulates fair employment practices.

THE CLOSE

Like the warm-up, the end of the interview is more important than its brief duration would indicate. These last few minutes are your final opportunity to emphasize your value to the organization and to correct any misconceptions the interviewer might have. Be aware that many interviewers will ask whether you have any more questions at this point, so save one or two from your list.

Concluding Gracefully

Conclude an interview with courtesy and enthusiasm.

You can usually tell when the interviewer is trying to conclude the session. He or she may ask whether you have any more questions, check the time, summarize the discussion, or simply tell you that the allotted time for the interview is up. When you get the signal, be sure to thank the interviewer for the opportunity and express your interest in the

TABLE 19.6 Acceptable Versus Potentially Discriminatory Interview Questions

Interviewers May Ask This	But Not This
What is your name?	What was your maiden name?
Are you over 18?	When were you born?
Did you graduate from high school?	When did you graduate from high school?
[Questions about race are not allowed.]	What is your race?
Can you perform [specific tasks]?	Do you have physical or mental disabilities?
[Questions about alcohol use are not allowed.]	Do you drink alcoholic beverages?
Are you currently using illegal drugs?	Have you ever been addicted to drugs in the past?
Would you be able to meet the job's requirement to frequently work weekends?	Would working on weekends conflict with your religion?
Do you have the legal right to work in the United States?	What country are you a citizen of?
Have you ever been convicted of a felony?	Have you ever been arrested?
This job requires that you speak Spanish. Do you?	What language did you speak in your home when you were growing up?

Sources: Dave Johnson, "Illegal Job Interview Questions," CBS Money Watch, 27 February 2012, www.cbsnews.com; "5 Illegal Interview Questions and How to Dodge Them," Forbes, 20 April 2012, www.forbes.com; Vivian Giang, "11 Common Interview Questions That Are Actually Illegal," Business Insider, 5 July 2013, www.businessinsider.com.

organization. If you can do so comfortably, try to pin down what will happen next, but don't press for an immediate decision.

If this is your second or third visit to the organization, the interview may end with an offer of employment. If you have other offers or need time to think about this offer, it's perfectly acceptable to thank the interviewer for the offer and ask for some time to consider it. If no job offer is made, the interview team may not have reached a decision yet, but you may tactfully ask when you can expect to know the decision.

Discussing Salary

If you receive an offer during the interview, you'll naturally want to discuss salary. However, let the interviewer raise the subject. If asked your salary requirements during the interview or on a job application, you can say that your requirements are open or negotiable or that you would expect a competitive compensation package.⁴⁵

How far you can negotiate depends on several factors, including market demand for your skills, the strength of the job market, the company's compensation policies, the company's financial health, and any other job offers you may be considering. Remember that you're negotiating a business deal, not asking for personal favors, so focus on the unique value you can bring to the job. The more information you have, the stronger your position will be.

If salary isn't negotiable, look at the overall compensation and benefits package. You may find flexibility in a signing bonus, profit sharing, retirement benefits, health coverage, vacation time, and other valuable elements.⁴⁶

To review the important tips for successful interviews, see "Checklist: Making a Positive Impression in Job Interviews."

Research salary ranges in your job, industry, and geographic region before you try to negotiate salary.

Negotiating benefits may be one way to get more value from an employment package.

INTERVIEW NOTES

Maintain a notebook or simple database with information about each company, interviewers' answers to your questions, contact information for each interviewer, the status of follow-up communication, and upcoming interview appointments. Carefully organized notes will help you decide which company is the right fit for you when it comes time to choose from among the job offers you receive.

For the latest information on interviewing strategies, visit real-timeupdates.com/bct14 and select Chapter 19.

Keeping a careful record of your job interviews is essential.

CHECKLIST Making a Positive Impression in Job Interviews

- A. Be ready to make a positive impression in the warm-up stage.
 - •• Be alert from the moment you arrive; even initial small talk is part of the interviewing process.
 - •• Greet the interviewer by name, with a smile and direct eye contact.
 - •• Offer a firm (not crushing) handshake if the interviewer extends a hand.
 - •• Take a seat only after the interviewer invites you to sit or has taken his or her own seat.
 - •• Listen for clues about what the interviewer is trying to get you to reveal about yourself and your qualifications.
 - •• Exhibit positive body language, including standing up straight, walking with purpose, and sitting up straight.
- B. Convey your value to the organization during the question-and-answer stage.
 - •• Let the interviewer lead the conversation.
 - •• Never answer a question before the interviewer finishes asking it.
 - •• Listen carefully to the interviewer and watch for nonverbal signals.

