

Pre?

Quick Guides for Busy Student Job Hunters

by Student Life Network



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What Will You Get Out of This Book?

If you've been offered a job interview, a hiring manager has already decided that you're technically qualified for the position.

Now it's a matter preparing to have a successful interview and not putting yourself at a disadvantage before you even walk into the room.

In this book you'll learn:

- 1. How to reply to an email offer for a job interview.
- 2. How to politely decline or reschedule a job interview.
- 3. How to complete a pre-interview checklist that will set you up for success.



We're Student Life Network

We're a resource hub for all things school. We help you improve your grades, find the right school, reduce your debt, and line up your dream job.

Our team is comprised of people who've successfully made the journey from high school through post-secondary all the way to their dream jobs. How? With the very tips and tricks that we hook you up with every day, including those listed in this ebook.

The editor of this particular ebook is Chris D'Alessandro. After two diplomas (one in marketing, one in writing) it was still a massive struggle for him to land a job he loved. With this book, he's paying it forward to help you (yes, you) land a job that you love.

Hope this helps!

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I Never Prepared for Job Interviews

And it was a mistake.

I've never been one who likes to prepare much. Rather, I've always felt I was more in my "zone" when I was winging something in the moment.

I don't like to do my personal budgets. I never studied for tests in school. And I never prepared for a job interview.

Don't be like me! Especially because I've really *bombed* some job interviews in my time.

I never thought ahead of questions they might ask me. Or what proper etiquette was. I didn't always thoroughly research a company or the people who would be interviewing me. And I didn't always make things easy on hiring managers.

That's probably why <u>it took me almost five years</u> to land a job.

Thankfully, after <u>bombing my interview at</u> <u>Student Life Network</u>, I decided to turn things around. And they hired me.

Why I put this book together.

After getting hired, one part of me wanted to "pay-it-forward" by helping others get full-time positions they loved. The other part had a chip on my shoulder and wanted to know why it had taken me so damn long to get a "real" job.

I ended up finding a lot of different reasons, but chief among them, students and new grads just aren't great when it comes to job interviews.

We dug in and did some research at Student Life Network. We surveyed thousands of students nationwide and found that 54 per cent of students are flat out afraid of job interviews, and 53 per cent were worried about being rejected. Forty-nine per cent felt they were unqualified for jobs in their field. So we decided to help a silent majority of students who feel like they're unable to make the leap from school to gainful employment in the real world.

We're assuming you've read <u>our first book</u>, and that you've landed yourself a job interview.

So now it's time to set yourself up for success.

Who this book is for.

Tired of blasting out dozens of resumes into the void?

Only getting the occasional job interview for places you don't actually want to work?

Feeling like the underdog when it comes to landing a full-time job?

Then read on grasshopper. We're going to teach you how to land a job interview. And how to not suck at job hunting.

-ssentia Help

I couldn't have put this book together without the essential help and work of Dana Iskoldski, Chris Ackroyd, Ryan Bolton, Sarah Cavan, Drew Dudley (creator of <u>Day One Direct</u>,a leadership program with insights from Fortune 500 companies), Seana Dwyer, Hamza Khan, Lauren Marinigh, Perry Monaco (as well as all the other fine folks at LinkedIn Canada), Bailey Parnell (her company <u>SkillsCamp</u> is full of great resources for hungry, young job hunters) and Stephen Sills.

And you, too.

Yes, you, reading this right now.

DANA ISKOLDSKI

gets an especially big shout out. She did a ton of research and single-handedly wrote entire sections of this book. To say she was instrumental in its completion and attention to detail would be an understatement. She also did way better in her job interview than I did, for the record.

"They emailed me back and now I'm freaking out."

If you read <u>our first book</u>, you learned how the first round of filtering works, and interviewing is the next step of the process. Thankfully, this part is easy, as long as you keep a few key things in mind.

