


A close-up photograph of a person wearing a dark pinstriped suit jacket, sitting on a smooth, orange-brown leather chair. The background is a solid, deep red wall. The lighting is warm and focused on the chair and the person's arm.

The next step*

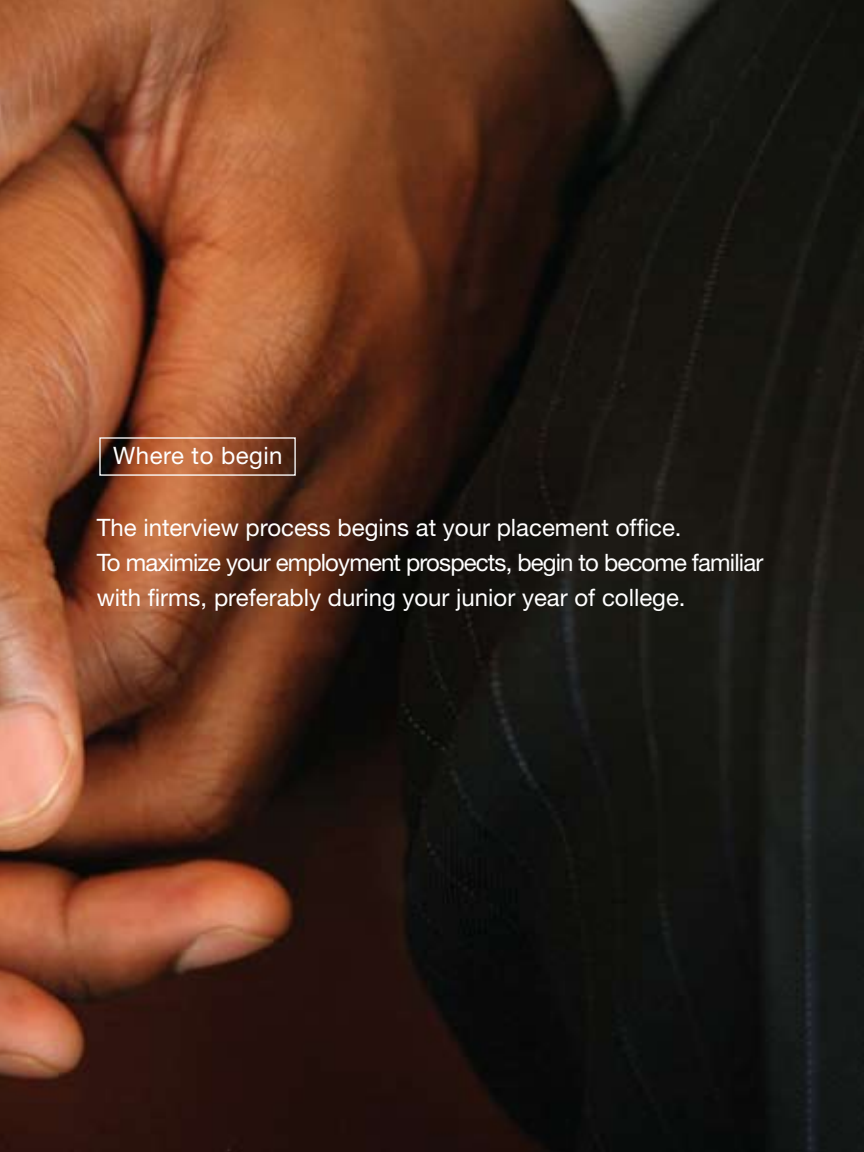
*connectedthinking

PRICEWATERHOUSECOOPERS 

Contents

PricewaterhouseCoopers has designed this brochure to assist college students in preparing for their employment interviews.

- 02 Where to Begin
- 06 Preparing for a Job Interview
- 12 Your Interview Conduct
- 16 What Professional Services Firms Look For
- 19 Parts of the Interview
- 28 The Office Interview – Visiting the Firm
- 30 Reasons for Rejection
- 32 What You Can Expect After the Interview

A close-up photograph of two hands clasped together. The hand on the left is a darker skin tone, and the hand on the right is a lighter skin tone. The hand on the right is wearing a dark pinstriped suit sleeve. The background is dark and out of focus.

Where to begin

The interview process begins at your placement office. To maximize your employment prospects, begin to become familiar with firms, preferably during your junior year of college.

