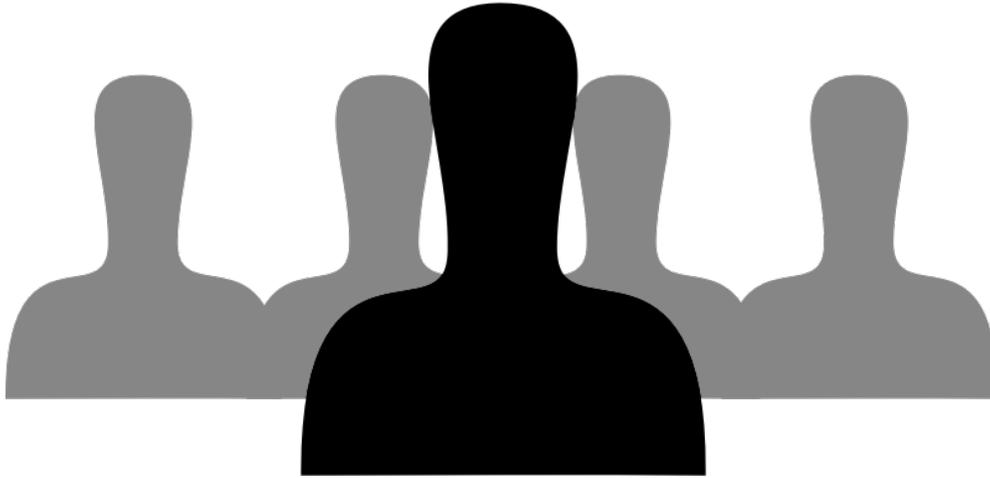




WISCONSIN  
**APPRENTICESHIP**  
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A Guide to  
**Successful Interviewing**  
for the **Skilled Trades**

Prepared by the  
**Bureau of Apprenticeship Standards**  
and the  
**Wisconsin Apprenticeship Advisory Council**  
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STATE OF WISCONSIN  
**DWD**  
Department of Workforce Development



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# Table of Contents

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## Successful Interviewing for the Skilled Trades

Interviewing Checklist	1
Plan and Prepare	3
The Interview	7
Frequently Asked Interviewing Questions	9
Closing the Interview	13
Interviewing Do's and Don'ts	15
Why Didn't I Get That Job?	19
Keep Learning	21



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# Interviewing Checklist



## Successful Interviewing for the Skilled Trades

### 1.

#### Plan and prepare

- Learn about the organization.
- Have a specific job in mind.
- Review all qualifications for the job.
- Prepare answers to broad questions about yourself.
- Review your resume.
- Practice mock interview with a friend or relative.
- Arrive before the scheduled time for your interview.
- Employers typically require three references. Get permission before using anyone as a reference. Make sure they will give you a good reference. Try to avoid using relatives.

### 3.

#### Personal appearance

- Be well groomed.
- Dress appropriately.
- Do not chew gum or smoke.

### 2.

#### Information to bring

- Resume. Although not all employers require applicants to bring a resume, you should be able to furnish the interviewer information about your education, training, and previous employment.
- Government issued identification, such as a driver's license.

### 4.

#### The interview

- Learn the name of your interviewer. Shake hands as you meet.
- Use good manners.
- Be cooperative and enthusiastic.
- Relax and answer each question concisely.
- Respond promptly.
- Avoid slang.
- Ask questions about the position and the organization.
- Thank the interviewer when you leave, and mail a hand-written "Thank you" note to follow-up.

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**Keep a record of the expenses you incur on your job hunt.**

**Some may qualify for income tax deductions.**

Contact federal and state officials for information concerning conditions and qualifications.



# Plan and Prepare

## Successful Interviewing for the Skilled Trades

### Research the company.

#### **It is important to do your homework.**

This will impress the interviewer, and it will save him or her time explaining it to you.

#### **Find out all you can about the company.**

Learn its history. What does it do? How stable is it? How's the market? What does it look for in its employees?



#### **Learn the name of the interviewer ahead of time, if possible.**

Say it to yourself enough so you will remember it.

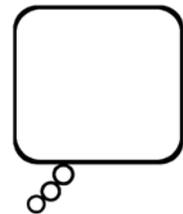
#### **This is your opportunity to screen the company as a potential employer.**

The first week on the job is not the time to learn of drawbacks that will leave you unhappy. Make certain to prepare a few questions to ask the employer during the interview process.

### Begin a log.

#### **Keep your interview information together by using a log.**

Note the date, time, and place of the scheduled interview; notes on the company and the position; and employer contacts, especially to whom you talked.



