



Interview Tips for Teens

Tips with a * should be considered important for the Zoom interview!

Part 1

Besides earning their own money, teens with a summertime or after-school job gain real-world experiences that help develop critical job readiness skills, like communications, working in teams, problem-solving and effective time management.

A job interview is your chance to showcase what makes you stand out from other candidates. Taking time to prepare is crucial to impress your potential employer and secure the job. Here are some tips to help you knock your first job interview out of the park.

* Before the Interview

- **Know your story.** Think about how your skills and passions align with the job you want. Be prepared to articulate why your background, strengths and motivation make you a strong fit for the company.
- **Research the job.** Use Google or LinkedIn to learn more about the company and your interviewer. Come prepared knowing their goals and focus areas, and have a list of questions to ask the person who interviews you.
- **Practice.** Using a list of common interview questions like those below, prepare your responses, and then practice answering them with a friend, family member or mentor. You can even watch yourself in the mirror to refine your answers and body language.

Common First Job Interview Questions

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why are you interested in this role?
- What are your greatest strengths/weaknesses?
- What are your hobbies outside of work?
- Do you prefer working by yourself or on a team?
- What achievement are you most proud of?

Part 2

*** Review the job description carefully**

In order to appear enthusiastic and prepared for an interview it's important to understand what will be required on the job. Reading the job description carefully is the first step in this preparation. Without this basic understanding, your teen may come across as not fully invested in the job.

*** Research the company or organization**

The next important step is that your teen research and learn as much as they can about the company or organization they are interviewing with. This can be accomplished by going to the company's website or doing a search on the company or organization's name. Employers will be impressed if they realize your teen has made the effort to educate themselves before the interview.

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Practice common interview questions

It's vital that your teen review the list of commonly asked interview questions prior to their meeting. Employers will be looking for succinct and on-target answers that are well thought out. That's difficult for anyone to achieve if they're thinking on the spot.

*** Think of three or four of your own questions**

Nearly every interview ends with an employer asking the interviewee if they have any questions. While this opportunity can be used to clear up any concerns or uncertainty your teen may have, it's also a chance for them to show their interest in the job.

*** Dress appropriately**

It's important that your teen knows first impressions are important and dressing appropriately to an interview is key. Jeans and a t-shirt won't cut it in most work environments. The level of formality will vary based on the workplace. But it's always important to wear clean clothing that isn't ripped or stained, doesn't have inappropriate wording (typically on t-shirts), and isn't too revealing.

Bring the necessary documents

It's always a good idea to bring extra copies of your resume to an interview as well as a notepad and pen. And if recommendations are written, have your teen bring those as well. These documents can be kept in a neat folder or portfolio.

*** Know your schedule**

During the interview the employer will most definitely ask when you are free to work. Be prepared to let them know which days and hours you're available. And if this is a summer position, let them know of any conflicts – such as driver's education or a family vacation.

*** Arrive at the in-person interview 10-15 minutes early. For a remote interview, login to the meeting no less than 5 minutes before the start time.**

There's no telling what traffic will be like on the day of your interview. Allow plenty of time to get to the interview. Arriving early ensures your teen is there on time and also makes sure nerves are calm before starting the interview.

Follow-up with a thank you note or email

Once the interview is done, make sure your teen knows it's appropriate to send a thank you email or written note to express appreciation for the opportunity and to reiterate their interest in the position. This gesture shows professionalism and leaves a positive impression.

*** The 3 Cs of Interviewing**

Besides the logistics of preparing for an interview, your teen should also focus on what's referred to as [the 3 Cs of interviewing](#). These refer to three key elements that can help anyone ensure greater success.

Confidence

Going through the interviewing process can be intimidating for many teens especially if they're applying for their first job. But displaying confidence during an interview is important. Adequate research and practice of answering questions can help build confidence. Teens should also know their body language – maintaining good posture, making eye contact, and speaking clearly – are critical ways to demonstrate confidence and make a good impression.