Follow these guidelines:

- Register with your placement office at the end of your sophomore year.
- Become familiar with the placement office's function and role.
- Determine when on-campus interviews are held.
- Determine when interview schedules are posted and refer to them frequently.
- Sign up early for interviews.
- Talk to as many firms as possible.
- Read employer literature.
- Keep your placement records up to date.
- Prepare a systematic job search plan.
- Get the best advice and assistance you can. Talk to faculty, employers and placement office staff if you have any questions.
- Become familiar with the recruiter's name and interview location.
- Speak with recent graduates who have been through the process.
- Visit various firm websites.

The job interview – be ready

A recent college graduate observed that it is regrettable that a job is not awarded with each degree. In fact, that was never the case, although at one time jobs were so plentiful and college graduates in such short supply that it may have seemed so.

In today's job market, securing a job is a highly competitive activity. Employers seek the best qualified candidates for their limited number of openings. But being the best qualified is not enough. You must have the skills to communicate that effectively to the employer. Unfortunately, these two qualities do not automatically go hand in hand.

The job interview is the means by which you, the job applicant, and the employer come together and communicate to determine common interests. It also might be the first time you come into direct contact with each other. For these reasons the first interview is the most critical and should be the focal point of your job search.



Preparing for a job interview

The information presented here should be useful in preparing for on-campus employer interviews with professional services firms, other initial interviews secured through your own efforts, and follow-up, in-depth interviews or “office visits” that employers conduct to further screen selected job candidates. The difference between on-campus and office interviews is that the former are usually quite short, lasting about 45 minutes. Therefore, employers place a premium on your ability to communicate effectively.

1. The key to a successful job interview is a sound presentation. So begin with yourself – a self-assessment. Analyze your:

- Strengths
- Weaknesses
- Academic Performance
- Career Interests
- Personal Goals
- Work Experiences
- Special Skills

2. Be prepared to express your qualifications in an organized, logical and convincing manner. Know how your qualifications can benefit the employer.

3. Keep in mind that interviewers have been trained to ask questions designed to reveal your strong and weak points. If you complete a self-assessment, you will be better prepared for the questions the interviewer will ask and be better able to direct him or her toward your strengths, rather than your weaknesses.

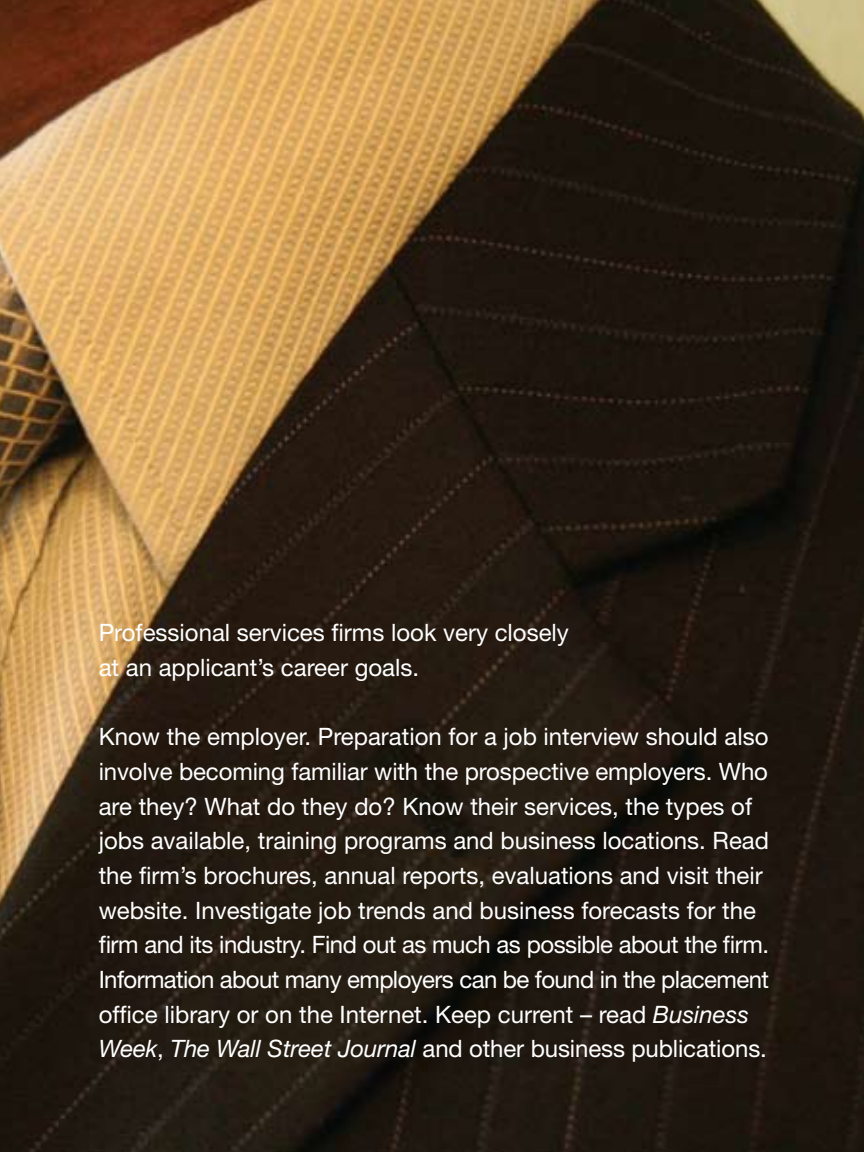
4. Be prepared to tell an employer why you should be hired. With many applicants for the same job, the pressure is on you to convince the interviewer that, of all those interviewed, you are one of the best candidates. If you are not prepared to tell the employer why you should be hired, then do not expect to be hired.

