

Interview Checklist

Handout available for download on the [YRRP website](http://www.yellowribbon.mil/cms/event-handout) at:
www.yellowribbon.mil/cms/event-handout

Before the Interview

- Know which job you were called for
- Know the job description
- Know information about the company relevant to the job
 - Internet research
 - Talk with current employees
 - Talk with the company's vendors/customers
- Rehearse your answers to interview questions (and questions you have for the interviewer(s) in front of a mirror – check for nervous habits)
- Prepare your own questions
- Dress appropriately (better to be over- rather than under-dressed)
- Rehearse route to interview a few days before the interview (same time of day)
- Ensure that you arrive 10-15 minutes early
- Bring a notepad and pen
- Print a copy of your resume and professional references (be familiar with your resume)

At the Start of and During the Interview

- Smile
- Offer a whole, firm handshake for all involved (single hand, not 2 hands)
- Make eye contact (do not stare; scan the room if multiple interviewers)
- No slouching
- Paraphrase the question or ask for clarification if you are unsure of what the interviewer is asking
- Speak naturally (don't rush), and avoid irrelevant jargon
- Toward the end of the interview, it is acceptable to ask how the rest of the hiring process will work

At the End of and After the Interview

- Offer a whole, firm handshake for all involved (single hand, not 2 hands)
- Make eye contact
- Write down notes from the interview to use for follow-up meetings/thank you notes
- Send a thank you note (mail or email depending on office culture)
 - Include additional information as relevant
 - Indicate your interest in the position
 - Include professional references as relevant

30-Second Commercial

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Elements of a 30-Second Commercial

- Create a **greeting**: include your first and last name
- List your **experience**: accumulated experience in your specific industry and jobs
- List your areas of **expertise**: major job functions and skill categories
- List your **strengths**: specific skills that you possess
- List your **accomplishments**: specific accomplishments that emphasize your strengths
- List your **job search strategy**: what you want to do with your experience

Template for a 30-Second Commercial

- **Greeting**: Hello, my name is _____.
- **Experience and expertise**: I have ___ years of experience in the _____ industry with expertise in _____ and _____.
- **Strengths**: My strengths are _____ and _____.
- **Accomplishments**: I have been recognized for _____.
- **Job search strategy**: I am interested in expanding my experience into _____.

Example of a 30-Second Commercial

Hello, my name is John Smith. I have 5 years of experience as a security guard with expertise in the fields of Security Assistance and Cooperation, Program Management and Training, and Strategic Planning. I have the ability to work with diverse groups and bring them to a consensus. I understand the team concept as a leader and a follower, and I can problem solve. I have led complex organizations successfully at all levels in a multi-national arena and received awards from the U.S. Army and the U.S. Department of State. I am interested in expanding my experience into the fields of national security and defense cooperation abroad.

Your 30-Second Commercial:

Commonly Asked Interview Questions and Answer Tips

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Tell me about yourself.

The key to answering this or any other interview question is to offer a response that supports your career objective. The challenge is to keep your answer short (about 1 minute) and focused. An interviewer often asks this question to find out if you are the kind of person who will fit in well with his or her company. You do not want to give the interviewer a long biography of your life that has nothing to do with your skills and achievements. The whole point of the interview is to show that you are the right person for the job. You may choose to tell a story that relates the origin of your interest in the career field. Another approach is to connect the personal characteristics, goals, and events that motivated you to pursue this opportunity. You may also want to mention what you are really passionate about and how this eagerness relates to your career and how you might bring this passion to the company once you are hired.

Why do you want to work in this industry?

Show the interviewer that you have thought about your career path and researched in-depth the industry that you are pursuing. Show the *fit* between yourself and the industry. How do your talents complement the industry? What about the industry interests you? Discuss any industry-related experiences that you have had and how they have confirmed your interest.

Why do you want to work here?

Show the interviewer your interest in the company. Share what you learned about the job and the company through your own research. Talk about how your professional skills will benefit the company.

What are your strengths?

If you have sufficiently researched the organization, you should be able to imagine what skills the company values. List them, and then give examples where you have demonstrated these skills.

What are your weaknesses?

Everyone has weaknesses, but the interviewer wants to know if you have any weaknesses that will prevent you from doing the particular job well. Discuss with the interviewer a weakness that you feel you have developed strategies to overcome. For example, if you do not like making cold calls, tell the interviewer about the phone scripts you wrote that helped you to overcome this fear. Always reassure the employer that you

are confident that you can either work with or overcome the weakness.

What are your career goals?

The interviewer wants to know if your plans and the company's goals are compatible. Let him or her know that you are ambitious enough to plan ahead. Talk about your desire to learn more and improve your performance, and be as specific as possible about how you will meet the goals you have set for yourself.

What are your extracurricular activities?

The interviewer may be looking for evidence of your job skills outside of your professional experience. For example, hobbies, such as chess or bridge, demonstrate analytical skills. Reading, music, and painting are creative hobbies. Individual sports show determination and stamina, while group sport activities may indicate you are comfortable working as part of a team. Also, the interviewer might simply be curious as to whether you have a life outside of work. Employees who have creative or athletic outlets for their stress are often healthier, happier, and more productive.