Competence

Demonstrating competence is crucial in an interview. In preparation for the interview, teens should have a mental list of their relevant skills, experiences, and knowledge that they can share. Providing specific examples that back these up adds to the validity of their claims.

Connection

The final 3C is "connection". Building a connection with the interviewer can help create a positive impression of your teen and make them more memorable. One easy way to build connection is to show genuine interest in the company and the role. This can be accomplished by asking thoughtful questions and actively listening to the interviewer's responses. It also helps to engage in friendly and professional conversation, demonstrating good interpersonal skills.

Have your teen keep these 3Cs in the back of their mind as they come up with answers to sample questions as they can be critical to their success.

There's a big difference between answering a question while slouching and not making eye contact, for example, than sitting upright and speaking confidently.

* 14 common interview questions for teens with answers

It's important for your teen to remember when being interviewed that the employer primarily wants to see what their personality is like, how responsible they seem to be, and, finally, more information about them as a person that wasn't available on their resume or job application.

The following are twenty common job interview questions that teens may encounter:

* Tell me about yourself

Employers ask this question to try to gauge the interviewee's personality and previous work experience. Any kind of personal summary shared succinctly and with positive energy can be a good answer, including just where the interviewee lives, what grade they're in, and what school they attend. For teens with little work experience, it can be helpful to mention any leadership positions held or other accomplishments – with sports, extracurricular activities, volunteer work, or even hobbies – especially if they demonstrate skills relevant to the position. This is also a time to mention any informal jobs such as babysitting, dog walking, or cleaning out horse stalls, for example.

Sample answer: "I just finished my sophomore year of high school. I live in Smithville with my parents and two sisters. I enjoy math and history at school, am a member of the nature club, and attend church regularly with my family."

* Why are you interested in working here?

Since teen jobs are often unglamorous or involve grunt work, the real answer to this question may be "because I want to earn money". But of course that answer won't go over well with an employer. So it's important that your teen is prepared with an answer – however much of a stretch it is – as to why they chose to apply to this job instead of a different one. Employers love to hear if their company or organization aligns with your teen's values if they have an interest in the industry, or if they like the product(s) being sold.

Sample answer: "I don't live far from here so I've eaten your ice cream many times and like it a lot. Chocolate peanut butter is my favorite flavor. Whenever I come in it feels like the employees enjoy working here so both those factors attracted me to the position."

Tell me about your previous work or volunteer experiences.

If your teen has already submitted a resume or job application the employer should already be aware of previous work experience. But sometimes by asking this interview question they can learn more about the specifics of the work, what responsibilities your teen had, and gauge their enthusiasm for those experiences.

Sample answer: "I've done a lot of babysitting for three families in our neighborhood over the past year. I also held a job at my barn where I cleaned out horse stables. And my family has been volunteering at our local food pantry for six years."

*** What skills or strengths do you bring to this position?**

Even if the job being applied for requires few skills, your teen can still answer this question by referring to their work ethic or positive attitude. Teens who are applying to jobs that require responsibility, like being a camp counselor or tutor, will need to highlight how they're responsible or why they're able to teach a particular subject. It's good to have a list of 2-3 skills or strengths to highlight.

Sample answer: *"I think I'm a pretty outgoing and friendly person. I try to stay positive in my interactions with other people and that can be beneficial when interacting with customers. I also consider myself to be a hard worker and I try to always be thorough when completing a task."*

*** Tell me about a situation where you demonstrated responsibility or leadership.**

If this is your teen's first time applying to a job, they may not have prior work experience to refer to here. But perhaps they have held more casual jobs such as babysitting, shoveling snow, mowing lawns, or taking care of a neighbor's plants. Each of those positions demonstrated responsibility to some degree. And any leadership roles your teen has held in school, in extracurriculars, or at summer camp could be mentioned here. Basically, any situation where your teen took initiative, showed accountability and led a team.