#### **Think about who you are as a person.**

List the things that really interest you and the things that don't; what you do well and what you don't; and your education, experience, and employment goals.

### Update your resume and references.

#### **Updated, clean copies create a lasting impression on the company.**

See the sample resume on the following page.

#### **Prepare additional materials, too, if applicable.**

Bring samples of your work, school transcripts, and letters of recommendation.



# SUE SMITH

100 Main Street • Any City, WI 53000 • (608) 000-0000 • [suesmith1@hotmail.com](mailto:suesmith1@hotmail.com)

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## Summary of Qualifications

- Experienced in job estimating.
- Able to use planers, saws, drills, ladders and a wide variety of hand tools.
- Proficient blueprint reading skills.
- Accustomed to working outdoors in all weather conditions.
- Familiar with safety standards and practices.

## Skills and Achievements

### Exterior Remodeler

- Performed measurements and estimated projects; worked with customers.
- Trained and supervised work crews.
- Experienced in installation of siding, soffits, fascia, gutters, doors and windows.
- Ability to work in high environments and handle ladders up to 32 feet with loads up to 150 pounds.

### Office Assistant

- Created filing system.
- Assembled test booklets.
- Checked documents for accuracy.
- Created completion certificates.

### Assistant Manager

- Performed customer service, managed consignments.
- Updated inventory in computer system.
- Responsible for store operations during owner's absence.
- Balanced register, made deposits.

## Experience History

<b>Siding Company</b> , Any City, WI <i>Exterior Remodeler</i>	1996-2008
<b>Office Environment</b> , Any City, WI <i>Office Assistant</i>	2003-2004
<b>Retail Store</b> , Another City, WI <i>Assistant Manager</i>	1992-1996

## Education

<b>Apprenticeship Prep Program</b> , Any City, WI • OSHA Hazard Recognition, Reading Comprehension, Sentence Structure, Mechanical Comprehension and Spatial Visualization.	2009
<b>Technical College</b> , Any City, WI • English and Psychology classes.	1995
<b>Another High School</b> , Another City, WI • Graduated 1994	1990-1994

# Plan and Prepare

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## Successful Interviewing for the Skilled Trades

### Dress for success.

**Attire and grooming are critical factors in an employer's hiring decision.**

They show the interviewer that you take yourself and the interview seriously. Skilled trade jobs may be dirty, but that doesn't mean you dress down.

### You want to be taken seriously.

Clean work pants, button down work shirt, and hard-soled work boots show that you know a skilled trade's workplace and are ready to work.

### Look professional without going over the top.

Don't wear dresses, heels, and a lot of jewelry. Clean work pants, a button down work shirt, and hard-soled work boots are a better fit.

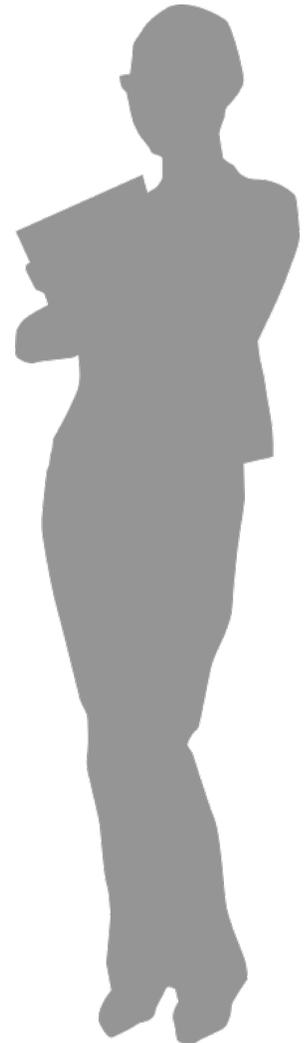
### Use this grooming checklist before job interviews.

- Comb your hair. It should be arranged neatly and appropriately.
- Shave or trim your facial hair, if a male.
- Brush your teeth and have a fresh breath.
- Avoid tobacco, alcohol, and onions or garlic prior to your interview.
- Wear clean clothing, not wrinkled or torn.
- Clean your face and hands. Finger nails should be clean and trimmed.
- Do not chew gum.
- Do not wear a hat during the interview. It shows a lack of respect.

### Prepare, prepare, prepare.

**You can never be too prepared.**

Review your previous work duties, accomplishments, and strengths and weaknesses.



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**Be sure to have the correct address and time of your appointment!**



# The Interview

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## Successful Interviewing for the Skilled Trades

### Arrive on time.

#### **Do not arrive too early and never show up late.**

Doing so creates an impression of being disrespectful of the company's time. Always arrive 10 minutes before the scheduled time of your interview.



