

# TeenWorks Job Interview Guide: Your Complete Preparation Toolkit

Getting your first job interview is exciting but can be nerve-wracking. This guide breaks down everything you need to know, from preparation to follow-up, specifically for teens looking for their first job.



## Before the Interview: Your Preparation Checklist

### 1. Research the Business (10-15 minutes)

- **Visit their website/social media:** Look for their mission, values, and services
- **Know what they sell/do:** Be able to explain their business in 1-2 sentences
- **Check recent news/posts:** Look for new products, events, or community involvement

### 2. Gather Your Documents

- **Printed resume** (even if you submitted online)
- **Reference list** (2-3 people like teachers, coaches, or family friends)
- **Work permit** (if required in your state for under 18)
- **Identification** (student ID, social security card if needed)
- **Notebook and pen** for taking notes

### 3. Plan Your Logistics

- **Map the route** and do a practice trip if possible
- **Plan to arrive 10-15 minutes early** (not earlier!)
- **Charge your phone** but plan to have it silenced during interview
- **Confirm contact person** and their pronunciation

### 4. Prepare Your Outfit



DO:

- Clean, wrinkle-free clothes
- Neutral colors (black, navy, khaki)
- Closed-toe shoes
- Minimal jewelry
- Neat, clean hair



DON'T:

- Graphic tees with slogans
- Ripped jeans or shorts
- Excessive perfume/cologne
- Baseball caps or hats
- Headphones/earbuds visible

# Common Teen Interview Questions & How to Answer

## "Tell me about yourself"

**What they want:** A brief overview of who you are as a potential employee

**Good answer:** "I'm a junior at Lincoln High School who enjoys working with people. I'm involved with the yearbook committee, which taught me attention to detail, and I've been babysitting for two years, which helped me develop responsibility and time management skills. I'm excited to apply these skills in a retail environment."

## "Why do you want to work here?"

**What they want:** Evidence you've thought about this specific job

**Good answer:** "I've shopped here before and always noticed how helpful the staff is with customers. I like that you're involved with the community food drive. I want to work somewhere that values good customer service and gives back."

## "You don't have experience. Why should we hire you?"

**What they want:** Understanding of transferable skills

**Good answer:** "While this would be my first formal job, I've developed relevant skills through babysitting and school activities. I'm responsible with time, learn quickly, and enjoy helping people. I'm eager to bring that energy here and learn everything I can about this role."

## "How would you handle an angry customer?"

**What they want:** Problem-solving and customer service mindset

**Good answer:** "I would stay calm and listen to understand their concern. I'd apologize for their frustration and let them know I want to help. If I couldn't solve it myself, I'd politely get a manager while ensuring the customer knows I'm taking their issue seriously."

## "What are your strengths and weaknesses?"

**What they want:** Self-awareness and honesty

**Good answer for strengths:** "I'm very reliable - when I commit to something, I follow through. I also learn quickly and enjoy helping people."

**Good answer for weaknesses:** "Since I'm new to formal work environments, I'm still learning professional communication. I'm working on this by asking clarifying questions when I'm unsure about something."

## "When are you available to work?"

**What they want:** Clear understanding of your schedule constraints

**Good answer:** "As a student, I'm available weekdays after 4 PM and all day weekends. During summer, I'm available full-time. I can provide my school schedule and any planned commitments in advance."

# **Day-of Interview: Step-by-Step Process**

## **1. The First 5 Minutes (Most Important!)**

- Turn phone completely off (not just silent)
- Greet everyone with "Good morning/afternoon"
- Offer a firm handshake (practice this!)
- Smile and make eye contact
- Wait to be offered a seat

## **2. During the Interview**

- **Use the STAR method** for behavioral questions:
  - **Situation:** Briefly describe the context
  - **Task:** What needed to be accomplished
  - **Action:** What you specifically did
  - **Result:** What was the outcome
- **Ask questions** when they say "Do you have any questions for me?"
- **Take brief notes** if helpful (ask permission first)

## **3. Questions YOU Should Ask**

\*Pick 2-3 from these:\*

1. "What does a typical day look like in this position?"
2. "What training is provided for new employees?"
3. "What qualities make someone successful in this role?"
4. "What do you enjoy most about working here?"
5. "What are the next steps in the hiring process?"

