

Nursing Interview Tips & Strategies

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Whether you're an experienced clinician or a recent graduate, the NursingJobs.com experts have outlined a three-part process to ensure a positive nurse interview experience:

Step One: Before the Nurse Interview:

Prepare your credentials.

Make sure that your résumé is updated, complete and easy to read. Place it in a folder with your name and contact information on the cover.

Also in the résumé folder, include your nursing license, BCLS/ACLS card, proof of any certifications you hold, and copies of certificates from any advanced training programs you have completed. Be sure to also bring a driver's license, immunization records and your social security number. We suggest you arrive with at least two copies of all documents. (Note for recent grads: If you don't have your actual license yet, bring a notice of passing scores.)

Provide a copy of your most recent skills checklist, demonstrating your clinical competencies. If you have developed additional skills since the last official record was created, we suggest you indicate this via highlights or a different ink color.

Prepare a typed list of references for the nursing job interview, including titles, current addresses and telephone numbers. You may also bring reference letters, although most employers only use them to supplement the information that they obtain themselves.

You may be asked to give permission for a criminal background check. The permission form will likely ask you to list all of your employers from the previous five to seven years, so be sure to have those addresses with you.

Anticipate the standard interview questions and make your answers count.

Get off on the right foot by practicing your answer to the question: "Tell me a little about yourself." This query is designed to test your judgment, so keep in mind that the interviewer does not want a chronological biography. Instead, provide insight into your unique skills and talents and be prepared to give examples to substantiate your claims.

Most nurse interviews also include the following questions: "How would you describe your skills as a team player?" "How do you handle working with difficult doctors?" "How would you deal with problem patients or families?" "What will you do when your unit is short-staffed, and you are required to give a treatment that you have never done before?" Think about these questions and be prepared with concise answers.

No matter what your experience level might be, speak to your strength as a quick learner, and be ready for questions such as: "What type of assistance and support will you need in order to get up to speed?" "What special skills and attitudes do you bring to the table that will enable you to carry your own weight on the unit?"

You will likely be asked what you have learned from working in unpleasant conditions in the past. Do not speak negatively about a previous employer. Instead, focus on what you have learned from such experiences.

Practice answering these questions until they accurately reflect your skills and personality. Ask a friend or relative to do a "mock" interview with you...and don't be afraid to pick someone who will challenge you.

Be ready to make a great first impression

Dress professionally, as if you were interviewing for a business position in a conservative organization. Whatever clothes you choose, make sure they are freshly cleaned and pressed!

Be sure your shoes are in good repair, and freshly polished. Hiring managers pay attention to such things because they are a good reflection of the candidate's attention to detail as an employee.

Leave for your nurse interview early. You never know when an unexpected traffic jam or busy parking lot will get in your way. Give yourself double the time that you think you will need.

Step Two: During the Nurse Interview:

Greeting your interviewer appropriately:

Offer a firm handshake, smile and look the interviewer straight in the eye during the initial greeting.

Take a quick look around the interviewer's office and make an appreciative comment about something that you notice. This will help both of you settle in and gets the interview started on an upbeat note.

Make frequent eye contact throughout the nursing job interview.

Stay cool on the hot seat

Nurse interviews are always stressful, even for the most seasoned applicants. It is natural to be nervous!

Listen carefully to each question to be sure you are responding to what is being asked. Never interrupt the interviewer.

You will most likely be given a chance to ask questions. Make the most of this time and remember that, at this point, the interview is not over and you are still under evaluation. Focus on questions about the status of the unit, current developmental projects, and how you would be oriented and assimilated into the existing work group.

Keep in mind that you are being interviewed because there is a problem or a vacancy. Select questions that validate your willingness and ability to be a part of the solution.

Ask for a tour and the ability to meet some of your "peers." Use this experience to get a feel for the unit. Is there a match for you here?

Is there a match? If so, ask for the job

The most important indicator of job success and satisfaction is how you feel about the job and facility. If you consider yourself a good match, say so and ask the interviewer if they agree! If the job does not feel right, move on to the next interview opportunity. In today's nursing job market, you have the luxury of finding a good match!

Step Three: After the Nurse Interview:

Send a thank you note.

Differentiate yourself from other applicants by sending a thank you letter. This indicates your interest and thoughtfulness. Hand-written or computer-generated notes are both fine but, either way, make sure they are neat and free of grammar and spelling errors. Also, be sure to use high-quality paper.

Make your letter short, focusing on thanking the interviewer for his or her time and consideration.

If a specific challenge was brought up in the interview, mention a contribution you could make to offer a resolution. Don't be shy, directly stress the match between the needs of the hiring manager and your skills and personality.

Mail or hand-deliver your letter so that it arrives within 24-hours after your nursing job interview.

Even if you are not interested in the job, send a letter thanking the interviewer for his or her time.

Haven't heard anything?

Call to convey your interest and to ask if there is anything else you can do to be the candidate chosen. Find out when the decision will be made.

Call again the day before the decision is made. In that call, wish the hiring manager great success with the hire, even if you are not selected. This demonstration of graciousness may be the nudge that throws the decision your way.

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<https://www.nursingjobs.com/guide-successful-nursing-job-interview.aspx>