



Job Interview Checklist: Three Things to Do and Three Mistakes to Avoid

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Your résumé helped earn the interview. Now you have an opportunity to explain your experience, demonstrate how you approach work, and learn whether the position suits you.

Use this checklist to prepare for a focused, professional conversation.

Three Things to Do

1. Get Yourself and Your Setup Ready

Get adequate rest and choose clean, comfortable clothing appropriate to the workplace. Confirm the interview time, location or meeting link, and format.

For an in-person meeting, plan your route and allow extra travel time. Bring your résumé and a notebook. For a video interview, test your microphone, camera, and connection, and choose a quiet, well-lit space.

Taking care of these details beforehand helps you concentrate on the conversation.

2. Be Friendly and Attentive

Greet people courteously, listen without interrupting, and respect personal space. Use natural eye contact and comfortable posture; a handshake is optional.

With a panel, begin your answer with the person who asked the question, then include the others naturally. Pause to think when needed, and ask for clarification if a question is unclear.

Professionalism does not require a flawless performance. Clear answers and thoughtful listening matter more than appearing perfectly relaxed.

3. Prepare Evidence of Your Abilities

Review the résumé you submitted and the job announcement. Research the employer and prepare several examples that demonstrate relevant skills.

For questions beginning “Tell me about a time...,” organize your answer around the **STAR method**: situation, task, action, and result. Explain the circumstances briefly, then focus on what you did and what happened.

Prepare questions of your own, such as:

- What would you want the person in this role to accomplish first?
- What challenges is the team working through?
- How will success be evaluated?

If a work sample would help, choose something relevant that you have permission to share. Be ready to explain your contribution. Harvard’s [interviewing guide](#) offers additional preparation advice.

Three Mistakes to Avoid

1. Relying on Enthusiasm Instead of Examples

Interest in the job matters, but statements such as “I really need this opportunity” do not explain your qualifications.

Show what you offer through specific examples. You can be enthusiastic while also evaluating whether the responsibilities, expectations, and working conditions meet your needs.

2. Giving Rehearsed Spin or Blaming Others

If asked about a weakness, describe a genuine area for improvement and what you are doing about it. Avoid disguised compliments such as “I am too dedicated.”

For example:

I sometimes spent too long solving a problem independently. I now set a checkpoint for seeking input, which helps me keep work moving.

Use your own experience. When discussing a departure or difficult workplace situation, stay factual and concise. Explain relevant lessons without attacking former colleagues or employers.

3. Leaving Important Expectations Unclear

Compensation and benefits are legitimate considerations. If the salary range has not been provided, a recruiter conversation can be a practical time to ask:

Could you share the salary range budgeted for this position?

If asked about your expectations, give a considered response based on comparable roles, responsibilities, and total compensation. Detailed negotiation often follows an offer, but clarifying a major mismatch earlier can save everyone time.

Ask about other important requirements, too, such as working hours, travel, or on-site attendance.

Follow Up Professionally

Before the interview ends, thank the participants and ask about the next steps and expected timeline.

Send a brief thank-you email, ideally within 24 hours. Mention something specific from the discussion, reinforce a relevant qualification, and express continued interest if the role still appeals to you. [CareerOneStop's follow-up guidance](#) recommends a prompt, focused message.

Preparation gives you useful examples to draw on and thoughtful questions to ask. Bring both, listen carefully, and let the conversation show how you could contribute.