

# Job Interview Tips for High School Students

Are you a high school student getting ready to interview for a job? It can be challenging when you haven't done it before, but putting your best foot forward during the interview is a critical step towards landing a great job during high school, and a valuable skill to develop for the future. Here are some tips to help you to take advantage of every interviewing opportunity.

## Top 10 Job Interview Tips for High School Students

**1. Arrive for your interview about 15 minutes in advance.** Make sure you take a trial commute to the interviewing spot if you are unsure of the location or how long it might take to park.

Punctuality is a major concern for employers of teens, and late arrival will often kill your chances of landing the job.

**2. First impressions have a high impact.** Take care with the way you dress and groom yourself to show the employer that you are taking the job seriously. The employer will be especially concerned with your appearance if you are in a customer contact position as a server, store clerk, receptionist or front desk worker.

- Wear wrinkle-free clothing and avoid garments with those stylish holes.
- For most jobs, business casual will be suitable. That means a nice pair of pants and a collared shirt for guys. Girls can do without the collar but should wear a nice blouse, and can pair it with a skirt of appropriate length if preferred.
- Consider the type of organization you are targeting as you prepare your interview attire. Show a fashion flare in line with the orientation of the store if you are going for a job in retail.
- Avoid a shaggy look with your hair, and don't wear excessive cologne, makeup or jewelry. Bring a notepad to jot down questions that may occur to you, points you want to remember to make in your behalf, and the interviewer's name if you tend to be forgetful.

**3. The receptionist, secretary or another staff member who greets you may not be your interviewer.** However, you can bet that the interviewer will ask about their impressions of you.

Sit up straight, look them in the eye, smile and converse respectfully with them. Ask a question or two or make some small talk. Make them want to tell the boss that they like your personality and that you would fit in.

**4. Greet the interviewer with a firm but not crushing handshake,** a warm smile and look them in the eye. Make a mental or physical note of their name and use it during the interview, so you remember it for your follow-up. Always address the interviewer as Mr. or Ms. Employers will be evaluating how you might interact with their staff and customers, who are probably primarily adults.

**5. Turn your cell phone off or to vibrate,** and resist the temptation to take a peek at any time before, during or after the meeting, when you are in view of the interviewer. Employers are very concerned about losing productivity among teen employees who are constantly checking their phones.

**6. Exude energy, enthusiasm and a positive attitude at all times.** Employers want upbeat teen workers who don't bring any attitudinal baggage to the job. When sitting, avoid slouching and lean slightly forward, like you are eager to hear the next thing that the interviewer has to say.

**7. Take inventory of your strengths prior to the interview.** If the employer has advertised the job, look at the description and be prepared to say how you meet as many of the qualifications as possible. Be prepared to describe situations where you have used your assets to get things done. Draw upon academics, school activities, sports and volunteer work for examples, especially if you haven't held any or many jobs.

Review some of the common questions for interviews (see below). Practice answering questions with a friend or family member so you can speak confidently during your interview. Don't be intimidated if you don't have all the qualifications for a job. Express a genuine eagerness to learn the job.

**8. Be prepared to say why the job interests you.** You can reference things like the tasks, work environment, what you would learn and the people with whom you would interact.

Everything being equal in terms of qualifications, employers will often pick the candidate who seems most interested.

**9. At the end of the interview, be prepared to ask a few questions about the job.** Focus on issues like the nature of the work, training, supervision, clientele, and when you might expect to hear from them. Don't bring up pay. If the job seems like a good fit, look the interviewer in the eye and tell them that you would really like to work there.

**10. Effective follow-up after your interview can separate you from the other candidates.** As soon as you leave the interview, write a thank you note expressing your gratitude for the interview and stating briefly that you would love to work with them and why you think it's a good fit. A card is a nice touch if your handwriting is legible, but email is also acceptable. Whichever you choose, send it immediately. It will reinforce your punctuality and ability to get things done, as well as reiterating your interest in the job.

## **What to Wear to an Interview for High School Students**

Most high school job seekers aren't interviewing for professional positions. Instead, they're usually looking for part-time jobs in retail, restaurants, babysitting, or even applying for volunteer positions. Accordingly, a teen's interview attire doesn't have to be exceedingly formal. In fact, a teen would look pretty silly in a full-blown business suit.