5. Two cardinal rules for interview preparation:

- Be prepared
- Be positive about yourself

6. To meet these two basic rules you should know what you want to accomplish, know all you can about the employer, and know job interview procedures. Knowing what you want means “be goal-oriented.” You should have some basic plan relating to the:

- Type of entry-level job you desire
- Training program desired
- Level of responsibility you want
- Work environment
- Job location
- Salary
- Advancement and long-term opportunities and how they relate to your long-term goals.



Professional services firms look very closely at an applicant's career goals.


Know the employer. Preparation for a job interview should also involve becoming familiar with the prospective employers. Who are they? What do they do? Know their services, the types of jobs available, training programs and business locations. Read the firm's brochures, annual reports, evaluations and visit their website. Investigate job trends and business forecasts for the firm and its industry. Find out as much as possible about the firm. Information about many employers can be found in the placement office library or on the Internet. Keep current – read *Business Week*, *The Wall Street Journal* and other business publications.

Here is some basic information that may be helpful to have about the employer:

- Size of the firm
- Type and size of clients
- Potential growth
- Job descriptions
- Positions available
- Type of services
- Mentoring program
- Advancement potential
- Training programs
- Employee benefits
- Career paths
- Name of recruiter

You do not have to know everything about the firm, but you should have enough information to carry on an intelligent conversation. Otherwise the interviewer may wonder about your initiative or sincerity in selecting the firm for possible employment.

Knowing the job interview structure assures that you will be prepared for what happens next. Surprises are great, but there is nothing as unnerving as being in a situation in which you do not know what to expect next. Don't let that happen in your job interview. Having a working knowledge of interview structures is the key to being able to relax and be at your best in an otherwise stressful situation.

A person wearing a dark suit is seated at a table, with their hands resting on a light-colored surface. The background is a vibrant, textured red. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the person's arm and the texture of the background.

There are various types of interviews, ranging from the seemingly casual to the highly structured.

The course the interview takes depends to a large extent on the personality and philosophy of the interviewer. The typical interview consists of a brief introduction, a review of your background and qualifications, a discussion matching your interests with those of the employer, and a brief wrap-up or close.


7. Your ability to market the product, “YOU” – your education, experience and potential – is in direct proportion to your level of preparation. If you don’t prepare, your interview is probably doomed to fail. Any reasonably good interviewer can immediately spot an ill-prepared job applicant. This need not, and certainly should not, happen to you. With the type of competition you will face, it is your responsibility to convince the employer that you are qualified.

Your interview conduct

The purpose of the interview is to exchange information between you and the interviewer so that a preliminary decision can be made as to whether you are among the persons best qualified for the job. This decision probably hinges on what you say and how you act within the time frame of the interview. Some good advice to remember:

First Impressions Are Important

- Arrive on time. Do not arrive too early – it is important not to appear overanxious.
- Bring a copy of your resume and unofficial transcripts with you just in case the interviewer did not receive a copy with your file from the placement office.
- Be certain you know the interviewer's name and find out how to pronounce it if it looks difficult.
- Be alert, friendly and courteous—but not casual.
- It pays to look and act confident. When meeting the interviewer, smile and show an interest in what he or she is saying. Shake hands firmly. Smile periodically.
- At the end of your interview, thank your interviewer using his/her name and shake hands.
- Leave your interview as gracefully as you entered.