### Shake hands firmly.

#### **A firm handshake exudes confidence.**

By being confident in yourself, the company will be confident in their decision to hire you.



### Make eye contact. Smile. Maintain good posture.

#### **Create a lasting impression from the moment you walk in.**

Smile and make eye contact. Show your enthusiasm for the position by maintaining your posture.



### Present your strengths effectively.

**Tell the interviewer what you can do for the company and prove it** by giving specific detailed examples of your work in the past.



#### **Here are steps to developing strong responses.**

Convince the employer that you are the right person for the job by:

- What skills, abilities, experiences, training and attitudes might the employer want and need? Think about the skills you have to offer. These are your strengths.
- Provide specific examples of your past work accomplishments. It will allow the employer to forecast what you might accomplish in the future. This is the key to presenting your strengths.
- Use examples of problems, challenges, situations, attitudes, and skills that prove your abilities. Show how your actions benefited the employer. Include specific details and, if possible, numbers.

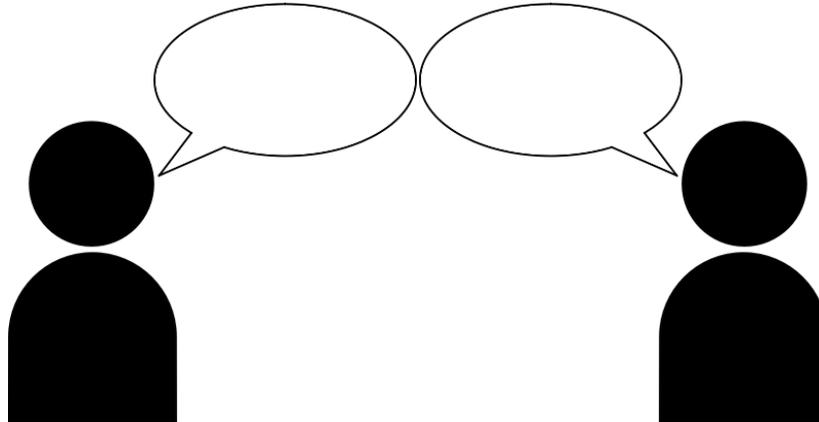
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**Be positive and confident in yourself. It can go a long way.**



# Frequently Asked Interviewing Questions

## Successful Interviewing for the Skilled Trades



### Q. What do you know about our company?

Your answer should include information about the history of the company and the product or service they provide.

### Q. Why do you want to work here?

**State that you like this type of work and you can do a good job.**

Share your interests in the company and be positive in your response. Aspects to include are:

- The good reputation of the company in the community.
- You would be proud to tell other people that you work here.
- Heard that the company appreciates good workers.
- Pleasant working conditions.

### Q. Tell me about your work experience.

**Use positive examples.**

Discuss positive examples that illustrate job-related skills and interests, and positive qualities, such as trustworthiness and stability.

### Q. Have you ever done this type of work before?

**Never answer "no."**

Mention similar types of tasks from past paid and unpaid experiences, training, or education. Talk about your ability to learn quickly or aptitude for the type of work.

# Frequently Asked Interviewing Questions

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## Successful Interviewing for the Skilled Trades

### Q. What kind of machines, tools, or equipment can you use?

**You should know the name of the type of equipment you have operated.**

Your answer should include all information on any machine related to the job.

Consider including hobbies that require the kinds of skills you will need to do the job.

### Q. Can you work under pressure and deadlines?

**If the employer asks this, it's probably part of the job.**

Your answer should assure the employer that you can meet deadlines under pressure, without becoming agitated, and that you will work extra time to do so.

**Cite examples from previous jobs or experiences.**

If you worked a production job, discuss how you filled orders in a short time period. If you were a student, discuss how you handled taking exam.

### Q. How do you describe yourself?

**Indicate positive attributes that benefit the employer.**

Examples: hard-working, cooperative, punctual, efficient, organized, responsible, etc.

Never indicate anything negative.

### Q. What is your greatest strength?

**Present yourself as a good worker that would be useful to the company.**

Discuss a strength that is related to the job, such as working until the job gets done or taking pride in your job. Explain how it would be useful to the company.

### Q. What is your greatest weakness?

**Turn a weakness into a strength.**

Examples: "I tend to be overly organized" or "I see a project through to completion even if it requires working extra hours."

### Q. How many days of work or school did you miss last year?

**Attendance records are important to employers.**

If you don't know, estimate conservatively. If the cause was illness or injury, discuss that you have recovered and it would not interfere with this job. Present a physician's note, if possible.

