

# **DOING YOUR BEST ON YOUR JOB INTERVIEW**

PERSONNEL DEPARTMENT  
CITY OF LOS ANGELES

## **CHECKLIST FOR PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW**

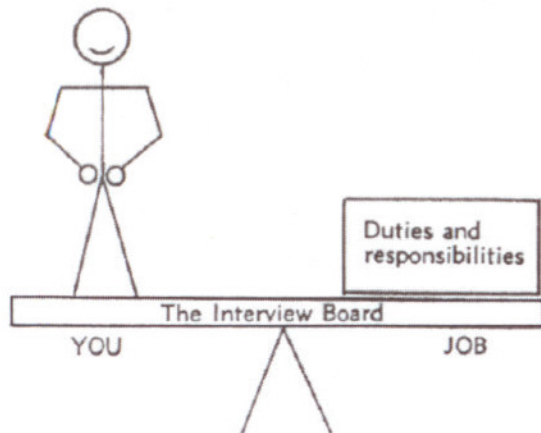
- Read this pamphlet carefully.
- Make a list of your good points and think of concrete examples that demonstrate them.
- Practice answering the questions on page 6.
- Review a copy of your application and the examination announcement.
- Make sure you know the exact date, time, and place of your interview.
- Dress neatly.
- Bring the interview notice with you.
- Have enough money for parking. You will need quarters for the parking meters near the Personnel Building.
- Leave in time to arrive at least 15 minutes before the appointed time.

## ABOUT THE INTERVIEW

There are three parts to every job interview. Each part is important.

1. **The Job** is the duties and responsibilities that need to be done.
2. **The Interview Board** is the men and women who make a judgment on how well your qualifications match the requirements of the job.
3. **Your Qualifications** are your education, experience, knowledge, abilities and/or personal qualities. You must show the interview board how well your qualifications fit the job.

experience  
knowledge  
education  
attitudes  
abilities  
interests



The interview board compares you with the job.

The Personnel Department makes every effort to assure that all candidates receive a fair interview and that the persons who serve on interview boards are competent.

The interview board that conducts your interview will probably be composed of two or three members. They are men and women from business, government, and community organizations. They are chosen because of their familiarity with the work for which you are applying and are experienced in hiring employees for their own organizations. Additionally, the Personnel Department strives to include interviewers who reflect the diverse nature of the City's population.

Before the interview, the interviewers will be briefed by Personnel Department staff. A member of the employing department may also assist in the briefing. That person's job is to make the interview board aware of the duties and responsibilities of the jobs that the applicants who are eventually hired will be doing. The briefer is **not** permitted to discuss individual candidates.

The Personnel Department briefer will provide the interviewers with rating sheets that describe the qualifications to be evaluated in the interviews and the standards to be applied in these evaluations. The factors stated on the rating sheets were identified through an analysis of the jobs and were determined to be the most important areas in which to evaluate candidates' qualifications. The briefer also makes the interview board aware of areas they should not consider in the interview, areas that are not related to job performance, such as race, religious creed, color, national origin, ancestry, gender, age, physical or mental disability, marital status, union activities, or political affiliations.

Except for certain promotional examinations, the Personnel Department avoids using interviewers who are likely to know some of the candidates. This is to avoid any bias, favorable or otherwise, toward any candidate. Interviewers are instructed to disqualify themselves from interviewing any candidates whom they believe they cannot rate objectively because of prior knowledge about the candidates.



If an interviewer does not disqualify himself or herself from examining a candidate who the interviewer knows, the candidate may request to have the interviewer removed from the board or to have an interview with another board if one is available.

The names, titles, and affiliations of raters on all interview boards will be posted in the waiting room area. Check the list to see who your interviewers are. If you recognize the name of an interviewer and believe that you could not receive a fair interview from that person, tell the receptionist. The interviewer may be excused from your interview only.

**Any candidate in an examination who attempts to contact an interviewer before or after their interview to discuss the interviews or grades given shall be disqualified in the examination.**

## BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

The job interview is probably one of the most important events in your experience, since the relatively short time spent in the interview may determine your future career. Interviews are generally scheduled at 25 to 35 minute intervals. Yet it is amazing how many applicants come to job interviews without any preparation.

