

# Preparing for Your Second Interview

## Objectives

1. Understand the importance of preparing for second interviews.
2. Distinguish between first and second interviews.
3. Describe the characteristics of a second interview.
4. Describe structured versus unstructured interviews.

## Characteristics of a Second Interview

### Importance of a Second Interview

The second, or “on-site,” interview is usually the final step in obtaining a job offer. You most likely have a 50 percent chance of receiving an offer, although this probability varies according to industry.

### Purpose of Second Interviews

Both the employer and the interviewee should have specific goals during the second interview.

#### Employer’s Goals

- **To identify your unique qualities:** During the first interview, employers try to identify many general qualities important to their organization. In the second interview, employers try to determine if you have specific qualities they want in a new employee.
- **To identify if you fit the organization:** Employers also want to see how others in the organization respond to you and if you are a good fit in their culture.

#### Your Goal

- **To decide if you want to work with this organization:** The second interview allows you the opportunity to view the facilities, meet employees of the organization, possibly see the community, and determine whether or not you want to work for this organization.

### A Typical Interview Day

Some interview visits begin with a dinner or reception the night prior to the actual interview. Interviews usually begin the following day at 8:30 a.m. or 9:00 a.m., although some may begin with a breakfast as early as 7:30 a.m. Most interview visits end at 5:00 p.m.



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If traveling by air, organizations typically pick candidates up before 8:00 a.m. and deliver them to the airport in the evening. Little (if any) free time can be expected, as even lunch may be reserved for interviews. If offered breaks to freshen up, take advantage of this time to go to the restroom, if for no other reason than to mentally take a break from this intensive process.

Upon arrival, you will usually meet with someone from the human resources department or in some settings, a person on the search committee. They will likely outline the day’s activities and answer any questions you have about the organization and what will occur during your visit. Sometimes this information will be provided to you prior to your visit. If it is not, you may request to know who will be performing the interview and a tentative schedule.

You may have private interviews with four or more individuals, including managers, executives, department heads, alumni from your school, and new trainees. Throughout the interview day, they may discuss:

- Specifics of the position
- Organizational culture
- Expectations of the individual hired
- Salary and benefits
- Employment guidelines
- Reimbursement of expenses

You will probably be given a tour of the facilities. If a tour is not scheduled, you may ask for one if time permits.

## **Types of Second Interviews**

There are several types of second interviews, but the majority will usually fall into two categories:

### **Structured Interviews**

A second interview is structured if the interviewers have specific criteria and questions they use to assess you. For example, one person may ask questions to determine your work ethic, technical skills, computer skills, or your sales ability. Another person may only ask you about your educational background or your work experience.

The key to doing well in this type of interview is to identify the specific quality or skill that is being assessed and direct your answers to information about that area.

### **Unstructured Interviews**

In an unstructured interview, the interviewer has to make a broad evaluation and may ask questions based on their individual needs. You may get similar questions from all the interviewers. Treat each interviewer with equal importance.

One example of a question that may come up in these kinds of interviews is “Why should I hire you?” This question would be answered differently to different people. Express to your immediate supervisor that you have the necessary skills to get the job done, as this person’s goals would be focused on how efficiently you can do the job. The president of an organization, however, may be looking at your potential for retention and advancement.

The key to doing well in this type of an interview is to identify the interviewer’s goals and to answer their questions accordingly.

## **Preparing For The Interview**

It is imperative for you to be fully prepared when you attend an interview, especially a second-round interview, as these tend to be in-person and you may not have access to notes.

### **Obtain an Itinerary in Advance**

It is important to know the schedule of the day’s activities, including names and titles of the interviewers. If possible, obtain biographical information about your interviewer(s). For many organizations, brief biographical sketches are available on company websites. You may also research a professional using web directories like [LinkedIn.com](https://www.linkedin.com); however, remember to watch your privacy settings as LinkedIn lets individuals know who has looked at their profiles. Knowing a bit about your interviewer(s) will give you the opportunity to think about their relationship to the position for which you are interviewing and prepare responses according to their questions.

### **Review Your First Interview**

Review your notes from the first interview. What were the most important candidate qualifications? What objectives/goals did the employer want to meet? Did you have any trouble answering any questions? Prepare your responses to effectively address these issues/questions.

### **Research the Employer for Relevant Information**

Ask the first-round contact to send you any additional information that you should know about the job, the organization, the department you would work for, and anything else they think is important to review before your visit. Interviewees who are prepared for the upcoming schedule, who know what to expect, and who have knowledge of the organization and its industry stand a greater chance of success than candidates who do not do the necessary research.

Check periodicals and the Internet for timely articles or information about the organization or industry. The Career Center Library has websites and print resources to help you acquire employer information. You can access relevant Career Center Library resources at [career.fsu.edu/Resources/Career-Center-Library](https://career.fsu.edu/Resources/Career-Center-Library). Additional Career Center print resources are listed at the back of this guide. FSU also has several library databases that may assist you in researching employers ([www.lib.fsu.edu](http://www.lib.fsu.edu)). Strozier

Library's Business Reference section contains many types of directories with private, public, profit, and non-profit employer data. Use articles and other information to review the organization's operations, products or services, and management structure. You may also want to review The Career Center's "Researching Potential Employers" guide, available at [career.fsu.edu/Resources/Career-Guides](http://career.fsu.edu/Resources/Career-Guides).

