



**WORKSOURCE**  
**PORTLAND METRO**

# Interview Workshop Guidebook

# Interview Tip Sheet

Below are steps you can take to prepare for and follow-up any job interview.

## Before the Interview

- Research the company and its products or services.
- Write out why you specifically want to work for that company.
- Evaluate your skills.
- Identify specific qualities you have that match what the employer is seeking.
- Know what makes you a good employee.
- Prepare a list of work-focused, task-focused or function-focused questions for your interviewer.
- Visualize yourself as someone about to be hired.
- Choose clothing for the interview that fits the position and the company culture.
- Make sure *all* the clothing you are planning to wear is clean and fresh.

## Day of the Interview

- Clean and trim nails.
- Consider the type of employer you are talking to and groom appropriately.
- Arrive ten to fifteen minutes early so you do not feel rushed.

## During the Interview

- Observe the interview room as you enter it.
- Make eye contact with every person as you are introduced to him or her.
- Write down the name of each person you meet. Ask for their business cards.
- Listen well to the interviewer's questions, statements and feelings.
- Pause thoughtfully to consider questions. Show that you think as you talk.
- If you don't understand a question, ask for clarification before you answer.

*Note: During interviews, don't ask questions such as salary, vacation time, benefits, time away from work, etc. Hold those questions until you have a job offer.*

## At the end of the Interview

- Thank the interviewers.
- Let them know that you want to be part of the team and would welcome a job offer.
- Ask when they are planning to make a decision and if you can call back if you don't hear from them.

## After the Interview

- Write down everything that happened, including the main points you made, the interviewer's name, line of questioning, areas of interest and the hiring timeline.
- Write and send or email a thank you letter within 24 hours. Note what you learned in the interview for your next contact with the interviewer.



If you smoke, be aware that smoke in clothing can be noticeable and offensive to non-smokers. Before an interview try not to smoke in your house or car. Likewise, use perfume or aftershave sparingly. Strong scents can make an unfavorable impression.

## Interview Basics

An invitation to a job interview means you've passed several important hurdles. Now you have the opportunity to show that you are the best person for a position. Successfully handling an interview is key to getting the position you want.

Luckily, all of us can practice and improve our interview skills.

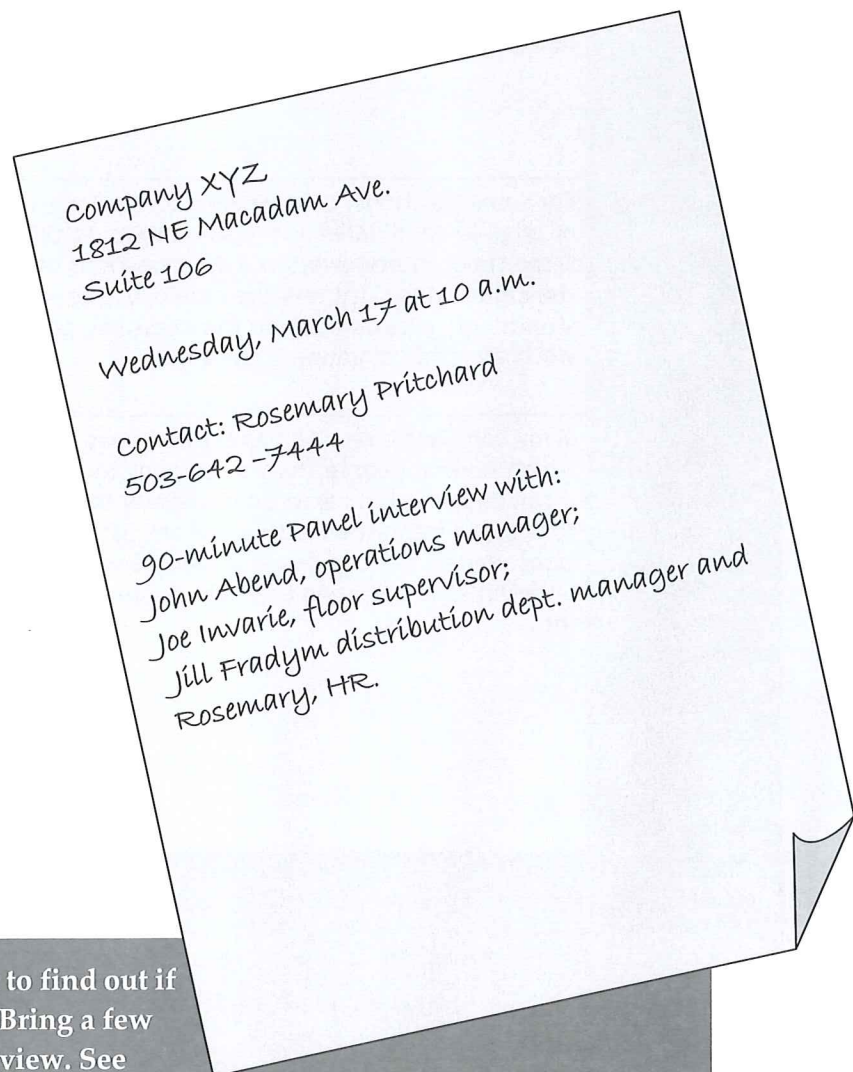
While every company's process is a little different, this guidebook covers common interviewing practices and trends, provides pointers to help you prepare for job interviews, and has lists of questions that you can use to practice interviewing. When you practice, pay particular attention to tough questions, such as those that ask about gaps in your resume or reasons for leaving your last position.