Act Natural and Be Yourself

Do not try to role play. You will not be able to continue to role play once you start. Better to have them hire you, for you.

Attitude is a Major Factor

Be pleasant and easy to talk to. Don't be afraid to tell an interviewer about yourself. Be enthusiastic without being loud. Keep your voice modulated. A "Yes" or "No" is normally an inadequate answer to a question. Take the opportunity to tell the interviewer about your goals and strong points.

Perhaps an important attribute will come out that you had not previously considered.



Be Completely Honest

Misrepresentations are usually an attempt to hide some problem that might get in the way later. It's better to deal with a potential problem immediately, in a straightforward manner, than to have it become a major issue later in the interview and perhaps result in making your entire interview suspect. If it is a matter of being unable to answer a question, say so. Do not bluff.

Be Conscious of Your Personal Grooming

There is no substitute for neatness. Wear a suit if at all possible. Dress in a professional manner. Remember – you're looking for a job, not going to a party.

Your Objective Is to Get a Job

During the entire interview, always keep this primary objective foremost in your mind. If you are qualified for the job and feel you can handle it, say so. Self-confidence is rewarded initially by employer confidence in you – and later on if you are successful in your job.



What professional services firms look for

The interviewer must, based on his or her inquiry and your response, determine if you, among all the candidates, are one of the best people for the job. To do this, the interviewer makes a judgment about the total candidate as a probable employee with the firm.

Personal Impressions

A good interviewer generally relies heavily on the first impression you make. This is because an employee's ability to make a good first impression in business and industry is a definite asset to the individual and the firm he or she represents.

During the interview you will be evaluated on such traits as:

- Poise
- Ability to communicate
- Maturity
- Integrity
- Stability
- Confidence

Job Interests and Career Goals

You should be prepared to communicate your career aspirations.

The interviewer will ask questions that require you to make and justify career decisions and will investigate factors relating to your:

- Adaptability
- Aptitudes and abilities
- Initiative
- Willingness to work and learn
- Enthusiasm
- Ability to get along well with other people

