

GETTING THE JOB

What should you do before the interview?

1. Prepare
2. Rehearse
3. Practice, Practice, Practice!

First impressions and overall appearance

1. Dress appropriately for your type of interview
2. Practice your Handshake!
3. Be Confident

What to bring

1. Your portfolio
2. References
3. Extra resumes
4. A professional looking notepad and pen

Sample Interview Questions to Practice Answering

Q. Tell me about yourself.

This is a time to sell yourself, talk about your experience, accomplishments, and qualifications for the job. This is not a time to talk about your age, childhood, family or hobbies.

Q. What is your greatest strength?

What can you bring to the organization? What do you feel is your strongest asset? Are you excellent at multi – tasking? Do you work well under stress? Can you make people feel at ease? These are just some examples of strengths you may possess.

Q. What are your weaknesses?

When answering this question, you want to focus on work. Be honest. Share some of the areas you need improvement in or something you aren't good at doing. You may also take this opportunity to talk about your weaknesses in positive ways. For example, "I am a workaholic and must finish all tasks before I leave for the day."

Q. Why should I hire you?

How well do you fit the job you are interviewing for? What do you have that makes you more qualified than other candidates? Explain what an asset you can be to the organization.

Q. How would your (last) supervisor describe you?

Focus on your work habits, and how you related to co – workers. How did you handle assigned tasks?

Q. What is the most difficult situation you have ever faced?

Describe the situation and how you handled it. What did you learn?

Q. What would you like to improve about yourself?

Focus on continuing education, or continuous improvement in your line of work or a career related goal that you have for yourself.

Q. What are your career goals?

Make sure they match with the goals of the company. Saying that your career goal is to be a financial advisor when you are interviewing for a job as a human service assistant, may cause you to be left out of the running for the job. Even if your long term goals are in a different area, find a way to relate them to the position you are interviewing for.

Q. What are some of your past mistakes?

Think back to things you could have handled differently. Focus on work.

Q. What have you learned from your past mistakes?

Explain how you learned to handle the situation better, or complete the task more efficiently. Focus on an example from work.

Q. Can you work well under stress?

This is important in any workplace. Explain what techniques you use to handle stress in the workplace. Be prepared to give an example.

Q. Are you a team player?

Again, this is very important. Even if you are mainly working by yourself, chances are your actions affect other members of the team. Talk about your experiences as a member of a team, and the importance of being a team player. Give an example of when you exhibited being a team player.

Q. What are the things that motivate you?

Some people are motivated by stress, others by challenges, what motivates you?

Q. Tell me about your duties in you present (or past) job?

This is pretty straightforward; describe a typical day on the job for you. If you are not currently working, reference your last job.

Q. What is the most important aspect of your present job?

What task that you do is most important for you to accomplish during the day? Keep in mind what the company considers to be important and try to reflect that in your answer.

Q. What duties have you enjoyed the most? Least? Why?

When answering this question it is important to keep in mind the duties of the job you are interviewing for. Do not list these as your least favorite tasks. Try to talk about what you enjoy doing more.

Q. Why would you like to work for us?

This is a time to talk about what you know about the organization, what interested you in the position and the company. It will also show the interviewer that you have done your research on the company.

Q. What kind of supervisor do you like the most? The least? Why?

At the time of the interview, you probably do not know what type of supervisor you will have. So it is important to stay open with this question. You do not want to shoot yourself in the foot by saying you do not like the type of supervisor you may be working for. Give examples of what has worked well for you, but remain open.

Q. Tell me about your experience in school.

This question is designed to see whether you enjoy learning, as there could be continuing education related to this position. Also, it will tell the interviewer how your education prepared you for the job you are interviewing for. Talk about what you liked about school and what you have learned.

Q. How do you relate your last job to this one?

Is it similar? Is it increasing your responsibility? A step up on the career ladder? What have you learned that you can apply to this position?

Q. Why do you want to leave your current job? (Why did you leave your last job?)

Be careful with this. Avoid trashing other employers and making statements like, "I need more money." Instead, make generic statements such as "It's a career move," or "I needed to gain more skills."