Remember, becoming a skillful interviewee takes practice, so accept every opportunity to interview. It's the best way to sharpen your interview skills.

When you are invited to interview make sure you write down the following:

- The interview location and address
- Date and time
- The name and number of the caller
- Expected length of the interview

As soon as possible after an interview, write down what you think went well and what you would want to improve next time.







Interviews are a great way for you to find out if a company is the right fit for you. Bring a few questions of your own to the interview. See page 15 for suggestions.



# Types of Interviews

Format for job interviews vary based on employer culture, the type of position, and the interview round. Below are common interview formats.

FORMAT	DESCRIPTION	TIPS
<b>TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS</b> 	<p>Companies use telephone interviews to screen job applicants whose applications or resumes look interesting.</p> <p>Phone interviews are also used when a candidate lives a long distance from the hiring manager or company headquarters. They can happen anytime when you are actively networking and job hunting.</p> <p><i>If you're job hunting be prepared for surprise calls.</i></p>	<p>Handle calls calmly. Thank the caller by name and ask for a moment to get situated e.g., close your door, turn off the radio, address anything that might be distracting. Pull out the company information and your application materials.</p> <p>Make sure you have a space for interviewing that is private and quiet. Prepare your family in advance so they don't interrupt or create background distractions when you're on the phone.</p> <p>If you are away from your materials, or in a situation that makes giving your full attention to the interviewer difficult, let the caller know and ask for a convenient time to call him or her back.</p>
<b>ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS</b> 	<p>This traditional interview format involves being interviewed by one person at a time.</p>	<p>Treat each one-on-one interview with great attention. Do not assume that a second interviewer knows what you told the first interviewer. Mention your preparation and qualities each time.</p>
<b>GROUP INTERVIEWS</b> 	<p>For some positions, companies interview a group of eligible candidates in the same room at the same time. Interviewers will ask questions of all the candidates. This lets the employer see who stands out, who can handle the pressure, and who has good communication skills.</p>	<p>Contribute views and ideas while also listening to the other candidates. Be confident, but avoid being aggressive. Someone may make your point first. If this happens, make a statement that adds to this point. Acknowledge valuable contributions from other candidates. Avoid obvious power conflicts. Stay cool under stress.</p>
<b>PANEL INTERVIEWS</b> 	<p>Many companies rely on panel interviews in which several people from a company interview a candidate at the same time. Usually these are structured interviews with a pre-set list of questions. Panels are composed of people who have an interest in selecting the right person for the job.</p>	<p>Get the names and titles of all interviewers, ideally at the time when the interview is scheduled.</p> <p>If you find yourself facing a panel unexpectedly, stay calm, greet each panel member with a smile and, if possible, a handshake.</p> <p>Give each person who asks you a question your full attention. Address him or her by name when answering. Make eye contact at the beginning and the end of your response. In between, look at the other interviewers.</p> <p><i>Send a thank you note or email to each interviewer.</i></p>

*Regardless of format, conduct yourself professionally:*

- Let the interviewer ask most of the questions.
- Keep answers to the point.
- Talk about your skills and abilities.
- Ask questions related to the position.
- Don't smoke, chew, or eat.



Because you might not be available when an employer calls, make sure your voicemail greeting makes the professional impression you want.

## Interview Methods

Interview methods also vary from company to company. In addition to the traditional “Tell-me-about-yourself” method, you might experience one of the following:

### BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEWS

Based on the idea that past behavior is a good indicator of ability and future performance, behavioral interview questions are designed to see if a candidate can use past examples to demonstrate the needed experience, knowledge or skill for a job.