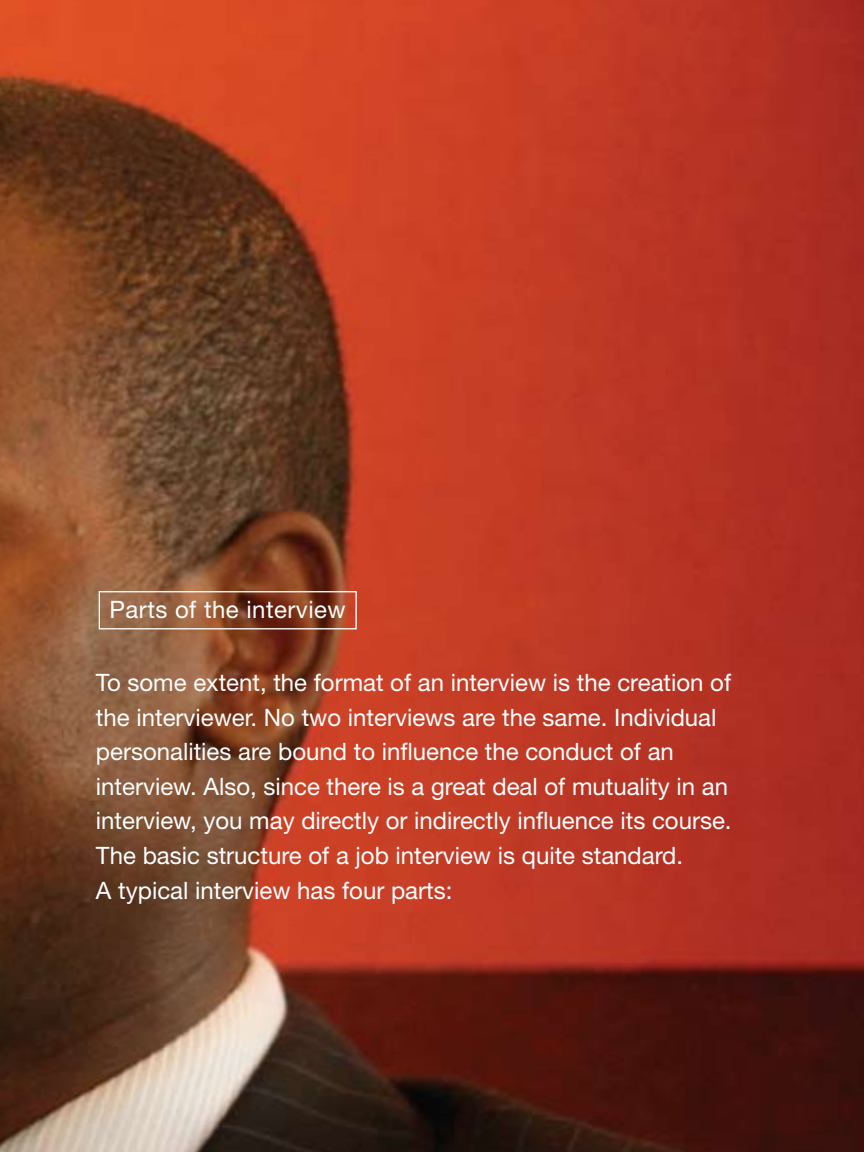
Job Qualifications

Your basic qualifications for the job are, of course, of paramount importance. No matter how great a person you are, or how well you have defined and demonstrated what you want to do – neither of which can be underestimated – the decision regarding an offer of employment will rest heavily on your qualifications, including:

- Level and appropriateness of academic training and achievement
- Special training
- Leadership
- Work experience
- Job-related hobbies and interests
- Faculty recommendations

Know your resume – it is often the focal point of the interview. Remember, the interview is a two-way street. Be prepared to make something happen. Interviewers look for well-rounded individuals whose work interests seem to match acquired knowledge, skills and talents. It is your responsibility to ensure that the interviewer gets the information needed to make an employment decision in your favor. If you fail here, you probably will not get another chance.

An interview should be a two-way discussion; do not monopolize the conversation. Listen to the interviewer and answer his or her questions.

A close-up, profile view of a man's head and shoulder, facing right. He is wearing a dark pinstriped suit jacket over a white collared shirt. The background is a solid, vibrant red color. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of his hair and the contours of his face.

Parts of the interview

To some extent, the format of an interview is the creation of the interviewer. No two interviews are the same. Individual personalities are bound to influence the conduct of an interview. Also, since there is a great deal of mutuality in an interview, you may directly or indirectly influence its course. The basic structure of a job interview is quite standard. A typical interview has four parts:

1. Introduction

Establish rapport.

2. Background

Yours! The what, why, where, when.

3. Discussion

Matching needs. Yours and the employer's.

4. Close

Final questions and instructions.

The Introduction

During the introduction, the interviewer notes his or her first impressions of you and makes initial judgments about your:

- Professional appearance
- Manner
- Enthusiasm
- Communication skills

The Background

This is when the interviewer determines your basic qualifications for the job. He or she will try to determine if you meet or exceed the firm's job requirements.

While you are listening or responding to questions, the interviewer will note how you handle yourself, evaluate your qualifications and suitability for employment, and revise (or confirm) the initial judgment made during the introduction.

You may have to provide answers to questions such as:

- Why would you like to work for our firm?
- What are your career ambitions?
- Tell me about your work experiences.
What did you gain from them?
- How did you like your university courses?
- Tell me about your extracurricular activities.
- What made you choose your major?
- What makes you think you could be successful in this job?
- What leadership experience do you have?
- What courses did you like best? Least? Why?
- What are your geographic preferences?
- How do your work experiences relate to our job opening?
- What made you choose this university?
- What do you know about our firm?
- Do you plan to go to graduate school?



- What in your opinion are the personal characteristics necessary for success in your field?
- What do you want to be doing five years from now?
- What two or three things are most important to you for an initial job assignment?
- What criteria are you using to interview employers?
- What are your strengths? Weaknesses?
- How do you get along with fellow students?
- They may not ask, “Why should we hire you?” but you should be able to answer this question before the interview.

