

INTERVIEW BASICS

What is a Job Interview?

- ❖ A job interview is a structured conversation between you and an employer to determine if this is a good job fit for both of you. It is an opportunity to market and sell “yourself” by demonstrating what your skills, education, and accomplishments can do for an organization. Employers are looking for someone who can perform the essential functions of the job, execute the mission of the organization, fit into its culture, and work effectively with their team of employees.
- ❖ The job interview also allows you the chance to see if there is a good fit between your interests, skills, and career goals with the organization. It provides a reality check to determine if the employer’s overall environment meets your needs. This is a two-way process: the employer assesses you and you assess the organization.



Tips for a GREAT INTERVIEW:

- ❖ Be **PREPARED!!** – Make sure you look and feel ready for the big day. Preparation starts the moment you find out you have an interview and the tips below will help you to stand out among the crowd!
- ❖ Show **ENTHUSIASM** – “Give me someone who is enthusiastic and motivated”; “Someone who is alert and alive”; and “Someone who is excited about coming to work here”.
- ❖ Be **COURTEOUS** – Be friendly, smile, and say hello to **everyone you meet**. The interview committee members are not the only people you are making an impression on.....everyone you meet from the moment you walk in the door will have something to say about you.
- ❖ Be **PROFESSIONAL** – Stand up straight, look people in the eyes, smile, extend a firm handshake and say thank you.
- ❖ Show **RESPECT** – Address people by Mr. or Ms., unless they ask you to call them by their first name. Do not sit down until you are invited to sit.
- ❖ **Follow up!** – Following up is an important step that will not only make a great impression on the employer; it shows that you are a very well rounded person that pays attention to the small details.

3 Basic Steps to the Interview Process:

1. Preparation

2. Interview

3. Follow-Up

Step 1) Preparation

Carefully read the job description

- ❖ This will help you understand what the employer is looking for and what questions may be presented in the interview.

Know yourself

- ❖ Be ready to explain your academic background, special skills, experience, interests, and career goals as related to the job you are interviewing for.

Know the employer

- ❖ By researching their company, you have shown that you can take initiative and are willing to go the extra mile to pursue your goals.
- ❖ Researching allows you to see how you fit into the organization. After researching a company, you may discover that it is not a good fit for you.

Prior to "Interview Day"

- ❖ **Plan your route** – Get the address, phone number and name(s) of people you are scheduled to meet. Map out directions and do a "test run", preferably at the same time of day of your interview. This will give you an idea of how long it will take you to get to the interview and hopefully prevent you from being late.
- ❖ Get a good night's sleep! You will be more mentally alert.

Appearance – What will I wear?

- ❖ Dress professional, clothing should fit appropriately, avoid flashy colors, NO flip flops, shorts, t-shirts, pants with holes – you get the idea!
- ❖ Be well groomed – Hair clean and cut, nails clean, and shower!
- ❖ Avoid excessive jewelry, hats, cologne and perfumes (some people are allergic).
- ❖ Make sure you try your outfit on the day before the interview. *If it does not fit right*, you do not want to find that out the day of the interview. Searching for a different outfit to wear on the day of the interview may cause you to be late.

"Interview Day"

- ❖ Give yourself plenty of time to get ready before the interview. Arrive 10 – 15 minutes early.
- ❖ Bring extra copies of your resume, transcripts, and references, just in case. It is best to be prepared, then to not have the information the employer requests. You can carry your documents in a presentation folder.
- ❖ **DO NOT** carry backpacks, large briefcases, oversized purses or any gadgets such as cell phones, IPODS, laptops, etc...into the interview.
- ❖ **DO NOT** bring food or drinks. If you are offered water or coffee in the interview it is ok to accept, but if no one else on the interview panel has water or coffee it is preferred you say "no thank you" and wait till the interview is over. You can have all the water and coffee you want after the interview.

Step 2 - The Interview:

This is where you will be introduced to the interview panel. When introduced, smile and give the interviewer(s) eye contact and a firm handshake. Sit down when asked and avoid keeping your briefcase and/or purse on your lap. Try your best to appear relaxed and confident. Try to remember each interviewer(s) name that you are introduced to. A trick to remember their name is repeating it after the introduction, i.e. "It's nice to meet you Mr. Smith." You may also ask to have a piece of paper and pen in front you during the interview (always ask first) so you may write down each interviewer(s) name(s). Do not take your focus off the interview though, just to write things down. Maintain eye contact and pay attention at ALL TIMES.

