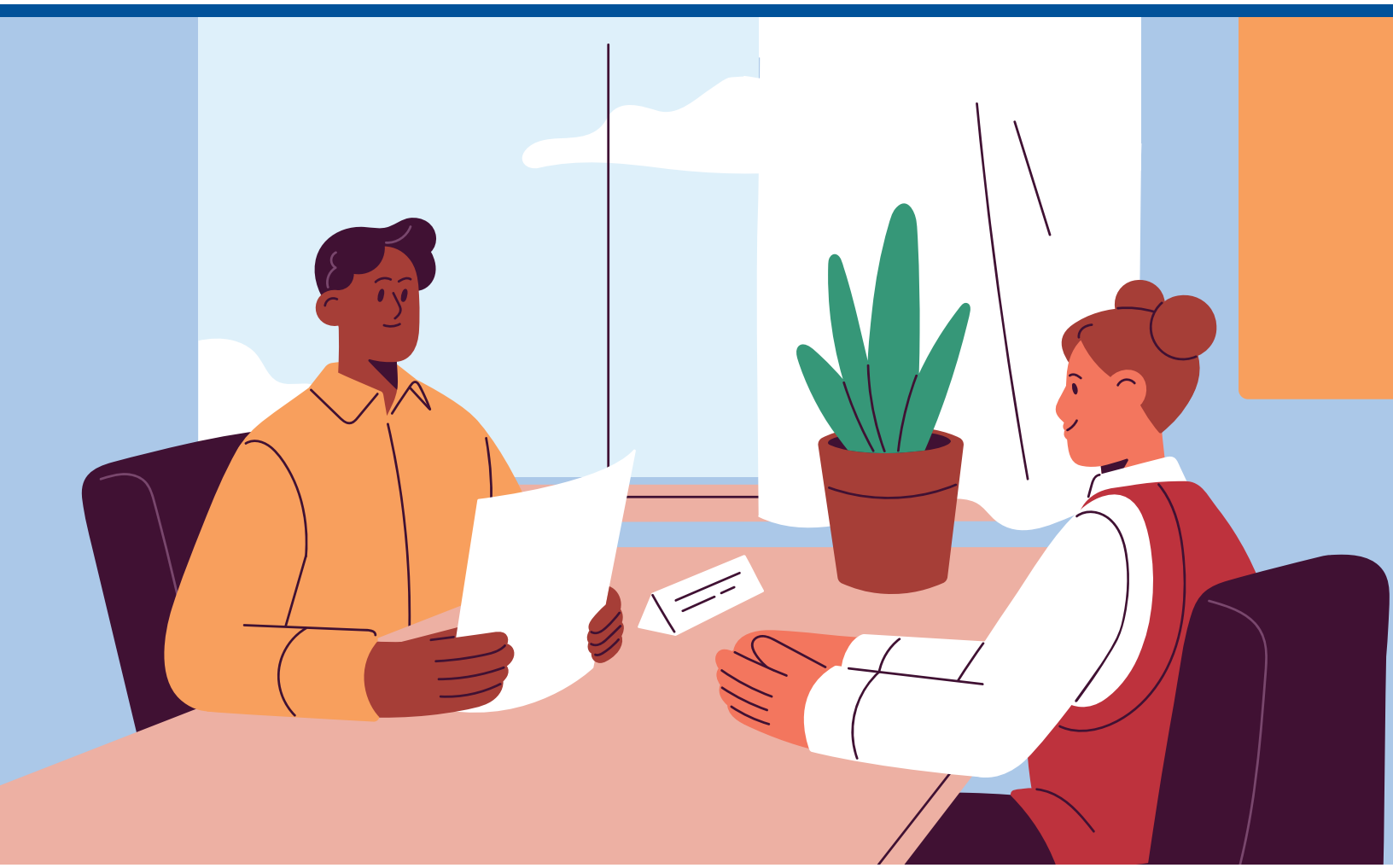
GEO Reentry CONNECT®



Success After Incarceration: Job Interview Tips

© GEO Care 2023

Getting an interview is a significant milestone in the job application process. It's an opportunity for you to personally connect with potential employers and showcase why you are an excellent match for the job.

These tips will help you understand what to expect during the interview process and provide you with a list of common questions that you may be asked. By familiarizing yourself with these questions, you can better prepare and present yourself confidently during the interview.

Addressing Your Past

Employers conduct background checks to verify qualifications. It's important to be truthful from the start, even if it means missing out on some opportunities. It's better to maintain trust than to risk losing it after being hired.

Professionalism

- Keep it simple and emphasize the positive
- If asked to give information about your past (convictions, incarceration, drug and/or alcohol use), avoid telling "your side of the story"; even if you were wrongly convicted, you will leave a negative impression
- Stay focused on what you have to offer the employer, not your personal story
- Offer details about your work history that highlight your strengths
- Demonstrate how you plan to or have turned your life around
- Focus on current activities and future plans
- List your goals and plans for the future
- Highlight the changes you have made with your new lifestyle
- Understand the concerns or hesitations of hiring you and offer reassurance

Make a Good Impression

- Arrive 15 minutes early
- Wear a professional shirt or blouse; jacket and tie are optional
- Be sure clothing is an appropriate length and fit
- Avoid jeans, sneakers, and flip-flops
- Choose neutral colors
- Wear minimal jewelry
- Bring at least five resume copies, a pen and paper to take notes, and a list of pre-written questions that you want to ask the interviewer
- Bring a list of three references. References can speak to your professional abilities and achievements. If you don't have much work experience, consider former teachers or community leaders who can address your commitment and work ethic
- Avoid talking about negative issues

Practice

- Write a short summary of your past; answer truthfully and be brief
- Make a list of things you have learned from your mistakes
- Get an outside perspective to help you think through your responses
- Rehearse and share with your peers or support systems

Notes

Interview Questions

During a job interview, you can expect to be asked various questions by Human Resources, the hiring manager, and other interviewers. Here are some examples of the most commonly asked questions.

Work Experience

- Tell me about the position(s) listed on your application/resume.
- What were your duties, responsibilities, expectations for the position(s)?
- What was your favorite job? What did you like/dislike about this job?
- Give an example of a goal you reached, and tell me how you achieved it.
- What life skills or job experiences make you a good fit for this company?
- Have you handled a difficult situation with an employee and/or supervisor? How did you handle it?
- Can you give an example where you went above and beyond in a position?
- Can you explain the gaps in your work history?

Incarceration

- Why were you incarcerated?
- What did you learn from your experience?
- Do you have challenges or limitations that could affect your work schedule?
- What have you been doing to prepare for employment since you were released?
- Were you employed or in school when you were incarcerated? If so, tell me about your work and education.

About You

- "Tell me about yourself" is an invitation to share why you are qualified for the position.
- Why do you want to work for our company?
- What are your strengths?
- What are you passionate about?
- Do you prefer to work independently or with others?
- What is your ideal work environment?
- How do you evaluate success?
- What motivates you to succeed?
- How do you handle stress and pressure?
- What is your worst quality?
- Describe a challenge where you succeeded.
- If the people that know you were asked why you should be hired, what would they say?
- What life skills or job experience do you have that would make you a good fit for our company?
- Do you have any concerns about entering the workforce?
- Where do you see yourself in five years?
- What have you been doing since you were released?
- How much money are you looking to make?

Notes