- •• Don't limit yourself to simple yes or no answers; expand on the answer to show your knowledge of the company (but don't ramble on).
- If you encounter a potentially discriminatory question, decide how you want to respond before you say anything.
- •• When you have the opportunity, ask questions from the list you've prepared; remember that interviewers expect you to ask questions.
- C. Close on a strong note.
 - •• Watch and listen for signs that the interview is about to end.
 - •• Quickly evaluate how well you've done and correct any misperceptions the interviewer might have.
 - If you receive an offer and aren't ready to decide, it's entirely appropriate to ask for time to think about it.
 - •• Don't bring up salary but be prepared to discuss it if the interviewer raises the subject.
 - •• End with a warm smile and a handshake and thank the interviewer for meeting with you.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE Identify the most common employment messages that follow an interview and explain when you would use each one.

A follow-up message after an interview is more than a professional courtesy; it's another chance to promote yourself to an employer.

Use the model for a direct request when you write an inquiry about a hiring decision.

Use the model for positive messages when you write a letter of acceptance.

Following Up After the Interview

Staying in contact with a prospective employer after an interview shows that you really want the job and are determined to get it. Doing so also gives you another chance to demonstrate your communication skills and sense of business etiquette. Following up brings your name to the interviewer's attention once again and reminds him or her that you're actively looking and waiting for the decision.

Any time you hear from a company during the application or interview process, be sure to respond quickly. Companies flooded with résumés may move on to another candidate if they don't hear back from you within 24 hours. 47

FOLLOW-UP MESSAGE

Send a follow-up message within two days of the interview, even if you feel you have little chance of getting the job. These messages are often referred to as "thank-you notes," but they give you an important opportunity to go beyond merely expressing your appreciation. You can use the message to reinforce the reasons you are a good choice for the position, modify any answers you gave during the interview if you realize you made a mistake or have changed your mind, and respond to any negatives that might have arisen in the interview (see Figure 19.6).⁴⁸ Email is usually acceptable for follow-up messages, unless the interviewer has asked you to use other media.

MESSAGE OF INQUIRY

If you're not advised of the interviewer's decision by the promised date or within two weeks, you might make an inquiry. A message of inquiry (which can be handled by email if the interviewer has given you his or her email address) is particularly appropriate if you've received a job offer from a second firm and don't want to accept it before you have an answer from the first. The following message illustrates the general model for a direct request:

When we talked on April 7 about the fashion coordinator position in your Park Avenue showroom, you indicated that a decision would be made by May 1. I am still enthusiastic about the position and eager to know what conclusion you've reached.

- Identifies the position and introduces the main idea

To complicate matters, another firm has now offered me a position and has asked that I reply within the next two weeks.

Places the reason for the request

Because your company seems to offer a greater challenge, I would appreciate knowing about your decision by Thursday, May 12. If you need more information before then, please let me know.

 Makes a courteous request for specific action last, while clearly stating a preference for this organization

REQUEST FOR A TIME EXTENSION

If you receive a job offer while other interviews are still pending, you can ask the employer for a time extension. Open with a strong statement of your continued interest in the job, ask for more time to consider the offer, provide specific reasons for the request, and assure the reader that you will respond by a specific date (see Figure 19.7 on page 616).

LETTER OF ACCEPTANCE

When you receive a job offer you want to accept, reply within five days. Begin by accepting the position and expressing thanks. Identify the job you're accepting. In the next paragraph, cover any necessary details. Conclude by saying that you look forward to reporting for work. As always, a positive letter should convey your enthusiasm and eagerness to cooperate:

I'm delighted to accept the graphic design position in your - Confirms the specific terms of the advertising department at the salary of \$3,875 per month.

offer with a good-news statement at the beginning



Figure 19.6 Follow-Up Message

Use the follow-up message after an interview to express continued interest in the opportunity, to correct or expand on any information you provided in the interview, and to thank the interviewer for his or her time.

Enclosed are the health insurance forms you asked me to complete and sign. I've already given notice to my current employer and will be able to start work on Monday, January 18.

 Covers miscellaneous details in the body

The prospect of joining your firm is exciting. Thank you for giving me this opportunity, and I look forward to making a positive contribution.

Closes with another reference to the good news and a look toward the future

Be aware that a job offer and a written acceptance of that offer can constitute a legally binding contract, for both you and the employer. Before you send an acceptance letter, be sure you want the job.

Written acceptance of a job offer can be considered a legally binding contract.

