

Interview Skills for English Language Learners

Topics:

- The three common types of job interviews.
- Interview basics (preparation, preparation, preparation!)
- What social skills do you need for job interviews?



The Three Common Types of Job Interviews

1. Telephone screening interview
2. Virtual interview (Zoom, Google Meet, etc.)
3. In-person interview



What is a “Telephone Screening Interview”?

- Often a first step in the hiring process.
- A meeting set up between an employer and a job applicant.
- The meeting is over the telephone on a specific date and time.
- The interview usually last just a few minutes.
- If you “pass’ the phone interview, you will be invited to the next step in the interview process, usually an in-person meeting.



What is the Purpose of the “Telephone Screening Interview?”

- Allow the company to narrow down the pool of applicants.
- Determine if you have the right qualifications.
- Find out how interested you are in the job.
- Find out your availability.
- Figure out how well you would fit in with the company.

The Virtual Interview

- Conducted live on a virtual platform such as Zoom, Google Meet, etc.
- Often a “group interview” – more than one person will be on the call.
- Often “scripted” – you will be asked a series of questions that are presented in a slide format.
- Often there is a set time limit (ex. 30 minutes).
- Little opportunity for a two-way conversation. It’s a “stand and deliver” format.



The In-person Interview

- You are invited to the organization to be interviewed by one or more employees.
- You will be asked a series of questions about your qualifications and interest in the position. (“behavioral” and “situational” interview questions are very popular!)
- It is your opportunity to ask questions about the position and the organization.
- You have a better chance to have a meaningful conversation and make a positive impression than in the telephone screening interview or virtual interview.



Interview Basics

Top Five Interview questions:

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Why are you interested in this job?
3. What are your strengths?
4. What are your weaknesses?
5. Why should we hire you?



Other common interview questions

How do you mitigate your weaknesses?

How would your boss (or co-workers) describe you?

What is your biggest accomplishment?

What is your biggest failure?

What interests you about this job?

Describe your management style

What are your career goals?

Do you have any questions for me?

“Behavioral” Interview Questions

Questions that interviewers use to know how you handled a specific workplace **situation** in the past, to learn how you might handle a similar **situation** in the future.

- Tell me about a time when . . .



Sample Behavioral Interview Questions

Share an example of a time when you faced a difficult problem at work. How did you solve this problem?

Have you ever had to make an unpopular decision? How did you handle it?

Tell me about a time you saw a problem at work and initiated a solution.

Describe a time when you were under a lot of pressure at work. How did you react?

Tell me about a mistake you've made. How did you handle it?

Share an example of a time you had to make a difficult decision. What did you do?

Tell me about a time when you disagreed with your boss. How did you resolve it?

Tell me about a time you worked with other departments to complete a project.

Share an example of a time when you failed. What did you learn from the experience?

Tell me about a time when you set and achieved a specific goal.

Tell me about a time when you had to persuade someone to do something.

Describe a time when you had a conflict with a colleague. How did you handle it?

Have you ever had to motivate others? How did you do it?

How to Prepare for Behavioral Interview Questions

The STAR Interview Method

Situation
Task
Action
Result

What Is the STAR Interview Method?

- **Situation:** give context to your answer
- **Task:** elaborate on the challenge and your role
- **Action:** explain how you handled the situation or overcame the challenge
- **Result:** what you achieved in the process



How to use the STAR Method

- S**
 - Share a specific situation you faced.
 - Share two or three important details about the situation.
 - Keep this part of the story brief, interviewers are more interested in the **Action** and the **Results**.

- T**
 - Describe your responsibility or role in the situation. What was the goal or task you faced?
 - Use one or two main points to describe the task you needed to complete.
 - Be brief (under two minutes).

- A**
 - Explain the specific actions you took to handle the situation or overcome the challenge.
 - Even if your actions were taken as part of a team, avoid using "we" in your response and instead use "I" to highlight your particular contributions.
 - This part of your answer requires the most in-depth description as this is what tells the interviewer is you are a good fit for the job and the company culture.

- R**
 - What was the outcome you reached through your actions?
 - Focus on two or three main results of your actions and discuss what you learned.
 - Provide concrete examples of the results of your efforts.
 - You should spend only slightly less time discussing the **Results** than your **Actions**.

How to Prepare for Your STAR Interview Response

The STAR method helps you to create an easy to follow story that shows how you handled specific work situations that demonstrate your skills and abilities.

1. Review the job description and its list of required skills. What will your challenges be for this position?
2. Identify at least three STAR stories you can tell that address the challenges.
3. Review the common behavioral interview questions.
4. Match your stories to the most common behavioral interview questions.
5. Write down your stories!
6. Practice talking through your answers out loud.

Tell your stories.

Must-have Story Categories

Create a workplace story for each of these “situations.”

1. **Problem:** A time when you solved a major problem or saved the day
2. **Collaboration:** A time when you were collaborative on a team and helped others
3. **Leadership:** A time when you became a leader and took charge
4. **Difficult Co-worker:** A time when you worked with a difficult colleague and how you handled it
5. **Failure:** A time you made a mistake, failed or messed up
6. **Obstacle:** A time when you overcame a major challenge or obstacle
7. **Achievement:** A time you achieved something great / something you're proud of

Sample STAR Interview Question Response

Question: *Tell me about a mistake you've made. How did you handle it?*

Situation: “I was working as an intern for an events company, and I was responsible for ordering the floral arrangements for a private event hosted by a high-profile client. Unfortunately, I mixed up the information from another event, and the flowers were delivered to the wrong venue on the other side of town.”