Q. Which adjectives would you use to describe yourself?

Answer with positive, work – oriented adjectives, such as conscientious, hard – working, honest and courteous, plus a brief description or example of why each fits you well. More examples include: upbeat, friendly, self-motivated, focused, and energetic.

Q. Where do you see yourself five (ten or fifteen) years from now?

Explain your career – advancement goals that are in line with the job for which you are interviewing. Your interviewer is likely more interested in how he, she or the company will benefit from you achieving your goals than what you'll get from it, but it goes hand in hand to a large degree. It's not a good idea to tell your potential new boss that you'll be going after his or her job, but it's okay to mention that you'd like to earn a senior or management position.

Q. Do you have any questions?

The following are acceptable questions to ask at the close of an interview. This is your last opportunity to show the interviewer that you want the job. Be sure to have at least a few questions prepared in advance.

- Who will be training me?
- What is the normal training/transition period?
- Job specific questions
- Who are the people I'd be working with and what do they do?
- How would I get feedback on my performance?
- Do you have a copy of the job description I may review?
- When will you be making a hiring decision?
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Know Your Rights When it Comes to Job Interviews!

Legal Questions	Category	Illegal Questions
Whether an applicant has worked for the company or a competitor under any other name and if so, what name. Name under which applicant is known to references if different from present name.	Name	Any inquiries about name, which would divulge marital status, lineage, ancestry, national origin or descent. "Has your name been legally changed?" "What is your former name?"
Are you under age 18?	Age	"When were you born?" "How old are you?"
No questions	Birthplace	"Where were you / parents / spouse born?"
Whether the applicant is prevented from lawfully being employed in this country because of a visa or immigration requirement. Whether applicant can provide proof of citizenship (passport), visa, and alien registration number after hiring. "If you are not a US citizen, do you have the legal right to remain	Citizenship	"Are you a US citizen?" "Are your parents, spouse citizens of the US?" "When did they become citizens?" Requiring a birth certificate, naturalization or baptismal certificate. Any inquiry into citizenship would tend to divulge applicant's lineage, descent, etc.

permanently in the US?"		
No questions	Ancestry or National Origin	"What is your language, ancestry, or national origin?"
Inquiries about address to the extent needed to facilitate contacting the applicant. "Will you have problems getting to work at 9am?"	Residence	Names or relationships of persons with whom applicant resides. Whether applicant owns or rents a home. "Do you live in town?"
Whether the applicant can meet specified work schedules or has activities or commitments that may prevent him or her from meeting attendance requirements. "Can you work overtime?" "Is there any reason why you can't be on the job at 7:30 am?" "What are the names of relatives already employed by the company?"	Relatives / Family/ Dependents / Marital Status	Questions concerning spouse, or spouse's employment, salary, child care arrangements or dependents. Whether you are married, divorced, separated, engaged, widowed, etc. The names of family members. "Do you have children?" "Do you have childcare?" "What kind of childcare arrangements do you have?" "How will your husband feel about the amount of time you will be traveling if you get this job?"
May be requested after hiring for identification purposes.	Photographs	Requests for photos at any time prior to hiring.
All questions related to academic, vocational or professional education of an applicant, including names of the schools attended, degrees/diplomas received, dates of graduation and courses of study.	Education	Any questions specific to nationality, racial or religious affiliation of a school.
None except "Can you work on Saturdays?" and only if relevant to the job.	Religion	Any question that directly or INDIRECTLY relates to a religion. "What religious holidays do you observe?" "What is your religious affiliation?"
"To what PROFESSIONAL organizations do you belong?" (Exclude those whose names or character indicates the race, religious creed, color, national origin or ancestry of its members).	Organizations	"To what organizations, clubs, societies, and lodges do you belong?"