Often applicants study for hours for a written test, but don't spend a fraction of that time preparing for the interview. Since the interview may determine at least half of the final grade, as much time should be spent preparing for the interview.

Some applicants assume they will qualify for a job because they meet "The Requirements" described in the examination announcement. This is not true. By meeting these requirements, you are qualified only to compete in the examination, which measures other important qualifications for the job. If you are successful in passing all parts of the examination, including the interview, you may then be considered for a job.

If you have a disability that requires an accommodation in the interview and the examination analyst has not contacted you, you should contact the Examining Division of the Personnel Department.

### Getting Ready

Be aware of the exact date, time, and place of the interview. This may sound almost too basic to mention, but it's an unfortunate candidate who assumes that the interview is to be held in a certain place, and then discovers two minutes before the interview that the appointment is somewhere else. Equally unfortunate is the candidate who arrives at the right place and time, only to find out that the appointment is tomorrow or worse, yesterday. Keep the interview notice with you. Don't rely on your memory.

Plan to arrive for your interview at least 15 minutes early. A few extra minutes will help to take care of unexpected emergencies. It is frequently difficult to find a parking place quickly in the Civic Center area.

Late arrival for an interview is seldom excusable.

You should present a neat, businesslike appearance for your job interview. Except for jobs requiring uniforms, it is usually appropriate for you to dress as you would on the job.

A review of a copy of your application and the examination announcement should help you to prepare to answer questions related to the job you are applying for. You should review them immediately before the interview to make sure they are fresh in your mind.

## DURING THE INTERVIEW

Just as you are about to enter the interview room, the receptionist will tell you the name of the chairperson. The chairperson will introduce you to the other board members and ask you to sit down.



## Your Conduct

Your courtesy, alertness, and self-confidence are important; so, you should try to speak in a self-assured tone of voice; smile occasionally; maintain eye contact with the interviewers as you listen and talk. Sit erect, but be relaxed; and be prepared to answer the interviewers' questions.

The board members realize that it is normal for people to feel nervous in this situation. Experienced interviewers will discount a certain amount of nervousness. If you are prepared to answer the questions that will be asked of you, you will probably find that you will not be as nervous as when you are unprepared.

## The Questions

Remember that the interview board will be evaluating your qualifications based on the duties of the position and the established evaluation criteria. They are instructed not to measure just your ability to handle an interview.

You should not bring letters of recommendation, work samples, or similar material to the interview unless you are told to do so. Due to the limited interview time, the board will not have time to review such material.

The interview board will be exploring and evaluating those qualifications that have not been fully measured by prior parts of the examination (such as any written tests or performance tests you may have taken). These qualifications include such things as personal qualities, oral communication, attitudes, goals and interests.

This does **not** mean, however, that you may not be asked technical questions or that material covered on the prior tests you have taken will not be explored further. Since the interview board usually includes technical experts, they will naturally wish to discuss some of these things with you, as well as your work and educational history and other background information.

The specific areas to be measured in the interview and any other parts of the examination are described in the examination announcement and the class specification, both of which can be obtained from the Personnel Department at any time. All candidates will be asked questions relating to the areas to be evaluated in the interview.

The interview board will be given your application to review prior to the time that you enter the room. Be ready for at least one question at the start, such as:

1. Tell us something about yourself.
2. Why are you applying for this job?
3. Why do you want to work for the City?

These are not easy questions to answer without some previous thought. You should be able to answer these kinds of questions without hesitation. Your preparation will help get you off to a good start.

You should also be prepared to answer questions about your abilities, training, and experience such as:

1. Describe your previous experience in this field of work.
2. Tell us how your previous work experience or training has prepared you for this job.
3. What are your major assets for this job?
4. In what areas related to the job you are applying for do you need to improve yourself the most? How have you compensated for this weakness or deficiency?



## Your Answers

Most interviews follow a simple question-and-answer formula. Your ability to answer quickly and accurately is very important, but don't rush yourself if it will hurt your ability to answer questions well. If your answers are confused and contradictory, you will not do well.

The greatest prevention against contradictory answers is the plain truth. A frank answer, even if it seems a little unfavorable to you, is better than an exaggeration that may confuse you in the next question. Being friendly, honest and sincere is always the best policy.