But, as is the case with any interview, it's important to look well dressed and put together.

Clothing should be in good condition, wrinkle-free and of course, work-place appropriate. Because a teen's level of maturity is a significant factor for employers looking to hire young people, it's especially important that teens dress modestly and tastefully.

## **Tips for Handling a Job Interview for Teens**

The key to successful interviewing for teens is to do exactly what a professional candidate for employment would do. That's the best way to make a positive impression on a prospective employer and to enhance your chances of getting the job.

## **Be Prepared**

Don't just show up for the interview. The more information you have prepared in advance, the better impression you will make on the interviewer. Take the time to get working papers (if you need them) and references, before you start looking for a job.

Do your research. Learn all you can about the position and the company. The job posting, and others for similar positions, can offer valuable information about what they are looking for in a candidate.

That will let you know what skills you should be emphasizing on your resume and in your interview. Checking out the company website will give you insight into the company culture, and exactly what they do and aspire to accomplish. All this information will allow you the opportunity to give complete, educated answers to anything the interviewer might ask.

### **Bring the following with you to the interview:**

- Completed job application (if the employer doesn't have it already)
- References
- Resume (if you have one....*hint, hint....you should have one*)
- Notepad / pen

## **Be Polite**

It's essential to have good manners when interviewing. Shake your interviewer's hand. Make sure you listen carefully and thoughtfully to the interviewer. Don't sit until you are invited to. Don't slouch in your chair. Don't use slang or swear. Be polite, positive, and professional throughout the interview.

## **Know Your Schedule**

Know what days and hours you are available to work, as the employer will almost surely ask. Flexibility is definitely an asset, because the more time you are available, the easier it is for the employer to set a work schedule. Also know how you are going to get to and from work, if you don't drive.

## **Be on Time**

Arrive at the interview site at least five to ten minutes early. If you're not sure where to go, get directions ahead of time. If you aren't driving yourself, make sure you have a reliable ride.

## **Go on Your Own**

If your mom or dad brings you to an interview, don't bring them into the interview room with you. It's important that you speak for yourself and connect with the interviewer, without someone else's assistance. You need to present yourself as a mature, responsible candidate for employment.

## **Send a Thank You Note**

Take a few minutes to thank the person who interviewed you. If you have an email address, send an email thank you note, otherwise send a paper note thanking the interviewer for taking the time to meet with you.

# Teen Job Interview Questions

When you are a teen preparing for a job interview, it can be helpful to review typical interview questions that you will most likely be asked. Take the time to practice the questions and how you would answer them so they reflect you, as a person and as a candidate for employment.

## Teen Job Interview Questions and Answers

**Why Are You Looking for a Job?** - Of course, everyone wants to make money at a job, but the reasons you should share with a potential employer should reflect your interest in the field, or in helping to develop your skill set.

**Why Are You Interested in Working for Our Company?** - Employers ask this question to gauge your interest in the field, and to see if you have done your research. Make sure you check out the company's website at the very least, and familiarize yourself with what the company does, what the work and the work culture are like, and what's important to them.

**How Has School Prepared You For Working at Our Company?** - Here is your opportunity to talk about the skills you have gained in your education that will make you an ideal candidate for the position.

**Why Should We Hire You?** - New hires take time to train, and the company wants to know you are worth it. Let them know about your interest in contributing to the company immediately, and be sure to mention if you think they are a firm you would like to consider when your studies are complete.

**What Do You Think It Takes to be Successful in This Position?** - The job posting can be very helpful in letting you know how they will want you to answer this question. Let them know about the skills you have that they are looking for.

**How Would You Describe Your Ability To Work as a Team Member?** - There have likely been many times you have worked as a team, on projects, in sports or while volunteering.

The interviewer will want to hear a specific example of a time you worked successfully in a team situation.

**What Has Been Your Most Rewarding Accomplishment?** - You don't want to brag, but you should share an accomplishment that relates to some of the qualities or experiences required for the job you're interviewing for.