Describe a difficult situation you have been through. -or- What has been your biggest challenge?

The interviewer is interested in hearing you describe your coping skills. Think of a time you had difficulty either at school or in a career-related experience, and describe it. Talk about the effective ways you handled the issue. Never speak negatively about a professor, boss, or fellow student.

Do you have any questions for me?

Always ask two or three questions and have more prepared in advance. This is your opportunity to learn more about the employer and to demonstrate your interest in the position available. Consider asking questions about the company culture, evaluation processes, current issues the industry is facing and/or other questions that relate to the job specifically or the organization as a whole. The interview is not the time to ask questions about salary, benefits, hours, or vacation. This information may be critical for you in making your decision but wait until you have been offered the job before asking about them.

Other Questions to Consider:

Your qualifications

- What can you do for us that someone else cannot do?
- What qualifications do you have that relate to the position?
- What new skills or capabilities have you developed recently?
- Give me an example from a previous job where you have shown initiative.
- What is important to you in a job?
- What motivates you in your work?
- What qualities do you find important in a coworker/boss?

Your career goals

- What would you like to be doing five years from now?
- How will you judge yourself as being successful? How will you achieve success?
- How will this job fit in your career plans?
- What do you expect from this job?
- Can you travel?

Your experience

- What have you learned from your past jobs/experiences?
- What were your biggest responsibilities?
- How does your previous experience relate to this position?
- What did you like most/least about your last job?
- Whom may we contact for references?

Your education

- How do you think your education has prepared you for this position?
- What were your favorite classes/activities at school?
- Why did you choose your major?
- Do you plan to continue your education?

The information on this handout was taken from the following source: Hamilton College. (n.d.). Interviewing. Retrieved from the [Hamilton College website](http://www.hamilton.edu/documents//career-center/Interviewing.pdf) at www.hamilton.edu/documents//career-center/Interviewing.pdf

Acing the Interview Resources

General Interview Resources

- Interviewing Guide on the [Hamilton College website](http://www.hamilton.edu/documents/InterviewingHandshake.pdf) at www.hamilton.edu/documents/InterviewingHandshake.pdf
- Pages 144-165 of the U.S. DOL Employment Workshop: Transition from Military to Civilian Workforce on the [Department of Labor website](http://www.dol.gov/vets/programs/tap/DOLEW-Participant-Guide-2017.pdf) at www.dol.gov/vets/programs/tap/DOLEW-Participant-Guide-2017.pdf

Types of Interviews

- Job Interview Types on the [CareerOneStop website](http://www.careeronestop.org/ResumesInterviews/Interviews/JobInterviews.aspx) at www.careeronestop.org/ResumesInterviews/Interviews/JobInterviews.aspx
- Types of Interviews on the [Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development website](http://mn.gov/deed/job-seekers/job-guide/job-interview/types.jsp) at <http://mn.gov/deed/job-seekers/job-guide/job-interview/types.jsp>

Company Research

- Guide to Researching Companies, Industries, and Countries on the [LiveCareer website](http://www.livecareer.com/career/advice/jobs/researching-companies) at www.livecareer.com/career/advice/jobs/researching-companies
- Homepage of the [Bloomberg Businessweek website](http://www.bloomberg.com/businessweek) at www.bloomberg.com/businessweek
- Find contact information, get competitive reports, and build targeted lists on the [Hoovers Company Information website](http://www.hoovers.com/company-information.html) at www.hoovers.com/company-information.html
- Homepage of the [Inc. 5000 website](http://www.inc.com/inc5000) at www.inc.com/inc5000

Finding Information on Nonprofit Organizations

- Homepage of the [GuideStar website](http://www.guidestar.org) at www.guidestar.org

Interview Body Language

- Interview Body Language Mistakes that Can Cost You the Job on the [Forbes website](http://www.forbes.com/sites/jacquelynsmith/2012/08/20/interview-body-language-mistakes-that-can-cost-you-the-job-2) at www.forbes.com/sites/jacquelynsmith/2012/08/20/interview-body-language-mistakes-that-can-cost-you-the-job-2

Guidelines for Interview Attire

- Interview Appearance and Attire on the [Virginia Tech Career Services website](http://career.vt.edu/job-search/presenting_yourself/interviewing/interview-attire.html) at http://career.vt.edu/job-search/presenting_yourself/interviewing/interview-attire.html

Job Interview Checklist

- Interviewing Prep: Job Interview Checklist for Job-Seekers on the [LiveCareer website](http://www.livecareer.com/career/advice/interview/job-interview-checklist) at www.livecareer.com/career/advice/interview/job-interview-checklist

Analyze Your Performance

- Pages 168-169 of the U.S. DOL Employment Workshop: Transition from Military to Civilian Workforce on the on the [Department of Labor website](http://www.dol.gov/vets/programs/tap/DOLEW-Participant-Guide-2017.pdf) at www.dol.gov/vets/programs/tap/DOLEW-Participant-Guide-2017.pdf