Think back to the coffee maker situation (again, you read <u>our first book</u>. Right?): your recruiter has a shortlist of 10 great machines. Now, since buying one is an important decision, they're going to borrow them all from the store to try them out. They can't always trust what a website says about a product to be 100% accurate, after all.

Recruiters are in a constant cycle of:

- Getting people to show interest in a job.
- Filtering through that group to find diamonds.
- Trying to "close the deal" on candidates (not every candidate who gets a job offer accepts it).

Repeat after us: "I am not lucky."

Here's the thing about coffee makers: nobody buys a bad one just to be nice. If you get an interview, it's not because somebody did you a favour. It's because a company thinks you can get stuff done for them.

You might not be the most credentialed candidate, but they wouldn't be interviewing you if they didn't think you could create more value for their company than they would be paying you (whether that be because you're inexperienced-yet-inexpensive, or because you're just a rockstar).

So, don't thank them for picking you. By all means, feel grateful that you have an opportunity like this. Feel excited for the conversation in the interview to come. But don't feel indebted and sell yourself short. This isn't you being an entitled millennial; it's you knowing your worth.

Your job is to help the recruiter do their job.

If you were the recruiter, you'd probably be happier if the first store you walked into was stocked with all 10 coffee makers you want to test, instead of having to run around tracking down machines from store to store.

The recruiter's number one goal, at this point, is just to get meetings booked, and if you've ever had to wrangle even half a dozen people (ever worked at a camp before?), you'll know how this can potentially be very stressful.

Be that available coffee maker—*email the recruiter back within a day.*

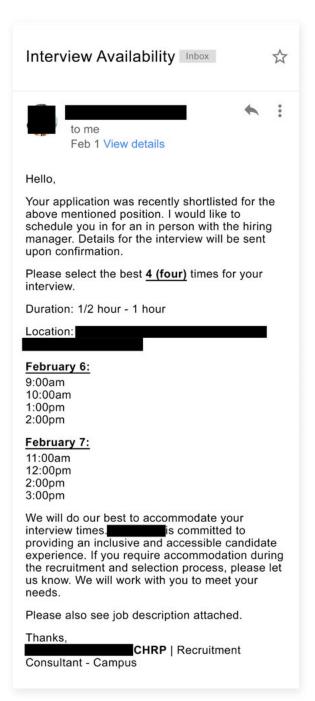
Also, try as much as possible to *avoid* the I-can't-make-this-time back-and-forth, and be reasonably accommodating with your schedule when it comes to interviews. You want to get back to a recruiter within a day to schedule the interview for a few reasons:

- It looks good if you're on top of your game.
- You can snag a better time when there are more slots to pick from.
- You can start preparing earlier.

Also, answer questions as directly as possible. The person you're emailing back is juggling a ton of things other than just your email. You may be a little new to the world of email etiquette, and these couple tips won't do you wrong:

- Open with "Hi ______," (Hey is usually too informal for first impressions, and in certain industries it's just plain informal).
- Sign off with something like "All the best" and don't think too much of it.

• Here's an example of an actual email you could get from a recruiter:



Notice that it's probably a copy-and-paste template, which shows just how much of the scheduling-an-interview process the recruiter wants to avoid.

 $[\square]$ A perfectly valid reply is:

Hi [name],

Thank you for reaching out.

The four best interview times are on Monday, February 6 (9:00am, 10:00am, 1:00pm, or 2:00pm).

All the best,

[yourname]

[🖂] They'll probably respond with:

Hi [name],

Please accept this email as a confirmation of the date and time of your interview. Please read the following details carefully.

Date: Monday February 6, 2017

Time: 1:00 PM

Duration: ½–1 hour

Meeting with: [name of hiring manager]

Location: [address]

Upon arrival please contact [hiring manager] at 123-456-7890.

[Company] is committed to providing an inclusive and accessible candidate experience. If you require accommodation during the recruitment and selection process, please let us know. We will work with you to meet your needs.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Thank you and good luck!

Make sure you get the information you need.