Task:” I took this very seriously and knew I needed to find a solution quickly as we were working on a tight deadline.”

Action: “After considering a few different ways to resolve the issue. I admitted my mistake to my boss and informed her of my plan and why I thought it was the best course of action. I took an early lunch break, drove to the other venue, picked up the flowers and delivered them to the appropriate venue an hour before the event.”

Result: “The client never knew about my mix-up, my boss was very grateful, and, the client gave our company a five-star rating.”

Illegal Interview Questions

Questions barred by the US EEOC (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission).

- How old are you?
- Where were you born (birthplace, country of origin)?
- Do you have a disability?
- What is your gender or sexual orientation?
- Are you married?
- Do you have children?
- Are you pregnant? Do you plan to have children?
- What is your race (color, or ethnicity)?
- What is your religion?



Interview Basics

Tips for a Successful Interview

Before the interview:

- Research the company – mission, goals, financials, etc.
- Know the interviewer's name, spelling, and pronunciation.
- Research the person(s) you will interview with – Google, LinkedIn, Facebook, etc.
- Research common interview questions and prepare your answers.



Interview Basics

Tips for a Successful Interview

During the interview:

- Be on time.
- Greet the interviewer with a handshake and a smile.
- Be aware of your body language (present a positive image!).
- Bring your resume (or have it nearby in a virtual interview).
- Bring the job listing requirements and qualifications (or have nearby in a virtual interview).
- Have some questions of your own prepared in advance.
- Have a reliable pen and a small note pad with you.
- **Sell yourself! This is not a time to be modest.**



Interview Basics

How to answer: *“Do you have any questions for us?”*

Example answers:

What do you like most about working for this company?

What would success look like in this role?

What are some of the challenges people typically face in this position?

What are the biggest challenges for this company in the next year?

What are the most important qualifications for this job?

What are the advancement opportunities from this position?

When do you expect to fill this position?

Always have a few questions for the interviewer! It shows your interest in the position.

After the Interview

- Should I send a thank you?
- How long to wait for a decision?



What social skills do you need for job interviews?

- Small Talk
- Time Management
- Grooming and Dress Codes
- Body Language

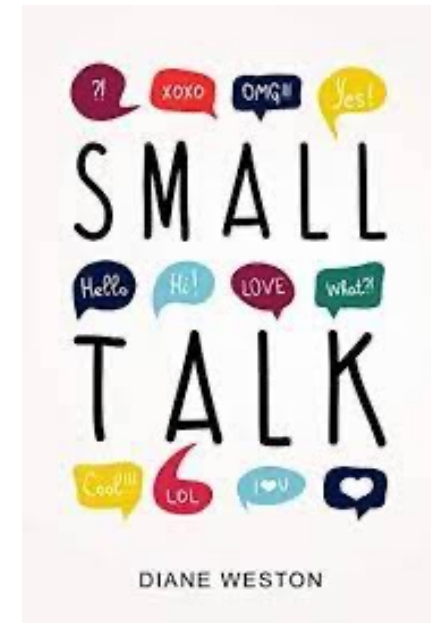


Small Talk

Your interviewer may begin the interview by engaging in *small talk*.

Be prepared to answer:

- Hello, thank you for coming in.
My pleasure; thank you for inviting me for an interview.
- Hello, how are you?
Very well, thank you. And you?
- Hello. Nice to meet. How has your day been going?
Great; I'm excited to be here.



*Small Talk exchanges are positive, friendly and **brief**.*

Time Management

During the interview you will be evaluated on how you can manage your time.

- Arrive a few minutes early.
 - Do not be even one minute late!
- Be mindful of the time allotment (usually you will be told how long the interview will last).
 - Glance at your watch or a clock nearby.
 - Do not go over the time limit.



Punctuality is important!

Grooming and Dress Codes

- First impressions count – a lot!
- It takes less than 30 seconds for the interviewer to form a positive or negative opinion of you.



First Impressions

YOU HAVE 30 SECONDS TO
MAKE A GOOD
IMPRESSION



In the first few seconds the interviewer will make crucial determinations about you:

- Your likeability
- Your trustworthiness
- How aggressive or passive you seem
- How well you would fit in with others on the team
- **Whether or not they are inclined to want to hire you!**

Body Language

Be aware of presenting **positive** non-verbal cues:

Handshake (in-person interview)

Personal space (in-person interview)

Smile

Eye contact

Facial expressions

Posture


Attentive



Body Language

- Your nonverbal signals are a huge part of the impression you convey.
- Over 50% of communication is through body language and how we look.
- Try to exude energy and positivity.

Body Language during an interview 101



Maintain good eye contact.
Don't wander

Don't cross your arms.
It comes off as defensive or uninterested

Practice your handshake,
arrange your belongings properly

Avoid trying to cross your legs, this can cause distraction when switching legs

Keep an interested expression and don't forget to smile

Remember good posture and sit up straight

Don't overuse hand gestures, you don't want to distract from what you're saying

Remain calm, Don't let nerves make your feet do a tap dance

Questions for Discussion

1. What is the worst job interview experience you have ever had?
2. What is the best job interview advice you have ever received?
3. What is one English job interview question that makes you super nervous?