**What Are Your Salary Expectations?** - With this question, the employer is trying to establish that your expectations are reasonable. As a young worker, the salary you are offered will probably align with an entry level position. It's usually best to avoid a specific number, unless you know for a fact what the job pays.

**Tell Me About a Major Problem you Recently Handled.** - With this question, the interviewer is trying to determine how skilled you are at problem solving. It's fine to use an example from school, work, sports or volunteering. Make sure you show a positive resolution.

**Have You Ever Had Difficulty With a Supervisor or Teacher?** - The interviewer will ask this question to determine how you relate to authority. Always answer honestly, but make sure that you have a positive outcome. Remember that the most difficult situations are sometimes the best learning experiences.

**Here's how to handle some of the questions employers are likely to toss your way!**

<b>What They Say</b>	<b>How To Answer</b>	<b>For Example</b>
Tell me about yourself.	Be ready with some basic information about yourself that shows your ability to do well on the job. Don't ramble on about your life.	"I'm super with kids. I baby-sit a lot and lead art projects at their birthday parties, so I think I'd be a great crafts counselor for your day camp."
Do you have any work experience?	Even if you haven't held a job before, emphasize that you can handle responsibility. Point out your relevant skills with specific examples.	I've never worked as a bank teller, but I'm organized and detail-oriented and I get all A's in math.
What are your greatest weaknesses?	Be realistic. It's an old trick to sugarcoat your reply by saying you work hard or are too competitive, but this irritates some interviewers. Instead, admit to a minor problem that's not job related and say you're working on it.	"I'm shy when I meet new people but I open up when I get to know them." "I've never been great at team sports, but I love in-line skating."
Do you work better on your own or with others?	Let them know that you'll fit in well with the team and offer a specific example.	"I enjoy meeting people and working on projects with a team. That's why I volunteer for school fund-raisers."
Why do you want this job?	Let them know you are enthusiastic about the job and their company and explain why.	"I plan to major in radio and TV journalism, so your position will help me learn a lot about this field."
Do you have any questions for me?	Don't inquire about the pay. Ask one or two solid questions to show your interest.	"What's a typical day like here?" "How did you get started in the field?" "What skills are more useful for someone in this position?"
What hours are you available to work?	Be available when they need you. If you must fit the job around other obligations, let them know you will do everything you can to accommodate them.	"I can work whenever you say." "I'll be taking the bus home, and it stops running at 10 p.m., but I can come in as early as you need me."
Do you have reliable transportation?	Assure them that you will honor your commitment to show up for work on time. Don't raise doubts or go into too much detail.	"Yes, I live within walking distance." "Yes, my father will drop me off every day." Not: I have a used car that been in the shop a lot so I might have some problems if the transmission goes."

## INTERVIEWING DO'S AND DON'TS

- DO** practice interviewing with a friend or family member. You'll be more polished for the real thing.
- DO** arrange your transportation in advance and allow extra time to arrive. If you're late for an interview, the employer may think you'll be late for work, too. That's reason enough to turn you down.  
(P.S. Wearing a watch sends the right message.)
- DON'T** bring your ride to the interview. If someone drops you off, have him or her wait in the parking lot, not the lobby. The company is hiring you, not your mother.
- DO** be prepared to break the ice with a neutral comment about the weather, the traffic or the day's news. If you're nervous, it's OK to admit it to the interviewer.
- DO** show your enthusiasm and interest, but don't appear desperate for the job. That's a turnoff.
- DO** look the interviewer in the eye. Otherwise, you'll appear untrustworthy or lacking in self-confidence. This doesn't include staring.
- DON'T** slouch, yawn, chew gum or otherwise show an attitude.
- DO** avoid one-word answers; remember this is a conversation. Avoid slang and filler words such as "um", "like", and "you know".
- DON'T** disagree about anything. Even the smallest negative comment can sway an employer to decide against you.
- DO** answer specific questions an employer asks. Otherwise, he or she will think you don't listen and don't follow directions well.
- DO** be ready with the information you'll need, such as the phone numbers of previous employers.
- DO** find out when you'll hear whether you got the job. Or say something like "I will plan to call you next week if I haven't heard from you." When you call, remind the employer who you are: "Hello. This is Chris Jones. We met last week to talk about the cashier's job."