Landing your first job is obviously important, and interviewers look carefully at newcomers to the labor force to determine how they would fit into their organization and the world of work. Few interviews are likely to play such an important role in your career as your first one.

Before the interview:
Be prepared to talk about yourself in terms of your skills as outlined below.

**don’t lose your cool!**

**be prepared.**

**know how to sell yourself.**

**know about the employer.**

**know what questions to expect and practice them.**

**Communication skills:** write reports, letters and promotional materials, edit, explain, speak clearly and effectively.

**Critical thinking skills:** identify critical issues, identify general principles, define parameters of a problem, use reason and logic, creatively solve problems, analyze from many angles.

**Research and investigation skills:** identify information sources, formulate questions, design experimental models, use a variety of information, assess needs.

**Creative skills:** develop models, experiment, apply theory, synthesize, predict, create new ideas, use imagination.

**Mechanical skills:** design and compose objects and machines, set up and repair equipment, assemble, build with precision, operate.

**Organization skills:** keep deadlines, pay attention to details, accept responsibility, reason, use logic, make contacts, arrangements, and decisions, classify, use clerical skills.

**Numerical skills:** use computational and statistical abilities, inventory.

**Instruction skills:** coach, facilitate groups, design educational materials, inform, lead.

**Persuasion skills:** influence others, sell, develop trust and rapport, motivate, arbitrate, negotiate, advance proposals, reconcile conflict.

**Human relations and interpersonal skills:** understand, listen, question, guide, review, represent, advocate.

**Design and planning skills:** set priorities, schedule time, identify alternatives, set goals, follow through, predict future trends.

**Performing skills:** speak publicly, tell humorous stories, develop stage presence.

**Leadership skills:** organize time, initiate, clarify and solve problems, take risks, be self-directed, motivate others to accomplish goal.

**Managing/supervising skills:** set goals and standards, assign tasks, organize ideas, design projects, make decisions, share responsibilities, implement policies, build teams.

**Know economic skills:** prepare and administer budgets, show financial accountability.

**Evaluation skills:** assess performance, set standards, make decisions, do analysis review.
**do your research!**

**Research the opening.** Attempt to find out as much as possible about the position that is available. Request that a job description be sent to you. Talk with your contacts in the organization.

**Research the company.** Find out as much as possible about the company’s purpose and products. If you have interviewed for information with someone in the company, review your notes. Read any information that the company publishes such as annual reports or the company newsletter.

**Research yourself.** Based on what you know about the opening and the company, list whatever traits and skills are needed for the job. Now consider your experiences, skills, and strengths in terms of the qualifications for the job. Identify examples of activities or work experience where you used the skills you listed as necessary for the position.

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**Information to have on the employer:**

- Relative size of firm in the industry
- Percent of annual sales growth last five years
- Potential new markets, products or service line
- Organization structure by product line, function, etc.
- Number of plants, stores or sales outlets
- Organizational goals/mission
- Average time in non-management assignment
- Short term profit picture
- Recent items in the news and periodicals
- People you know in the organization
- Structure of assets- price of stock
- Formal versus on-the-job training
- Array of product line or services
- Typical career path in your field
- Growth potential for the industry
- Name of recruiter
- Percent of annual growth in earnings/share
- Community support programs
- Employee data: number of employees, racial and ethnic diversity, education, benefits
- Consumers: public/private, areas/businesses, lease/buy product

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**Bring with you to the interview:**

- an extra copy of your resume
- a typed list of your references
- a portfolio of examples of your work (if relevant)
- letters of recommendation
- questions that you will ask during the interview

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**10 steps to a successful interview**

1. **Arrive on time.**
2. **Introduction yourself in a courteous manner.**
3. **Read company materials while you wait.**
4. **Have a firm handshake.**
5. **Use body language to show interest.**
6. **Listen.**
7. **Smile, nod, give nonverbal feedback to the interviewer.**
8. **Ask about the next step in the process.**
9. **Thank the interviewer.**
10. **Write a thank-you letter to anyone you have spoken to.**

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**Sources:**
National Association of Colleges and Employers Planning Job Choices: 1998