## **4. The Closing**

- Thank them specifically ("Thank you for explaining the team structure")
- Reiterate interest ("I'm very interested in this opportunity")
- Clarify next steps ("Should I expect to hear back by email or phone?")
- Get a business card if possible



# After the Interview: Critical Follow-Up

## 1. Within 24 Hours: Send a Thank-You Email

Subject: Thank You - [Your Name] Interview for [Position]

Dear [Mr./Ms. Last Name],

Thank you for taking the time to interview me yesterday for the [position name] position at [business name]. I enjoyed learning more about [mention something specific discussed] and how the team [mention something you learned].

I was particularly interested to hear about [specific aspect of job or business]. My experience with [relevant skill] would allow me to contribute to [specific responsibility mentioned].

I remain very interested in this opportunity and look forward to hearing about next steps. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you need any additional information.

Sincerely,  
[Your Name]  
[Phone Number]  
[Email Address]

## 2. If You Don't Hear Back

- **Wait 5-7 business days** before following up
- **Send one polite email** asking for an update
- **If rejected**, respond graciously: "Thank you for letting me know. I appreciate the opportunity to interview and hope you'll keep me in mind for future openings."



## Common Teen Interview Mistakes to Avoid

Mistake	Why It's a Problem	Better Approach
Looking at phone during interview	Shows lack of interest/respect	Phone off and out of sight
Bringing a parent inside	Appears not independent	Parent waits outside or in car
"I don't know" with no follow-up	Shows lack of effort	"That's a good question. Based on..."
Not knowing about the business	Shows you didn't prepare	Mention 1-2 specific things you learned
Asking only about pay/schedule	Seems only interested in yourself	Ask about training, team, responsibilities first
Bad-mouthing previous boss/teacher	Shows poor attitude	Stay positive or neutral about past experiences

# Special Scenarios for Teens

## Group Interviews

- Make eye contact with everyone in the room
- Listen carefully when others speak
- Build on others' points ("I agree with what [name] said, and I'd add...")
- Don't dominate the conversation but contribute meaningfully

## Working Around School

- Be prepared with your school calendar
- Know exam periods and important school events
- Show flexibility for holidays and summers
- Demonstrate good time management skills

## Handling the "No Experience" Question

Redirect to:

1. **School activities:** Team projects, group work, presentations
2. **Volunteer work:** Community service, church activities, helping neighbors
3. **Personal responsibilities:** Babysitting, lawn mowing, helping family business
4. **Soft skills:** Punctuality, responsibility, eagerness to learn



## Quick Self-Assessment Before You Go

Rate yourself on these key areas (1-5 scale):

- **Research:** How much do I know about this business?
- **Appearance:** Is my outfit clean, neat, and appropriate?
- **Practice:** Have I rehearsed answers to common questions?
- **Documents:** Do I have everything I need?
- **Transportation:** Do I know exactly how to get there?
- **Mindset:** Am I viewing this as a learning experience regardless of outcome?



## Final Pro Tips

1. **Practice with a family member** - do a mock interview

2. **Record yourself** answering questions to check your delivery
3. **Arrive early but don't enter** until 10 minutes before
4. **Bring breath mints** (not gum!)
5. **Remember they WANT to hire someone** - they're not trying to trick you
6. **Every interview is practice** for the next one

**Most importantly:** Employers hiring teens understand this might be your first interview. They're looking for enthusiasm, willingness to learn, reliability, and a positive attitude more than perfect interview skills. Your genuine interest and preparedness will make you stand out!

Good luck! You've got this. 🌟

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