# Frequently Asked Interviewing Questions

## Successful Interviewing for the Skilled Trades



### Q. Why did you leave your last job?

**Whatever the reason, a single explanation will do. Be brief and factual.**

The company had a layoff and you lacked seniority. If the reason was unsatisfactory, such as being fired, explain positively how you corrected the situation.

**Do not say negative things about your last employer, job, or boss.**

Only say positive statements. An employer may not hire you for sharing details that you did not like about your last employer or boss.

### Q. What was your employer's opinion about your work?

**The best thing to do is to provide a copy of an open letter of recommendation.**

If don't have one, say that you got along well with the employer and you are sure that they would give a good recommendation. If you feel they would not, be brief and positive about why.

### Q. What have you been doing between jobs?

**Leave the impression that you have been active, not idle, between jobs.**

Share the constructive things you have done, such as school, volunteering, and temporary employment.

# Frequently Asked Interviewing Questions

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## Successful Interviewing for the Skilled Trades

### Q. What are your career objectives?

**Express your desire to continue learning to increase your value to the company.**

Discuss your want to gain more knowledge and experience. If you know the company advances employees from within, state that you want to grow with the company.

**If you don't know about the advancement policies, do not state a specific position.**

The employer may think you will be dissatisfied with the position that is open. Say that you hope to be the best person the employer has in that area.

### Q. Why should we hire you instead of someone else?

**Explain all of the qualities that make you an asset to the employer.**

Examples include the following:

- Good attendance and punctuality.
- Personal attributes, such as friendliness, honesty and efficiency.
- Work qualifications and any additional skills that you have gained.
- Work efficiently with very few errors.
- Get along well with co-workers and supervisors.
- Willingness to work extra hours.

### Q. When are you available for work?

**Express willingness to begin as soon as possible.**

If you are uncertain about whether you would accept a position if offered, establish a reasonable time frame to inform the employer of your decision.

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If you've heard the company is good to work for, say so.

# Closing the Interview

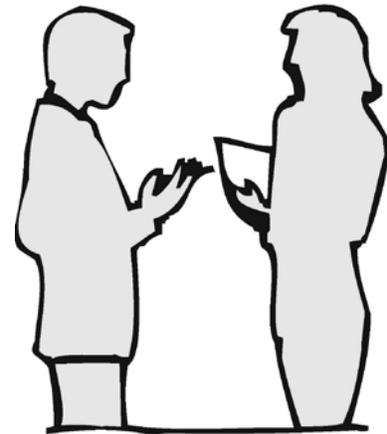
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## Successful Interviewing for the Skilled Trades

### Have some questions prepared.

#### **An interviewer will often ask if you have questions.**

It shows your interest in the position and the company, and it provides you with an opportunity to clarify details.



#### **Here are some examples of questions:**

- What are the greatest challenges I may face?
- Why is this company a good place to work?
- Will there be overtime/travel?
- What benefits does the company offer?
- What hours will I be working if hired?
- What strengths or abilities would the ideal candidate possess?
- Is there any additional information you would like to know?
- When are you planning on making a hiring decision?
- Tell the employer you look forward to hearing from him/her.

### Close the interview positively.

#### **If you are interested in the job opportunity, let the interviewer know.**

State that your contributions would be positive. Tell the employer you look forward to hearing from him/her. When the interview is over, leave. Don't linger with unnecessary questions.

#### **Be sure the interviewer has your current contact information.**

This enables the employer to contact you and provide you with an opportunity to update them on new credentials. If you are currently employed, set a time when you can call.

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**If you do not receive a call from the employer within 30 days,**

call to see if they have filled the position.

If they haven't, express your interest in the position again.



# Interviewing Do's and Don'ts

## Successful Interviewing for the Skilled Trades

### Do.

#### Beforehand

1. Research the employer.
2. Get a good night's sleep so you will be alert.
3. Appear well-groomed. Dress neatly.
4. Bring an extra resume, list of references, a small notebook and a pen.
5. Arrive 10 minutes early to find the office and use the rest room.
6. Treat all administrative staff politely—they are important allies.
7. Silence your cellphone or leave it in your vehicle.



#### During

1. Express enthusiasm. Smile and shake hands firmly upon meeting the interviewer and staff. Speak clearly and directly. Vary your tone of voice.
2. Sit up straight. Maintain good eye contact. Lean slightly forward in your chair. Show a sincere and polite interest in the job and the interviewer.
3. Answer interview questions completely.
11. Listen to the interviewer. This will help you avoid asking questions that have been covered. Take time to clarify questions you don't understand.
12. Sell your qualifications rather than your need for the job.
13. Use "please" and "thank you" when appropriate. This courtesy should be extended also to anyone else involved in your job search.
14. Ask questions in the interview.
15. Indicate your interest in the job by saying, "I hope you will consider me for this job," or, "I am very interested in this position because..."