### PERFORMANCE INTERVIEWS

Performance interviews provide candidates a chance to showcase skills by asking them to perform a task relevant to the position. For example, a trainer may be asked to set up and conduct a training session, and a sales person may be asked to “sell” a product. To prepare for a performance interview ask yourself what types of tests an employer might set up for someone in your line of work. Then, prepare to handle them.

### STRESS INTERVIEWS

To see how interviewees handle themselves under pressure, some employers set up intentionally stressful situations such as asking rapid-fire questions. Respond politely and calmly. Remember to keep eye contact. If the rapid-fire question technique is used, ask the interviewer to allow you to respond to the first question before answering a second.

### Exercise

To prepare for a variety of interview situations, use the chart below to consider the challenges you might face when various formats are used with various methods. How can you address that challenge? For example, what might you do to prepare for a behavioral interview conducted over the phone? How might it be different than a one-on-one situation?

	BEHAVIORAL	PERFORMANCE	STRESS
TELEPHONE			
ONE-ON-ONE			
GROUP			
PANEL			

Use your network to find out about the interviewing practices used at companies in which you're interested.





# The Employer Perspective

The following skills and attributes are important to most employers. Read through them and think of examples in your experience that demonstrate your abilities or performance in these areas.

## RELIABILITY

Employers look for people who meet deadlines and can get the job done. Interviewers may ask questions about the past behavior on the job to assess your reliability.

<b>Attendance</b>	Employers want people who “show up every day and are on time.”
<b>Following Policies &amp; Procedures</b>	Interviewers may want to hear how you have followed safety policies, office or manufacturing procedures, and have documented your work activities.
<b>Goal Setting</b>	You may be asked how you met personal and team goals. This helps employers understand if you can prioritize objectives and goals. Prepare for these questions by listing times you have met personal and team deadlines and goals.
<b>Task Commitment</b>	It may be important for you to commit to long hours and make personal sacrifices to meet specific goals and deadlines.

## INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

Employers value employees who work well with others.

<b>Assertiveness</b>	Employers want to know if you can act with maturity regarding feelings or strong opinions, especially when others disagree with you.
<b>Teaming</b>	Employers value employees who work well with others and keep team commitments. Interviewers may want to hear how you helped a team meet its goals.
<b>Perceptiveness</b>	The work team needs to hire workers who are aware of the feelings, needs, values and opinions of diverse populations and personalities.

## COMMUNICATION SKILLS

An interviewer may ask questions to find out how you communicate ideas and how you ask questions to gather the information needed to perform a job.

<b>Communication Style</b>	Interviewers are looking for someone who can build rapport with co-workers and positively motivate them.
<b>Oral Communication</b>	Employers need people who can give clear and accurate information to team members, supervisors and managers. They also need people who listen well.
<b>Written Communication</b>	Employers value the ability to read and interpret information. Some jobs require employees to document work activities, write reports, memos, e-mails and presentations.

The Expert Village Job Interview Workshop Series offers 2-minute video lessons on a variety of job interview topics. Check them out at: [http://www.expertvillage.com/video-series/3192\\_job-interview.htm](http://www.expertvillage.com/video-series/3192_job-interview.htm) and [http://www.expertvillage.com/video-series/4434\\_prepare-job-interview.htm](http://www.expertvillage.com/video-series/4434_prepare-job-interview.htm)

## **FLEXIBILITY**

The interviewer may assess your ability to work with different types of people, work schedules, teams, technology and shifting tasks.

- |                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| <b>Change</b>              | Interviewers may ask about your past reactions to changing work teams, technologies, business processes and assignments.  |
| <b>Multi-task Oriented</b> | You need to be able to talk about situations in which you were cross-trained on equipment or processes and how you met performance deadlines or multiple goals. |

## **PROBLEM SOLVING**

All jobs require problem solving. Interviewers ask a variety of questions to understand how you approach challenges.

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|-----------------------------|---|
| <b>Alertness</b>            | You may get a question regarding your ability to monitor the environment, machines, and/or people. They want to know that you are attentive to details.   |
| <b>Coping Skills</b>        | Employers value employees with a mature and positive attitude when problems occur and may ask questions about how you work under stress or in hazardous conditions, meet strict deadlines or work with difficult people.  |
| <b>Ingenuity</b>            | If the position requires someone who can think quickly and come up with new ways to solve problems or perform job duties, the interviewer may ask you to think of an example of your innovative solution to a problem.  |
| <b>Investigative Skills</b> | Employers want to know if you can use a systematic approach. They want to anticipate problems, determine root causes, and select effective solutions. They want to know the tools you used: logical reasoning, data analysis, and/or other types of evaluation. |

## **MANAGEMENT & COORDINATION**

The ability to manage projects, people and teams is important in many positions. To assess your ability to manage and coordinate, interviewers may ask about the following:

- |                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Big Picture Thinking</b>        | Interviewers will ask questions regarding your ability to work closely and smoothly with others. They want to gauge your awareness of timing, how you gained the trust and cooperation of key people to meet organizational goals, and check for your awareness of group politics. |
| <b>Coaching Skills</b>             | Employers value employees who are able to motivate and inspire. During an interview they may want to hear how you earned your reputation for being a leader among co-workers.  |
| <b>Decision Making</b>             | Employers want people who consider the available information, make a decision, and act on it. They look at your commitment to the decision and how you react when challenged. They may want to know how you act in an emergency.   |
| <b>Organization &amp; Planning</b> | Interviewers will ask questions regarding your ability to organize people, tasks, and events. Tell them how you developed an action plan, prioritized your timeline and met deadlines.   |

# STAR Worksheet

Copy and use this form to practice developing STAR responses to interview questions.

**Situation**

**Task**

**Action**

**Result**

**Question:**

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**Situation:**

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**Task:**

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**Action:**

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**Result:**

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# The S T A R Behavioral Interviewing Method

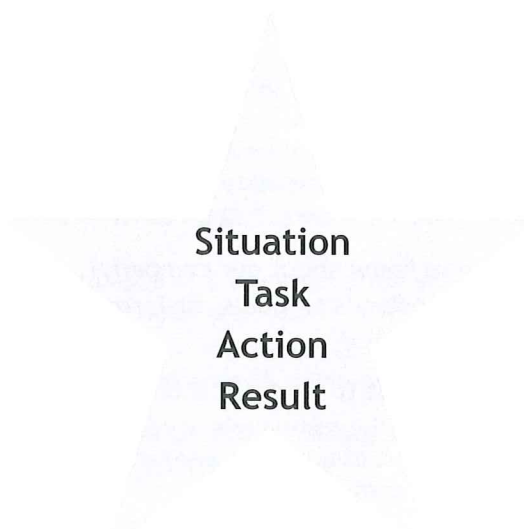
This is a four-step technique for answering behavioral interview questions. It will help you clearly explain how your past experience applies to particular interview questions.

**Situation** – Describe the task you were asked to do.

**Task** – Describe the tasks, jobs, or problems you were assigned to complete.

**Action** – Describe the actions you took. Be sure to use “I” statements.

**Result** – Describe the results of the actions you took. Be sure to include numbers if applicable. *Make sure you talk about the results in your response.*



**Situation**  
**Task**  
**Action**  
**Result**

## Practice Using the STAR Method

*Example:* An interviewer asks you to describe a work situation when you had to be assertive giving instructions to others.

**Situation:** I worked as a machinist in the lathe department and I was usually the designated ...

**Task:** ...trainer for new employees.

**Action:** I showed them how each turning center worked and asked specific questions to find out each new employee’s level of understanding and experience. Based on their answers, I instructed them at an appropriate level. I provided hands-on instruction and was very detailed oriented. I was particularly focused on the safe operation of the machinery. I was insistent that all safety precautions were followed. I didn’t allow short cuts. As I became comfortable with an employee’s ability to operate the machinery and meet our quality standards, I gave him or her more responsibility.

**Result:** I often received feedback from the new employees that my style of instruction was thorough. They said they appreciated the level of detail I shared about the “personality” of the machinery. It helped them understand the special quirks of each machine and how they could effectively monitor their production processes.



If an interviewer asks for an example of negative behavior or circumstance, be sure to explain what you learned from the experience and how you performed differently as a result of lessons learned.

## Remember Your Body Language

A number of studies conclude that the tone and quality of voice contributes as much as 38% to one's message, and body language contributes 55% of the total message. Body language includes how you stand, sit, look and move. Make sure your body language projects the image you want.

### Body Language Tips

- When you enter the employer's office, smile and tell the receptionist your name and the purpose of your visit.
- When you enter the interview room, smile and firmly shake the interviewer's hand.
- Keep good eye contact while interviewing, but don't stare.
- Sit with your posterior at the back of the chair and bend forward slightly at the waist. This shows interest and poise to the interviewer.
- Don't chew or eat. Avoid drinking coffee or water.
- Avoid pulling or twisting your hair, wringing your hands, or fiddling with pens or papers.
- Shake the interviewer's hand as you leave.

