After the Interview: Timeline to Follow Up

You had an amazing interview and wrote the perfect thank you note. Now what? How long should you wait to follow up? You’ve probably been constantly checking and refreshing your email. Checking your phone for voicemails and calls. Unfortunately, you are probably not the first thing on the hiring manager’s mind. They have meetings, review budgets, and yes, meet with more candidates.

So, what do you do to follow up?

Actually follow up

It’s not a question of whether you should follow up or not, it’s a question of when! Following up shows respect and an important way to show interest in the position. What else it shows: communication skills, organization, and initiative.

Below is an example of an appropriate follow-up.

Hello HR Manager (be specific with the name),

I hope you’ve enjoyed a productive week!

I thought I’d check in to make sure that you have received everything you need from me– please know I would be delighted to answer any questions you have about my references or resume. I look forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,

Job Candidate
Wait X? amount of time

The general rule of thumb for how long to wait before following up is 5 business days. This may vary depending on size of company and industry. For example, smaller companies may move faster than larger companies.

Follow up carefully

The goal of following up is to show your interest, not hassle them until they hire you. Pay attention; if the recruiter doesn’t want you to follow up, make sure you follow their wishes.

What if you never get a response? How should you proceed? Look below for what to do when the trail goes cold.

When the Trail Goes Cold

Though it doesn’t seem like it to job seekers, Hiring Managers are normal, busy people! Overflowing inboxes, long to-do lists, and many hurdles to jump through. It’s best to approach a delay with a polite, formal tone that encourages a response so as not to jeopardize a potential job offer. Below are some examples to guide you in a second, and if necessary, final contact.

Follow-Up #2: Follow-Up to the Follow Up

Hello HR Manager,

I hope you’re doing well!

I thought I’d follow up on our conversation from last week and see if you had an update you could share. I’m still very much interested in working with you and your team, and I’d love to hear your thoughts!

Sincerely,

Job Candidate
Follow-Up #3: Final, Professional Farewell

Hello HR Manager,

I wanted to check in on our conversation from [Last Contact Date] regarding [Company’s Open Position].

I’m in the process of considering other employment opportunities, and it would be very helpful to know if you have decided to go in another direction or are experiencing an internal delay. I very much appreciate your transparency either way and will respectfully stop following up if that is the case.

Sincerely,

Job Candidate

Here are some final tips that could get you a callback:

- Allow at least a full business week to pass between emails to make sure that the HR manager isn’t just backlogged and working through the inbox.

- Write generic email titles that include terms like “Quick Question.” This sends the message that the receiver can read and respond to the email quickly, appealing to the desire to clear his/her inbox quickly.

- Never use all-caps or aggressive punctuation that would reveal impatience or unprofessionalism.

- **When in doubt, assume the result is out of your control.** Perhaps they cannot reveal that the salary requirements have changed, the position moved across the country or their best employee applied for the job at the last minute. If you assume the best, it will be easier to maintain a professional and positive outlook in emails.