While you have your recruiter in an open line, slip in a question or two (unless they already let you know). You'll want to know the basics, most of which you'll probably be told. But if you aren't, don't be afraid to ask.

Basics:

- Address
- Time
- Names of who you're meeting

Most good recruiters will tell you who you're meeting with, but if they don't, <u>Sarah Cavan</u>, a former HR recruiter for Vice and <u>Red Academy</u>, suggests asking:

Also, [recruiter's name], could you please let me know the names of the people I will be meeting with?

Nothing wrong with asking. And it'll give you the ammo you seriously need for the next part of your interviewing process: actually acing the interview.



In case you have to reschedule.

Try as you might, sometimes you will be in a situation where you have to reschedule.

1. Give as much notice as possible.

It's not easy getting multiple people in a room together at the same time, as any recruiter will tell you. Your interviewer has a busy schedule of their own, and coordinating between you two isn't guaranteed to go smoothly once an interview date has been scheduled.

If you catch a nasty cold the day before your interview, don't wait until the day of to call the recruiter and let them know you can't make your meeting.

2. Call or email.

Preferably, call your recruiter to let them know you can't make the interview time you had previously agreed to, and ask to reschedule. It's easy, on the recruiter's end, to get jaded when a candidate gives this news, so being as present as possible on your side will add a real, human element to your reply. You'll also sound like the kind of person who responsibly takes charge of situations where there's an issue, and doesn't hide behind a computer or inbox.

3. Be direct.

You aren't breaking up with someone. You're helping your recruiter do their job by giving them as much notice about a reschedule as you can. Don't beat around the bush with long preamble or leave it up to the interviewer to guess, based on what you said, that you won't be able to make it.

ΝΟΤΕ

That said, if you think it will reflect badly on you given the reason you provide for rescheduling, maybe don't call. For example, if you're supposedly sick, but you call and sound completely chipper on the phone, that might raise a red flag.

$[\mathcal{G}]$ If you call, say something like:

Hi, [name], this is [your name]. We arranged an interview for the [role] position, at [time] on [date]. I'm calling to see if we can reschedule, because I'm no longer able to make it at that time for [brief, valid reason here]. I know this is extra work for you, and I'm sorry, but I wanted to let you know as soon as I could. I'm available again anytime [alternate dates here]. I really appreciate your understanding. Or you can email—replying to the email thread you already have started.

$[\square]$ Say something like:

Hi [name],

Unfortunately, [brief, valid reason] is making it impossible for me to make our previously scheduled interview time.

I understand this is more work for you, but are we able to reschedule?

I'm definitely open [alternate times here], but if those don't work let me know what you and [hiring manager] have available.

My apologies, I really appreciate your help rearranging this interview schedule and am really excited to meet your team.

Once you receive this, could you please confirm so that I know I'm not leaving you in the dark?

All the best, [your name]

What to know if you reschedule.

Your brief, valid reason.

A good rule of thumb is not to overshare. If you have a terrible stomach infection, just say "stomach illness."

In the interview world, nobody's going to ask you for a sick note or an alibi or question you, like a teacher might, so they don't need to hear all the gory details.

Here are examples of valid reasons:

- "Car troubles on the way here." (Note: if your car broke down the day before, it's reasonable to expect you'd find a way of getting to your interview on time.)
- "Sick, and don't want to bring the germs into your office."
- "Family emergency."
- Any other general issue that can be explained in a few words is enough.

Examples of bad reasons that you'll likely get judged hard for:

• Not ready.

- Another interview conflicts with this one.
- Poor driving conditions. (Unless it's an extreme weather day.)
- "I forgot."

You get the picture. Anything that hints to the recruiter that you're irresponsible, that you don't take ownership of your mistakes, or that you're incompetent, won't help you.

Be apologetic.

Recognize that it takes a lot of work for a recruiter to coordinate candidate and interviewer schedules, and you've just created additional work for them. Also, recognize that your interviewer may in fact just be too busy to see you again for a while. Make sure you convey that you value the time they're taking.