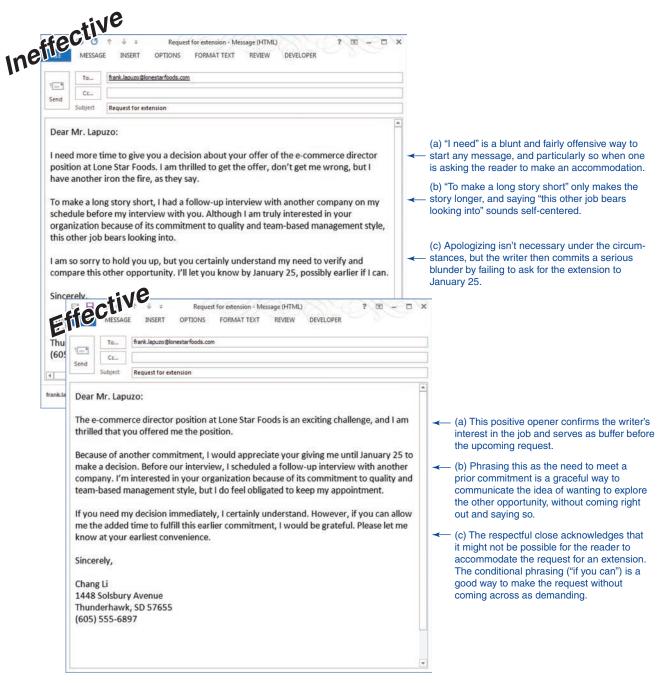


Figure 19.7 Request for a Time Extension

Needing more time to decide on a job offer is not uncommon, particularly for candidates with desirable credentials. However, make the request in a respectful and subtle way. The reader understands you are comparing opportunities and looking for the best offer, so you don't need to belabor this point.

LETTER DECLINING A JOB OFFER

If you decide to decline a job offer, do so tactfully, using the model for negative messages.

After all your interviews, you may find that you need to write a letter declining a job offer. Use the techniques for negative messages (see Chapter 11): Open warmly, state the reasons for refusing the offer, decline the offer explicitly, and close on a pleasant note that expresses gratitude. By taking the time to write a sincere, tactful letter, you leave the door open for future contact:

Thank you for your hospitality during my interview at your

Durham facility last month. I'm flattered that you would

offer me the computer analyst position that we talked about.

I was fortunate to receive two job offers during my search. Because my desire to work abroad can more readily be satisfied by another company, I have accepted that job offer. Precedes the bad news with tactfully phrased reasons for the applicant's unfavorable decision

I deeply appreciate the time you spent talking with me. Thank you again for your consideration and kindness.

Lets the reader down gently with a sincere and cordial ending

LETTER OF RESIGNATION

If you get a job offer while employed, you can maintain good relations with your current employer by writing a thoughtful letter of resignation to your immediate supervisor. Follow the advice for negative messages and make the letter sound positive, regardless of how you feel. Say something favorable about the organization, the people you work with, or what you've learned on the job. Then state your intention to leave and give the date of your last day on the job. Be sure you give your current employer at least two weeks' notice.

Letters of resignation should always be written in a gracious and professional style that avoids criticism of your employer or your colleagues.

My sincere thanks to you and to all the other Emblem Corporation employees for helping me learn so much about serving the public these past two years. You have given me untold help and encouragement.

serve as a buffer

Uses an appreciative opening to

You may recall that when you first interviewed me, my goal was to become a customer relations supervisor. Because that opportunity has been offered to me by another organization, I am submitting my resignation. I will miss my friends and colleagues at Emblem, but I want to take advantage of this opportunity.

States reasons before the bad news itself, using tactful phrasing to help keep the relationship friendly, should the writer later want letters of recommendation

I would like to terminate my work here two weeks from today (June 13) but can arrange to work an additional week if you want me to train a replacement.

 Discusses necessary details in an extra paragraph

My sincere thanks and best wishes to all of you.

Tempers any disappointment with a cordial close

To verify the content and style of your follow-up messages, consult the tips in "Checklist: Writing Follow-Up Messages."

CHECKLIST ✓ Writing Follow-Up Messages

A. Thank-you messages

- •• Write a brief thank-you letter within two days of the interview
- •• Acknowledge the interviewer's time and courtesy.
- •• Restate the specific job you're applying for.
- •• Express your enthusiasm about the organization and the job.
- •• Add any new facts that may help your chances.
- Politely ask for a decision.

B. Messages of inquiry

- •• If you haven't heard from the interviewer by the promised date, write a brief message of inquiry.
- •• Use the direct approach: main idea, necessary details, specific request.

C. Requests for a time extension

- •• Request an extension if you have pending interviews and need time to decide about an offer.
- Open on a friendly note.
- •• Explain why you need more time and express continued interest in the company.
- •• In the close, promise a quick decision if your request is denied and ask for a confirmation if your request is granted.

D. Letters of acceptance

- Send this message within five days of receiving the offer.
- •• State clearly that you accept the offer, identify the job you're accepting, and confirm vital details such as salary and start date.
- Make sure you want the job; an acceptance letter can be treated as a legally binding contract.

E. Letters declining a job offer

- •• Use the indirect approach for negative messages.
- •• Open on a warm and appreciative note and then explain why you are refusing the offer.
- End on a sincere, positive note.

F. Letters of resignation

- •• Send a letter of resignation to your current employer as soon as possible.
- •• Begin with an appreciative buffer.
- •• In the middle section, state your reasons for leaving and actually state that you are resigning.
- Close cordially.