### **Prepare Questions to Ask Your Interviewers**

Questions show enthusiasm about working for the employer. Keep in mind that you are also interviewing the employer to see if this is the position you want. The second interview is an opportunity to learn more about the organization. The list below suggests topics to cover:

- Request a complete job description.
- Find out who will supervise you.
- Ask what you will be expected to accomplish in the first six months.
- Ask about support for professional development.
- Inquire about the performance appraisal system.
- Ask about the organization's philosophy and management style.
- Find out about employee turnover and/or how economic conditions have affected the organization.

## **Interview Trip Logistics**

### **Travel Arrangements**

Your travel plans can be handled in a number of ways. You may be asked to make your own arrangements, or the organization may coordinate your travel arrangements.

### **Lodging**

If you are arriving the day before your interview and staying at a hotel, ask if the organization will be making arrangements for your lodging. Ask the human resources representative which expenses are prepaid and which will be reimbursed. Make sure you have clear directions from your hotel to the organization. Check parking options if you are driving to the interview.

### **Car Rental**

If you rent a car, you will need your driver's license and a major credit card. Some agencies require you be at least 21; others set the minimum age at 25. Call in advance to obtain this information.

### **Miscellaneous Expenses**

Take a credit card to handle unexpected expenses and cash for incidentals (tips, cab, etc.).

### **Reimbursement for Expenses**

Some employers will reimburse you for expenses accumulated during your interview trip. Large employers will reimburse you by check. Smaller employers and government agencies often do not pay travel expenses. If the organization has not stated they will pay expenses, ask them in advance so you know what to expect. On your trip, maintain an accurate record and keep receipts for all expenses (meals, tips, hotels, taxis, etc.).

### **Day of the Interview**

- *Arrive 10-15 minutes early.* Always allow extra time for your first visit to the employer site. Dress professionally and be enthusiastic — see the "Dressing to Impress" guide on The Career Center website. Remember to take notes when appropriate. Always write down names and titles of people with whom you speak if you did not obtain this information in advance and record important points.
- *Meals and informal social events are often part of a second interview.* Demonstrate good dining etiquette and conversational skills during the meal. The meal is part of the interview, and you are being evaluated. Employers view this as an opportunity to see how well you fit with their current mix of employees — and you should use it as a time to see how you feel about the group. Refer to the "Using Proper Etiquette" guide for more information and tips on business etiquette (also on The Career Center website).
- *Observe the work environment and organizational/corporate culture.* The corporate culture is the environment or personality of an organization. It dictates acceptable business practices, the treatment of employees, and much more. Take the time to get a feel for the corporate culture so you can decide whether it is the type of environment where you would feel comfortable working.
- *Clarify the next step in the employer's decision-making process* by asking when you can expect to hear a decision. If you receive a verbal offer, ask for a written offer as well. While you want to thank the employer, never accept a verbal offer on the spot. Instead, be prepared to give them a date by which you will inform them of your decision. For tips on decision making, refer to the "Negotiating Job Offers" guide.

## After The Interview

### Follow Up Letter

After the visit, send letters, separate from the expense voucher, to your interviewers, the person for whom you would work, and/or the head of the search committee. Reiterate your interest in the job and stress positive qualities that you have to offer the organization.

If you do not hear from the employer within the previously specified amount of time, call them. If you failed to get a follow-up time frame, it is appropriate to contact them after one week. Speak with the person who arranged the interview and ask about the status of your candidacy.

### Job Offer

If a verbal job offer is made, you will usually receive a phone call anywhere from 1 day to three weeks after the interview. In non-business settings, it may be longer. This verbal offer should be followed by a written offer restating the terms. See The Career Center's guide on "Negotiating Job Offers" for more information.

## Additional Resources

### Select Career Center Library Resources

<i>Ace Your Interview</i> .....	VB W4
<i>A/E/C Employers Guidebook: 2005-2006 Edition</i> .....	VIB5 E55
<i>Almanac of American Employers</i> .....	VIB A5
<i>Boost Your Interview IQ</i> .....	VB M3
<i>Competency-Based Interviews</i> .....	VB K4
<i>Corporate Equality Index 2012: Rating American Workplaces on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Equality</i> .....	IGI H8
<i>Cracking the Coding Interview: 150 Programming Interview Questions and Solutions</i> .....	VB M32
<i>Employer Literature Files</i> .....	Section VI
<i>Directory of Florida Industries</i> .....	VID FL 8
<i>Hoover's Handbook of American Business</i> .....	VIB H6
<i>How to Land A Top-Paying Federal Job: Your Complete Guide to opportunities, internships, résumés and cover letters networking, interviews, salaries, promotions, and more!</i> .....	VI B2 W5
<i>Interview Preparation Binder</i> .....	VB C62
<i>Peterson's Top 2,500 Employers</i> .....	VID US P4

### Select Online Resources

- [www.quintcareers.com/second\\_interviewing-dos-donts.html](http://www.quintcareers.com/second_interviewing-dos-donts.html)
- [www.forbes.com/2009/05/12/second-interview-advice-leadership-careers-basics.html](http://www.forbes.com/2009/05/12/second-interview-advice-leadership-careers-basics.html)

### No Job Offer

If you do not receive a job offer, stay positive. Maybe the position or organization was not a good match for you. Reflect on your interview experience. What did you do right? Which areas could you have improved? Remember, you can call the employer to ask for feedback about your qualifications and interview presentation to help you with future interviews.

## Summary

The second interview is usually the final contact an individual will have with an organization prior to an offer for hire. These interviews often require some additional preparation and logistics planning to execute effectively. Conducting research and practicing interviewing skills are essential to second interview success.

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