## Questions to Ask Prospective Employers

Before an interview, prepare questions to ask your interviewer. This sends the message that you are prepared and can think independently. However, avoid asking questions that are easily answered on the organization's website or questions that were answered during the interview.

- How would I be trained/brought up to speed for the job?
- Which of the job goals are the most critical to the organization?
- How would my performance be evaluated?
- What are the company's strengths and weaknesses compared to its competition?
- What qualities in a job candidate are most important to you?
- What is the organization's plan for the next five years, and how does this department fit in?
- What are the day-to-day responsibilities of this job?
- What concerns you most about my ability to perform this job?
- How much guidance or assistance is made available to help individuals develop in their career?



- Get ready to shake hands. Wash and dry your hands before entering the employer's office or conference room.
- *Researching Companies Online* is a research tutorial with the step-by-step process for finding free company and industry information. Check it out: <http://www.learnwebskills.com/company/>



# Thank You Letters

How you follow-up your interview is almost as important as what you said during the interview. Write and send thank you notes to each person who interviewed you as soon as possible – no later than 24 hours after the interview. Double-check the spelling of every word, especially names, titles, company names, and addresses.

Some interviewers will prefer an emailed Thank You, while others will be more impressed with a traditional hard copy note. Gauge this preference based on what you know about the company and your impression of your interviewer. The most important thing: Just write it.

**Date**

Leslie Owner  
Personnel Director  
Linn Val Industries, Inc.  
300 9<sup>th</sup> Street  
Portland, OR 97201

**Use the interviewer's name. Make sure it's spelled correctly.**

**Restate your interest in the job.**

Owner:

Thank you for taking the time to interview me yesterday. I am very interested in the production position we discussed and excited about the opportunities for improving efficiency at Linn Val.

My seven years of experience in production and my ability to work well as part of a team fit with your expressed needs. I have also had experience working with large machinery and I am forklift certified so I can roll-up my sleeves during those peak periods you described. As a dependable, punctual worker with a flawless safety record, I would be a benefit to your company.

**Remind the interviewer of your excellent qualifications. Include anything important you may have forgotten in the interview.**

Again, thank you for your time and consideration. I am looking forward to hearing from you and will be happy to provide any further information you may need.

Sincerely,  
*Hugo Applicant*

Hugo Applicant  
413 NW Myers  
Portland, OR 97223

**Thank him or her for his or her time.**

## Thank You Pointers

- Everyone likes to be thanked.
- Only 1% of job applicants send a thank you note to interviewers. This simple courtesy makes them stand out.
- If you left out significant selling points during your interview, make them in your thank you.
- Thank you notes may be typed or neatly handwritten. If you handwrite your note, print or write legibly.
- Use plain, professional stationery for hard copy thank yous.
- Hand-delivered thank yous can sometimes make a good lasting impression.

For more examples of thank you notes see: <http://jobsearch.about.com/od/thankyouletters/a/samplethankyou.htm>

To find out more about the services listed below, talk to WorkSource staff or visit [www.worksourceportlandmetro.org](http://www.worksourceportlandmetro.org).

- **Workshops for Job Seekers**  
Every WorkSource Portland Metro Center offers workshops to help job seekers find employment. To see what workshops are available, select the calendar option at: [www.worksourceportlandmetro.org](http://www.worksourceportlandmetro.org).
- **Veteran's Services**  
WorkSource Portland Metro has specialized staff to assist Veterans with a variety of job placement and training services. For more information, call your WorkSource office and ask for the Veteran Representative.
- **Short-Term Occupational Skills Training**  
WorkSource Portland Metro may be able to help you achieve career goals by supporting training in selected programs.
- **National Career Readiness Certification (NCRC)**  
Complete NCRC requirements to earn a certification that tells employers you are ready and able to work.

**WorkSource Portland full-service offices:**

**Beaverton-Hillsboro :**

241 SW Edgeway Drive, Beaverton  
503-526-2700

**Central:**

40 N Webster, Suite E, Portland  
503-280-6046

**East:**

19421 SE Stark Street, Portland  
503-669-7112

**Southeast:**

7916 SE Foster Road, Suite 104, Portland  
503-772-2300

**Tualatin:**

7995 SW Mohawk Street, Tualatin  
503-612-4200

**Additional Online Resources for Job Seekers**

- **CareerOneStop** – A U.S. Department of Labor-sponsored site that offers career resources and information to job seekers: <http://www.careeronestop.org/>
- **The Riley Guide** – The Riley Guide introduces users to the online job search, listing many online sites and services that are useful for job search: <http://www.rileyguide.com/atoz.html>



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