Also, when you are in the interview, thank your interviewers for rescheduling and recognize that it was a favour they did you.

Offer alternate times.

Make it as simple as possible for the recruiter to reschedule with you. Offer them times you're definitely available, so all they have to do is take

ΝΟΤΕ

That said, don't be too apologetic. Sure, this sounds vague at best, but keep in mind you're aiming for a professional image, not that of a student whose computer broke down two minutes before the deadline to submit an assignment online. those to the rest of the people meeting with you, and say that if there's a different time that works better for them to let you know.

You now owe them one, and you won't have the luxury of being as choosy as you could have been the first time around. Your goal now is to be as easy to schedule as humanly possible.

Do not cancel again.

This is obvious. Think back to the coffee maker testing phase: after a certain point, a recruiter won't want to go to any more stores to test options. They'll just pick from the ones they've already tested.

It's not personal, but the longer it takes to schedule an interview with you, the less payoff a recruiter will see from hiring you.

Highlights:

- 1. Your primary goal is to make a recruiter's job easy.
- Be flexible
- Provide them with all the information they need/ask for
- 2. Make sure you know:
- The address
- The time
- The names of who you'll be meeting with
- 3. If you have to cancel:
- Give as much notice as possible
- Call or email
- Be direct
- 4. When you cancel:
- Give a brief and valid reason
- Be apologetic
- Offer alternative times
- Do not cancel again



The Pre-Interview Checklist

Some smart person probably once said that "preparation is a prerequisite to success."

Which makes sense. You wouldn't go into a test without studying and expect to ace it, or at the very least, perform better than the person who did study.

When it comes to job interviews, a passing grade isn't enough. You have to be the standout performer. So do your homework, and make sure you've checked all of the following off of this list. You can thank <u>Bailey Parnell</u> from <u>SkillsCamp</u> for providing us with her checklist of what you need to do to prepare for your interview.

Research the company and your interviewers.

Like an exam, it's better to go in over-researched than under. Just in case they ask.

Company:

- Make sure you know what the company actually does (I've seriously had people come in confusing us with another brand)
- Company culture and philosophy
- Company mission, vision, and values
- Current projects the organization is working on
- The dress code
- The workplace setting

Interviewers:

- What is their present role in the institution?
- Do they work in general recruiting?





- Would they be your manager or a member of your team?
- What do you have in common?
- Did you go to the same school?
- Have you worked at the same place previously?
- Are you from the same town?

Practice ahead of time (out loud).

Sometimes how we sound in our head does not communicate well verbally. Though you won't know all of the questions ahead of time, you can definitely prepare for some of the inevitable questions like, "Tell me about yourself." Here is a starting list to prepare with:

Most Common Interview Questions:

- Tell me about yourself.
- What interests you about this job?
- Why are you leaving your last job?
- Why are you the right person for this job?
- What do you know about our company so far?

SPOTLIGHT QUESTION

Students seem to really struggle with the "what are your weaknesses" question. You don't want to give weaknesses that wholly make you unqualified for the job (e.g. a cashier whose weakness is talking to people). But, no one is perfect and you also want to show that you understand things you need to work on.

- Tell me about a time when you had a conflict with a teammate.
- What would you do in your first 90 days in this position?
- What is most important to you in a new position?
- Where do you see yourself in 5 years?
- What is your greatest professional accomplishment?
- What are your weaknesses?
- If you were an animal, what would you be and why?
- What is your superpower? Something you do better than anyone else?
- What questions do you have for us?

"Bad" Weaknesses

- Threshold skills for the job
- No weaknesses
- Joke weaknesses (e.g. Kryptonite)

IMPORTANT THING

Say how you're working on

improving the skill.

• Strengths as weaknesses (e.g. "I'm too organized." Eye-roll.)

"Good" Weaknesses

- Deficit-thinking
- Shyness
- Impatience
- Letting go of control
- Honesty and bluntness
- Conflict-averse

Prepare the things you'll need to bring.

