

## How to Shine During a Panel Style Job Interview

You may be forewarned—or you may be surprised when you first walk in. There they are: a panel of people waiting to interview you for a job. Your first instinct may be to panic; not only do you have to impress one interviewer, but several of them! But there are definite advantages to being interviewed by multiple people at once. The tips below will help you successfully navigate a panel interview while keeping your poise and sanity in check.

- **Skip the fluff.** With one-on-one interviews, you have more of a chance to develop a relationship with your interviewer wherein you may begin to get a sense of what he or she wants to hear. The good news/bad news situation with a panel is that your success depends more on your job-related abilities than owning the same breed of dog as the boss. When they're comparing notes afterward, panel members will tend to focus more fully on your qualifications, skills, and presentation.
- **Spread the love.** It's tempting to focus more on the person who seems to be a softer touch. If one person on the panel is smiling and nodding encouragement, who wouldn't want to talk directly to her? But it's important that you make eye contact as equally as possible with all of the interviewers. Start and end your answer by making eye contact with the person who asked the question, but during the course of your response, look at the others present. Also, unless the panel is made up of 10 people, make an effort to remember and use their names when speaking to them.
- **Take notes.** Many people forget to bring a notepad to an interview, but it's especially important to do so when you're being interviewed by a panel. Not only can you surreptitiously jot their names down for future reference, but you can take notes on things that you'd like to remember or bring up later. When you're facing questions and information from several people, it's particularly difficult to remember who said what or what you want to follow up on. Taking notes makes you look organized and interested. Just remember to look up occasionally!
- **Investigate the company.** If you know ahead of time who will be interviewing you, research their positions, responsibilities, and the work of their departments. You'll be more comfortable going in, and they'll be impressed at your knowledge. It's also important to gather as much information as possible about the company in general because what one of them doesn't think to ask (to gauge your familiarity), another one will.
- **Take your time.** Being interviewed by multiple people may mean that questions will be fired at you more quickly. Make sure that you take time to consider your answer before blurting out something awful just to keep up with their pace. A few seconds to gather your thoughts is perfectly acceptable no matter how rapid-fire their questions are.
- **Focus your own questions.** Just like any other type of interview, you'll be given the opportunity to ask questions. When you ask, try to focus on one person—preferably the person you believe can best answer your specific question. Even if you're not sure who that is, pick one person and ask. Otherwise, you'll go looking like a distracted poodle trying to make eye contact with everyone at once.
- **Pay attention to interaction.** One of the benefits of a panel interview for applicants is that it provides a snapshot of the company. The panel members are likely to be executives, and the upper echelon sets the tone for the entire firm. So look for signs that they're respectful of each other and knowledgeable about the company's needs. If potential colleagues are on the panel, think about whether you can see yourself working with them on a day-to-day basis.
- **Thank them individually.** When you send post-interview thank you notes (you do send them, right?), make sure to write a separate note to each interviewer thanking her for her time and reiterating your interest in the position.

## About the Author

Jason Kay recommends that you learn more job search strategies at [JobGoRound.com](http://JobGoRound.com). Read customer [reviews of resume writing services](#), [cover letter writing tips](#), [interviewing tips](#), and more.

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