The interviewer also evaluates your ability to communicate in a clear and logical manner. He or she is also seeking clues to measure and evaluate your:

- Self-confidence
- Ability to relate to others
- Level of motivation
- Short- and long-term goals

Also under review are your statements about career ambitions. Are they balanced with your past academic performance, work experience, extracurricular activities and other interests?

A good self-assessment can make you more articulate and help direct your thinking in responding to such questions.

Don't shortchange yourself when talking about work experiences. All your work background is important, whether or not it relates to the job you seek. This includes part-time, full-time, volunteer, intern and co-op experience.

Evaluate your work experiences in terms of attributes and skills you expect to bring to your new career. Relate them in a positive manner. Remember, employers want employees who are:


- Self-starters
- Self-motivators
- Eager to work
- Adaptable
- Team players

The Discussion

The discussion is a critical part of any interview. It is here that the interviewer tries to match your qualifications and career interests with the opportunities available at the firm.

Having read the firm's literature and conducted other research on the firm and the type of jobs you qualify for and are interested in, you should now be able to enter a constructive dialogue about how you can fit into – and be profitable to – the firm. Sell your product – yourself!



A close-up, profile view of a man in a dark suit and light-colored shirt, resting his chin on his hand in a thoughtful pose. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

Here you have the opportunity to ask questions, covering new information and clarifying previous points, such as:

- How long is the training program? Can an individual go through it in a shorter time? At his or her own pace? When does it begin?
- How much travel is involved?
- What are the duties and responsibilities of this job?
- What would a typical day be like?
- How often are performance evaluations conducted?
- How much contact is there with management?
- Where are the job openings located?
- What is the housing market like in the city?
- Is this job the result of expansion or new growth?
- What diversity programs does the employer have?

It's best to avoid asking questions that can be answered by reading the firm's literature.


Finally, if comments on salary are to be included in the interviews, it will generally be in the discussion phase. Let the interviewer mention salary first. You should have some idea of current salary levels from discussions with placement office representatives and faculty before the interview, so the importance of salary will be minimized at this stage.

The discussion is also a chance for you to point out important qualifications that the employer may have left out or passed over lightly. Do not be afraid to point them out. You may not get another chance.

The Close

This is the wrap-up. If the interviewer is really excited about you, you could get a last minute "selling job" on the firm. Also, ask any final questions you might have. You will get instructions about what will happen next, such as:

- Being told when you will receive a decision
- Being requested to supply additional information.
- Being invited for an office visit
- Suggesting another meeting
- Expressing no further interest
- Providing other information dictated by firm policy



The office interview | visiting the firm

If you are successful in your initial campus interview, the next step is usually an invitation to visit one of the firm's offices.

What to Expect

- Be prepared to talk with staff members at all levels.
- They will ask questions about you and your career goals. Expect some fairly detailed questioning.
- They will expect you to ask questions. Concentrate your questions on the nature of the work, the typical duties and responsibilities you will be required to perform. Know the firm's organizational structure.

Be Prepared!

- Get a good night's sleep.
- Have some idea about what you are going to ask.
- Be attentive and show interest.

The Wrap-up or Last Interview of the Day

- Within a short period of time, you will be notified of the outcome of your interview.
- You may be offered a job that same day.
- Do not consider the outcome to be negative if an offer is not extended immediately. Some firms make a practice of extending offers through the mail.

Expenses

- Keep an accurate record of your expenses.
- Keep hotel and airplane receipts.
- If you are splitting expenses among several firms, be certain you inform the firms.

If You Receive an Offer

- Try to give the firm some idea about when you will make a decision.
- Do not box yourself in – make sure you give yourself enough time to interview at all the firms you planned to.
- Make certain you understand the offer completely (overtime, benefits, and other relevant matters).