Don't answer just "yes" or "no" to any question. Expand on your answer at least a little. Volunteering information is often helpful in showing how you qualify for the position, but be completely honest, because you will almost always be asked more about your answer. It is also important to know when to stop answering a question. You should try to avoid repeating yourself, giving information that is unrelated to the question, or talking too much on any one point.

If a long period of time has passed since you submitted your application, or if you have had a different job or experience since you submitted it, bring the interview board up to date.

Ask the interviewers to repeat or explain any questions you do not understand. This may be embarrassing, but it is better than answering the wrong question.

You should be sure that the interviewers learn what your particular strengths will be in doing the job. If something went wrong on a previous job, explain the circumstances and accept the blame if it was your own.

If you have been fired and you are asked about it, admit it, and explain what you have learned from this experience. Negative experiences can be turned into an asset for you, if you can show how you have changed or improved yourself after recognizing your mistakes.

Make sure that your good points get across to the interviewers, but try to be factual and sincere, not conceited. If you are describing your best qualities, be concrete. Give examples of how these qualities have helped you and your previous employers. This is where your preparation will payoff.

Remember that you have known yourself all of your life. The interviewers, however, have only a short period of time to try to get to know you and to recognize your capabilities. Be sure to help them all you can by giving them the information they need to properly evaluate you.

## The End of the Interview

Toward the end of the interview, you will be asked if you would like to add anything. If you believe that there is something concerning your qualifications the interviewers should know that hasn't been mentioned, this is your chance. This is also a good time to briefly sum up what you believe makes you a good candidate for the job.

Sometimes candidates protest their interviews after receiving their scores, with the claim that the interview board did not ask them about experience, training or other background which the candidate believes is important. Interviewers don't have time to ask enough questions to bring out all the qualifications a candidate may possess. That is the reason we instruct interview boards to ask all candidates if they have anything they would like to add; and such protests as the one mentioned above are not valid if you do not take advantage of the opportunity to answer the last question fully.

Try, however, to make your final statements or your answer to the above question concise because the interview board has a schedule to keep and there are other candidates waiting.

The chairperson will indicate the end of the interview by thanking you for coming in. Thank the interviewers for their time and consideration.



## AFTER THE INTERVIEW

After an interview concludes, each interviewer independently assigns one interview score, which reflects that interviewer's evaluation of your overall qualifications based on all the rating factors. The scores of the interviewers are then averaged to yield your final score in the interview portion of the examination.

Interview scores fall into one of the four broad ranges identified below:

Outstanding	A score from 90-100 reflects that your qualifications were evaluated to be consistently strong and that you are among the highest qualified candidates.
Good	A score from 80-89 reflects that the interviewers evaluated your qualifications as well qualified.
Satisfactory	A score from 70-79 reflects that your overall qualifications were acceptable as presented but may require further development.
Below 70	A score below 70 reflects that your qualifications in one or more of the rating factors need additional levels of development in order to be considered for the job.

The results of your examination will usually be mailed to you within two weeks after your interview.

The scores candidates receive in an interview depend to a large extent on the presentation of their qualifications to the interview board. In the past, the examination analyst was available to provide candidates with paraphrased comments made by the interviewers. Due to decreased staffing, on April 8, 1994, the Board of Civil Service Commissioners determined that this service will no longer be provided. Candidates who receive low scores frequently disagree with the judgment of the interview board. The Civil Service Commission, however, does not consider a difference of opinion between the candidate and the interviewers regarding the candidate's qualifications as a valid ground for protest.

## INTERVIEW APPEALS

If you believe that any of the persons on your interview board were prejudiced or not qualified, that there was fraud involved, or that the interviews were not properly conducted, you should file a written protest within two working days after you complete your interview. The reasons for your protest and the facts supporting your charges must be submitted in writing.

All too frequently when we do poorly, we blame someone else. The wise thing is to reflect upon the interview and determine how to better prepare and thus improve in future interviews. It is hoped that the information contained in this pamphlet provides you with insight on the City of Los Angeles interview testing process and how to do your best on your job interview.

## THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES IS AN EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER