

## Interviewing at the U.S. Department of Defense

**Department of Defense (DoD)** - The Department of Defense provides the military forces needed to deter war and ensure our nation's security.

It is an honor to have a hiring manager select you to interview amongst all of the applicants for a particular position. Typically, the hiring process contains many steps where the manager can learn more about you, your skills and abilities and you more about the position, the work and the culture. The interviewing process should be viewed as a two-way process where both parties are seeking a good fit. It is important to put your best self forward and demonstrate respect and curiosity about DoD and the position for which you are applying.

### Resume

Your resume is traditionally the first interaction you will have with a hiring manager. This is your opportunity to contextualize your skills and qualifications. The DoD is a Federal agency, meaning a Federal resume is required. A Federal resume contains more information than a typical resume. You will need to include for each position: month and year of employment, the physical address of your employment, supervisors name and phone number, hours per week worked, salary and rate of pay, permission to contact your supervisor and a list of responsibilities and duties. Your resume should include schooling, degrees, and date of completion. Additionally, include specialized skills and abilities relevant to the position you are applying. Use a font which is easy to read and no smaller than a 12 point. Use a format which is easy to follow and include the most recent experience at the top of the resume working back chronologically. For best results tailor, your resume for the position you are applying. For assistance on creating a resume, use the resume builder at [www.usajobs.com](http://www.usajobs.com).

**Schedule A Letter** – You may be asked if you are eligible under the Schedule A Hiring Authority. This is demonstrated through the inclusion of a Schedule A letter or a letter from your doctor, licensed medical professional, a certified State Vocational Rehabilitation counselor or letter from government regarding your eligibility of disability benefits. This letter will serve as documentation that proves you have an intellectual disability, severe physical disability, or psychiatric disability. This is often referred to as "Proof of Disability Documentation."

[https://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/publications/abc\\_applicants\\_with\\_disabilities.cfm](https://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/publications/abc_applicants_with_disabilities.cfm)

### Pre-Interview

**Do your research** - You can never be too prepared for an interview. Be familiar with the position description, research the Department, its structure, goals and objectives and if possible the professional profiles of those conducting the interview. Think about a couple of questions you can ask about the job or Department because you will have time during the interview to ask questions. Practice answering some of the standard interview questions, such as:

- Why do you want this position?
- What makes you the ideal candidate for this position?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- What type of work environment do you prefer, a team or individual?

### Phone Interview

Most likely your first interview will be a phone screening where you are asked general questions about your skills, qualifications and interest in the position. This is your first opportunity to set yourself apart from the other applicants. Preparing and practicing will help you stay calm during the call. Make sure to take the call in a quiet location. While on the call, listen closely to what the interviewer/recruiter is asking and make sure

not to interrupt the question. Be thoughtful in your answers and do not rush. If you need a moment to process your answer before speaking, take it, just let your interviewer know.

If the interviewer asks about your salary requirement, be prepared to provide it. Too high or low salary requests serves as a quick elimination for both parties. If you do not have a salary requirement research the GS payment schedule online. There are a number of websites that list average salaries for various positions.

### **Disability Disclosure**

Disclosing or discussing your disability is a very personal choice. Depending on your needs, you may never choose to tell your employer any specifics, however, if you need an accommodation you will need to provide information on your functional limitations and submit a doctor's note before receiving an accommodation. Of course, if you need an accommodation for your interview, you will need to discuss it when you schedule your interview. An interviewer should not ask about your disability. It is appropriate for an interviewer to make an initial inquiry about your ability to perform the essential functions of the position with or without an accommodation but they cannot ask additional questions prior to an offer of employment. It is important to note that not all the individuals you might encounter in an interview are aware of this fact, innocently you may be asked, so it is best to prepare an answer such as "I am happy to discuss this further upon receiving an offer of employment." Then redirect the conversation, "Can I tell you more about my experience?"

### **In Person Interview**

The in person interview is generally is the next step in the process. This is a time for interviewer to see you, learn more about you both as a person and your qualifications. You will want to be polished and prepared.

### **Appropriate Dress**

Many workplaces have adopted a more casual atmosphere where the dress code is business casual, however that dress code should not apply to you for an interview. As an interviewee, you should always dress business professional which means suit, tie and jacket for men and suit for women (suit separates are acceptable). If your disability prevents you from moving comfortably in a jacket, a cardigan, button down shirt, dress or going without a jacket will suffice. Regardless of what you wear make sure your clothes are clean, ironed and comfortable.

### **What to bring?**

Always bring a clean copy of your resume. Most interviewers will have your resume but it is best to be prepared. Additionally, be prepared to provide 3 professional references with contact email and phone number. If the position requires a lot of writing is helpful to have a writing sample available. Also, it may be helpful to bring a bottle of water to help a nervous dry mouth or to buy an extra few seconds to answer a question while you take a drink.

### **The Interview**

An interview can be unpredictable, you may be asked questions about hobbies, experiences or asked to solve a problem. It is imperative that you stay relaxed. Be prepared to answer questions about everything on your resume and how your experiences have prepared you for this job. Read over the job description and make sure you are able to talk about how you could do each job objective. Don't be afraid to ask questions.

### **Follow-up**

Always follow each interview with a personal thank you note/email. Try to include something personal or respond to something from the interview to remind your interviewer of your interview. Once that is sent, you wait for a response. Don't call or email unless you were instructed to do so.