Sample answer: *"I've been a babysitter for four different families and had the responsibility of taking care of two kids by myself for up to four hours. I also help my family by doing chores around our house and I'm generally good about getting my homework done on time."*

*** How would you handle a situation where you made a mistake?**

This can be an intimidating question for some teens who believe they should never make a mistake! But what the employer is looking for is that your teen understands the importance of taking responsibility for mistakes, acknowledging them, and learning from them. It's also a good idea for your teen to outline how they would communicate the mistake to their supervisor, propose solutions or improvements and take steps to prevent similar errors in the future.

Sample answer: *"Hopefully I won't make any mistakes but if I did I'd first seek help from my supervisor. Then, I'd try to fix the mistake if possible, learn from it, and try not to make that mistake again."*

*** Are you comfortable working in a team?**

Of course, the answer the employer is looking for is "yes". But it certainly helps if your teen can elaborate by highlighting instances where they successfully contributed to a team project. Mentioning any successes they've experienced in team sports, and how they worked with other players, may also be beneficial here.

Sample answer: *"Yes. For many years I've played lacrosse and had to work with my teammates to be successful. I enjoy working as part of a team."*

Sample answer #2: *"When I'm assigned a class project in school I'm usually the one who takes the lead. I list all the tasks we need to do in a Google doc and then work with my group partners to determine who will take on each task."*

*** Are you comfortable working independently?**

Similar to the interview question above, if an employer is asking this question they are looking for candidates who can work independently. Any prior work experience would of course be beneficial to include here. But if your teen is also good at planning, time management, or has demonstrated motivation by taking an asynchronous online class— all of these would be worth mentioning too.

Sample answer: *“Yes. I’ve always been good about coming home from school, taking a short break, and then focusing on my homework on my own.”*

*** How do you prioritize and manage your time effectively?**

Realistically, this interview question may be a difficult one for many teens who are still learning executive functioning skills like time management. And this question will likely only come up in a job situation where a teen needs to work independently such as being a tutor or virtual assistant. An employer will want to hear examples such as using to-do lists, setting deadlines, and prioritizing important tasks first.

Sample answer: *“When I was in middle school I wasn’t very good about managing my time. But then I started using to-do lists and a planner to organize my homework. Now, every Sunday I try my best to plan out my week so I know what to expect.”*

*** Describe a time when you faced a challenge or setback. How did you overcome it?**

A question like this is asked to assess your teen’s character and resilience. Challenges arise in nearly every job and employers want to know that their employees are able to handle them. Your teen should be equipped with a good story that illustrates how they sought guidance, researched solutions, or asked for assistance to overcome their challenge. Of course, the best story will end on a positive note and it’s helpful to explain what your teen learned from the experience.

Sample answer: *“Last year I was really struggling in my math class. I decided to meet with my teacher after school and have her help me. Within a few weeks, I felt more comfortable with what I was learning.”*

*** How do you handle stress or pressure in a workplace and/or academic setting?**

Teens are typically still learning how to handle stress or pressure, so they won’t have a perfect response for this. But the key here is to mention some of the strategies they use to improve. Examples would be using a planner to prioritize tasks, taking a deep breath, or seeking support from mentors or supervisors. It’s helpful for your teen to emphasize their ability to stay calm, maintain focus, and adapt under pressure if these are all true.

Sample answer: *“My school work can be demanding and stressful at times. I’ve learned that I’m not as overwhelmed if I make lists of what I need to get done and use a planner. And also stick to that plan as much as possible! If I’m feeling stressed during a test I’ve found that taking a few deep breaths calms my nerves a little and helps me focus.”*

*** Do you have any questions for us?**

This is a classic interview question and one that could throw teens for a loop! Naturally, many teens will assume that if they don’t have any questions their answer should be “no”. But it’s important to recognize this question as an opportunity to show interest in the position and company. Your teen

should have a list of questions they can ask that demonstrate an interest in the company, team dynamics, or the specific role.

Sample answers: *“How often are new ice cream flavors created and how do the employees promote them?” “What other duties should I expect to have besides caddying for the golfers?” “How many employees typically work one shift?” “What kind of people do well working here?” “What are the customers like?”*