Always come prepared with the following. Even if you don't use them in the interview, it looks good that you planned ahead. Make sure you bring:

- Copies of your resume for every interviewer.
 If you don't know how many there will be, bring three as a safety.
- A pen and notebook to take notes during the interview.
- A portfolio or samples of your work if applicable.

• A list of questions on the company and role to ask in the interview.

Arrive early.

This one should be a given, but you would be surprised at how many people still arrive late to interviews. The standard is 15 minutes ahead of your interview. Try not to be much earlier than that, as it can inconvenience your interviewer.

Plan your outfit the night before.

Planning out your outfit the night before will ease any morning stress you might feel. Unless you are 100% sure your employer allows casual clothing, it is safest to dress in business-casual attire. You can always dress down once you get the job.

Eat protein.

Eat protein before your interview. Dopamine and epinephrine work to regulate mental alertness and are found in tyrosine; an amino acid found in proteins. We don't want you being spaced out

GENERAL TIP

Plan your travel route out ahead of time and prepare for delays.

BAILEY'S TIP

"I'm very particular about time, so one thing I like to do is find a wifi coffee shop near my meeting and go work there an hour early. This way I'm not stressed about inevitable traffic delays." and unfocused because your brain doesn't have

fuel, so eat your proteins!

Highlights:

- 1. Thoroughly research the company and the interviewers.
- 2. Practice answers to common questions.
- Don't give some lame weakness if asked.
- Instead, offer something real that you're working on.
- 3. Prepare and bring the following:
- Copies of your resume for every interviewer (at least three).
- An updated portfolio if applicable.
- A list of prepared questions.
- 4. Arrive early.
- Bailey suggests arriving at least an hour early and killing time at a nearby coffee shop if need be.
- 5. Prepare your outfit the night before.
- 6. Eat protein (for reals!)



A millennial walks into an interview...

Our generation... or really everyone under the age of 40, gets a bad reputation for being "entitled."

Maybe we are. Maybe we aren't. Maybe it's our parents' fault. Maybe it's ours.

None of that matters.

The only thing that matters in this case is that you don't give an HR recruiter or hiring manager cause to think you're a cliché, cocky millennial who believes you're "entitled" to a job. Because they may already be making that assumption about you. It's an annoying stereotype. Because, as we know, most students and new grads don't feel comfortable going through this process.

This process is scary. It's unknown. It's frustrating. And it feels like your entire future is riding on the outcome—and in a way, it is.

Being cocky and thinking you can ace an interview without doing your research first is the wrong approach. But that doesn't mean you shouldn't have confidence in yourself. Especially at this stage.

The offer of an interview generally means you are technically qualified for a job. It means you're initially appealing to recruiters. It means you're good enough.

So hold your head high. Have faith in your own skills. Understand that you present value. Be humble. Be ready to learn. Be ready to work hard.

And please, please, please, do your research and be prepared.

Did you find the book helpful?

Did it help you get a job? Or do you still have burning questions for us to address? What would make this book a better, more helpful reading experience?

You can let us know. Seriously.

Email us here: contact@studentlifenetwork.com



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Stephen Sills <u>https://twitter.com/stephen_sills</u>



"After 5 Years of Job Hunting, This is The Best Damn Advice I Have" by Chris D'Alessandro <u>http://blog.studentlifenetwork.</u> <u>com/2018/01/09/job-hunting-best-advice/</u>

"What is it Like to Get Hired at Student Life Network?" by Chris D'Alessandro <u>http://blog.studentlifenetwork.</u> <u>com/2016/12/14/what-is-like-to-get-hired-at-</u> student-life-network/

Red Academy https://redacademy.com/



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Nailing the Interview (Pt.3)

http://blog.studentlifenetwork.

com/2018/05/10/our-free-ebook-helps-you-

nail-your-job-interview/

Interview Follow-Up (Pt.4) http://blog.studentlifenetwork.com/2018/05/16/ free-ebook-helps-follow-job-interview