

You landed an interview as the finalist – Congratulations!

The time up until the interview is your chance to study and prepare for the one to two days on site. Study the institution, study the key leaders, study all the founding and central statements of purpose, convocation, and strategy. People from the top to the bottom will be trying to figure out if you are a good fit and will help the organization fulfill its mission.

It's also time to study yourself. This should be a review. What makes you tick? Why do you really want this position? Who are you when no one is looking? Are you quiet and reserved? How can you step up your game without being someone you are not? Are you comfortable in your own skin? Potential colleagues want to know who you are.

Know your schedule and understand who you will be meeting and when you will be meeting them. Be on time for everything. Doing so shows respect for the various people you will meet. If you are late for something beyond your control, state it plainly.

If you are asked about weaknesses, answer with real weaknesses. We've all heard the story about the person who answers that they work too hard or care too deeply. Instead, carefully craft an answer that shows you are not perfect but also not a threat. Focus on something you've learned about yourself and know needs improvement. Don't hesitate to explain how you are working on the weakness. Be ready to explain the positives you bring to the table, as well.

Answer questions without guile. We all want to guild the lily occasionally. This is not the time to try that. If you worked with a team to accomplish something big, say that and not that you did something on your own.

Have your answer to how you will use your first days in the new position. Remember that change can be threatening. Never lead with a plan to upset the apple cart. Major changes in the first 100 days can be viewed as a failure to understand and appreciate the work already being done.

Ask questions that show you've done your homework and that you care about what is central to the organization's ethos. Listen with intent and purpose. Who are these potential colleagues? Do you see yourself fitting in and becoming part of this team?

Dress the part. Even if this age of casual attire, don't give in and dress like you might at work. Professional attire is always the right choice.

Remember – you are interviewing them as the interview you. If you leave the interview feeling that this is not right for you, don't move ahead and accept an offer that will leave you wondering why you accepted a couple of months down the road. As I've told more

than one job seeker, “You are not obligated to accept an offer just because it is presented.”

Being the real you allows you to let the hiring team know what they are getting and allows you to make the right decision should the job be offered.