#### After

16. Thank the interviewer.
17. After you leave, jot down your impressions and what you might do differently next time.

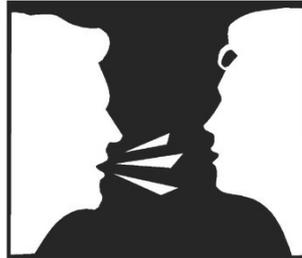




# Interviewing Do's and Don'ts

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## Successful Interviewing for the Skilled Trades



### Don't.

1. Bring relatives, friends, or children.
2. Ask questions only about pay and benefits.
3. Act as if you need this job no matter what.
4. Interrupt. If you have questions or need clarification, wait for a logical break in the conversation.
5. Bring up personal matters. Examples: personal problems, financial matters, and health issues.
6. Criticize former employers and co-workers.
7. Do not use slang such as, "dude," "huh?" and "like."
8. Give petty excuses such as, "That work was too hard," or "The people I worked with were not nice."
9. Lose sight of the effect you are having on the interviewer.
10. Do distracting behaviors, such as chew gum, smoke, play with your hair, or constantly adjust clothes.
11. Read any papers or handle any items on the interviewer's desk.
12. Bring anything bulky to the interview, such as books, shopping bags, or overly large briefcases.

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**Your actions, words, and attitudes influence the way people think about you.**

What you do or don't do can make the difference in getting the job.



# Why Didn't I Get The Job?

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## Successful Interviewing for the Skilled Trades

### The employer hired "someone more qualified."

If you did not get the job, an employer will often notify you. Many employers often tell people that they "hired someone more qualified." Below are some potential real reasons to review.

#### **Lack of preparation**

- Did you do all your homework about the employer's business before the interview?
- Did you practice answers to questions the employer may ask?
- Did you talk too much—or too little?

#### **Employment history**

- Was it truthful?
- Is your resume current and updated?
- Did you give work references that support your work record?

#### **Background education/training skills**

- If you did not have the background the employer says is needed, did you have an adequate amount of education and on-the-job training that could have been presented?

#### **Salary**

- Were you realistic?
- Did you show flexibility and the desire to "earn" promotions and raises?
- Did you consider any benefits, such as insurance, company car, or educational opportunities?

#### **Over-qualified**

- Did you express a definite interest in the company?
- Did you indicate specific skills that would apply to this position?
- Do you need to generalize your resume?

#### **Job hopping**

- Does your work record consist of many short-term jobs (exceptions may be seasonal work between school terms)?
- If you worked for a staffing agency, did you list the agency, not the placement, as your employer?

#### **Relocation**

- Were you flexible and realistic? For instance, retail jobs often require frequent relocation.
- Did you indicate your willingness to travel, as needed?

#### **Long unemployment history**

- Did you work at odd or short-term jobs while you were searching for work? If so, list them to indicate your willingness to work.

# Why Didn't I Get The Job?

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## Successful Interviewing for the Skilled Trades

### Personality conflict

- Did you take an instant dislike to the interviewer?
- Did you indicate personality conflicts on previous jobs?

### Potential for advancement

- Did you emphasize that you are dependable, willing to work hard, and express your interest in being a long-term employee?

### Interested

- Did you ask intelligent, inquiring questions, and show a genuine interest in the employer's business?

### Language

- Did you avoid slang?
- Did you speak clearly and present your answers concisely and completely?
- Did you avoid arguments?

### Appearance

- Did you look your best?
- Did you dress appropriately?

### Punctual

- Did you report to your interview on time or before the scheduled time?
- If you were unavoidably detained, did you place a follow-up call with a reasonable explanation?

### Courtesy

- Did you say please and thank you?
- Did you provide your current contact information?

### Transportation

- Do you have a current driver's license and is your address current?
- Do you have the ability get to and from work?
- Is your driving record an issue?

### Education

- Have you made a sincere attempt to continue your education?
- Did you provide documents of all your relevant education and training?
- Did you indicate applicable training while you were working on your previous jobs?

If you don't get the job, consider the interview as a learning experience.

**Don't get discouraged.**

Remember, the employer did not reject you as a person. You were qualified enough to be offered the interview, and the experience will build your confidence.

**Ask for feedback.**

Identify what you did well and what you could improve. Then ask the employer for their feedback on any interview techniques that you could improve upon.

**Remember, getting a job is a full-time job.**

Keep at it. Job seekers are often turned down for several jobs before they are offered one. Take some time to enjoy a favorite hobby or activity. Then get back to the hunt.