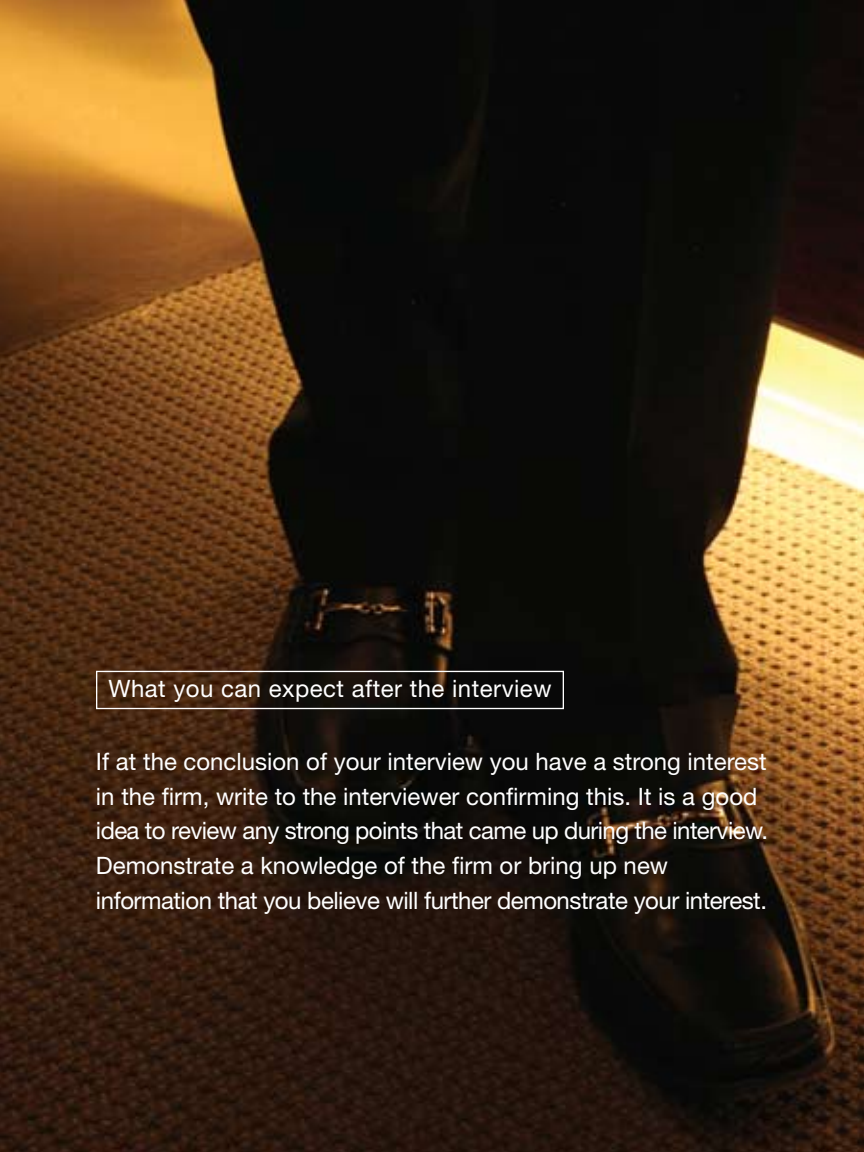
- If you have questions about the offer, call your recruiter.
- Remember that, in the long-run, small differences in salary now usually aren't important.

Reasons for Rejection

If you receive a rejection, keep your chin up. There are many other large national firms and many outstanding regional and local firms. If you constantly receive rejections, examine the reasons. They may show common interviewing faults. Make improvements where possible. If you do poorly in an interview and do not receive an offer, it could be because of one or more of these common interview faults:

- Insufficient career direction
- Failure to project your qualifications
- Absence of apparent initiative
- Need for greater self-confidence
- Unkept or inappropriate personal appearance
- Insufficient knowledge of the firm
- Lack of apparent interest and enthusiasm
- Unwillingness to relocate; lack of mobility
- Inability to express yourself clearly
- Failure to ask questions



A photograph showing a person's legs from the knees down, wearing dark trousers and black dress shoes. The person is standing on a light-colored, patterned carpet. The lighting is warm and focused on the lower legs and feet, creating a professional and polished appearance.

What you can expect after the interview

If at the conclusion of your interview you have a strong interest in the firm, write to the interviewer confirming this. It is a good idea to review any strong points that came up during the interview. Demonstrate a knowledge of the firm or bring up new information that you believe will further demonstrate your interest.

In any event, it is always good professional manners after an interview to write a note of appreciation to the interviewer or office interview coordinator. It can be a very effective tool. Make it a short, sincere statement of your appreciation for the time spent with you. Reaffirm your interest in the position or firm if that is the case. Try to get it to the interviewer that evening or the day after your interview.

Accepting an Offer

- Write or call the firm to inform them of your acceptance.
- Establish a starting date.
- Inform the other firms that have offered you a position of your decision.
- Inform your school's placement office of the name of the firm and the type of position.

Preparation Notes

Preparation Notes

Preparation Notes