These inquiries must only relate to the applicants professional qualifications.		
Inquiries concerning education, training or work experience in the armed forces of the United States only.	Military	Type or condition of military discharge. Applicant's experience in other than US armed forces. Request for discharge papers. Are you collecting a service-connected disability pension?
"Have you even been convicted of any crime? If so, when, where, and disposition of the case." "Have you ever been convicted under criminal law within the past five years (excluding minor traffic violations)?"	Arrests – Criminal Record	All inquiries relating to arrests. "Have you ever been arrested?" Note: Arrests are not the same as convictions. An innocent person can be arrested, remember.
Inquiries about the ability to perform a certain job.	Height and Weight	Any inquiries not based on actual job requirements.
Inquiries to duration of stay on a job or anticipated absences, which are made to males and females alike. "Do you foresee any long term absences?"	Pregnancy	All questions relating to pregnancy and medical history concerning pregnancy. "Do you plan on having more children?"
"Can you lift 40 lbs?" "Do you need any special accommodations to perform the job you've applied for?" "How many days did you miss from work (or school) in the past year?"	Physical Health	"Do you have any physical disabilities?" "Do you have any handicaps?" "What caused your handicap?" "Have you ever had any serious illness?" "Have you collected disability/workers' comp.?"
No questions	Sex	What is your sex?
No questions	Sexual preference	"What is your sexual preference?" "Are you a homosexual?"

Some employers may ask you questions they should not – question that may be discriminatory. While you should not answer them, be prepared to deal with the underlying issues; for example, a question about age may be the interviewer wondering if you can handle the job or a question about childcare may be the employer wondering about whether you will miss a lot of work. You can reassure the employer about these things without directly answering the questions.

If you feel you have been discriminated against – contact your local office of Human Rights.

Ex-Offender Employment Rights

Statistics compiled by the Division of Criminal Justice show that 83% of ex-offenders who violated probation or parole were unemployed at the time of violation. Therefore, employment can be a key factor in your success while on probation or parole.

Know Your Rights as an Ex-Offender

As an ex-offender in New York State, there are certain things you need to know regarding your employment rights:

Employers can ask you for your convictions, however they cannot ask you about arrests.

Certain employers can routinely obtain a copy of your sealed Rap Sheet. Those employers include **hospitals, banks, museums, child care agencies, nursing homes, and all Civil Service jobs**. Rap sheets are also checked when you apply for those positions which require a state or municipal license (not a drivers license).

Employers who cannot obtain a copy of your Rap Sheet are allowed to request disposition slips as part of the application process.

Employers are not allowed to discriminate against ex-offenders. However, discrimination in hiring on the basis of being an ex-offender is extremely difficult to prove. Unless the employer puts in writing that they will not hire you because you are an ex-offender, you have very little proof. So, the best offense, in this case, is a good defense! What can you do to prepare for employment?

- Obtain a **Certificate of Relief from Disabilities** or a **Certificate of Good Conduct**. These important certificates go on your Rap Sheet. They demonstrate evidence of your rehabilitation. See your Parole Office to find out how to obtain a certificate.
- **Prepare** for your interview by practicing answers to questions on why you have a gap in your employment, and how you spent your time while incarcerated. (Did you get a GED or complete a vocational course? Be sure to bring along the diplomas to prove it!)
- Put together a resume. List the work experience you obtained while incarcerated, as well as any extracurricular activities in which you may have been involved.

Should you disclose the fact that you are an ex-offender when you go to an interview? Here are a few tips:

- If you lie on an application, an employer can fire you for lying, no matter how good a job you are doing. For those on parole, if you lie on a Civil Service application, you could face misdemeanor charges and be charged with a violation.
- Be prepared to tell the employer that if s/he does hire you there are special incentives such as the **Federal Bonding Program** (which will bond you for up to \$10,000) and

Targeted Jobs Tax Credit (which will give the employer a tax break for hiring you). For information about these and other programs, check with your nearest Department of Labor Office.

- Always highlight what you have done to rehabilitate yourself. Admit your mistake and discuss the lessons you have learned.

Eventually you will find an employer who is willing to give you a chance and you will be able to establish a solid work history once again! For further information, see **The Prime Objective**, published by the New York State Department of Labor.