The Question Phase: "what we say" vs. "how we say it"

- ❖ Let the interviewer(s) lead the questioning and do not interrupt.
- ❖ Pay ATTENTION and LISTEN CAREFULLY to each and every question!
- ❖ Be prepared to discuss:
 - Work experience, education, skills, activities, interests, job knowledge and what you know about the company/organization you are interviewing for.

- ❖ The interviewer(s) will be evaluating the following:
 - Transferable skills, job-related skills, and self-management skills.

- ❖ The interviewer(s) want to see:
 - Problem-solving skills – examples that prove you know how to solve problems (i.e. state the problem, how you solved it, and outcome).
 - Good people skills – discuss your abilities and situations in which you have worked well with others; how you collaborated on a project.
 - Closure skills – your ability to get things done. Bring up examples of times when you met deadlines and helped close a deal.

- ❖ Steps you can follow to help answer questions appropriately and fully:
 1. Answer all questions truthfully.
 2. Avoid using slang (answer all questions speaking clearly).
 3. Never speak negatively about you present or previous employers.
 4. Sell yourself. Talk about your skills, accomplishments and abilities – NOT your childhood, family or unrelated issues.
 5. Identify good examples of your experience, knowledge, skills, and abilities.
 6. Identify specific skills you use to problem solve.
 7. Identify accomplishments (i.e. saving employer(s) money, creating a new procedure, demonstrating leadership, increasing efficiency, etc.).

How to conduct yourself during the interview:

- ❖ Be aware of your body language, it can speak as loudly as your words, SMILE!
- ❖ Maintain eye contact. It shows interest and that you are paying attention.
- ❖ Be aware of your voice tone, volume and pace. Sound enthusiastic!!

“Types” of questions to be prepared for, include:

- ❖ **General:** Questions to gather basic information.
- ❖ **Specific:** “Specific” to the job you are interviewing for.
 - Accounting job – expect questions related to taxes, Excel and your education, training and work experience related to accounting.
- ❖ **Situational:** Hypothetical situational questions that are designed to find out what you would do if you were in that situation and employers use these questions to evaluate your problem solving skills.
 - The question usually begins with “What would you do if....”
- ❖ **Experiential:** Designed to evaluate your problem solving skills again, but this time from actual “real life” situations.
 - The question usually begins with “What did you do when....”

Questions to Ask Employers (at end of interview)

- ❖ What kinds of assignments might I expect the first six months on the job?
- ❖ Does your company encourage further education?
- ❖ Do you have plans for expansion?
- ❖ How do you feel about creativity and individuality?
- ❖ Do you fill positions from the outside or promote from within first?
- ❖ What qualities are you looking for in the candidate who fills this position?
- ❖ What skills are especially important for someone in this position?
- ❖ What characteristics do the achievers in this company seem to share?
- ❖ When should I expect to hear from you?

Lastly, be aware of “illegal” questions.

- ❖ If you are asked any of these questions in an interview, you can either choose to just answer it or politely say, “Excuse me, I believe that is an inappropriate/illegal question and I do not wish to answer it”.
- ❖ These are some examples of the questions that should “not” be asked in an interview:
 - Are you married?
 - Do you have children?
 - Do you have any disabilities? (They can ask you if you can do the job with “reasonable accommodations”).
 - What are your religious beliefs and will they prevent you from working at certain times, holidays, etc.?
 - Do you have or have you ever had a problem with drugs or alcohol?
 - What is your ethnicity?
 - What is your sexual preference?

Step 3 – Follow-up:

- ❖ Send a “Thank You” note to the employer. You should have the interviewer(s) name(s) and the address of the company; if not make sure you get it before leaving the interview.
- ❖ Keep the note simple and brief. It can handwritten (if you have good handwriting) or typed on a simple thank you card or quality piece of paper.

What are employers looking for when they interview?

- ❖ Being on time every
- ❖ Understand money and how to handle it
- ❖ Know how to work with others.
- ❖ Work will with men and women from diverse cultures
- ❖ Can find answers, evaluate information, and create solutions to problems
- ❖ Understand the “big picture” in relation to the job at hand
- ❖ Acquire, evaluate, interpret, and communicate information; ability to use computers to process information
- ❖ Choose, apply, maintain, and troubleshoot computers and other new types of technology that makes work more efficient

Quick Interview Tips:

Following through on these tips can be challenging when we are nervous, but that is where practicing and good preparation can help. The more you know and prepare by practicing interview skills and questions, the easier it will be to conduct yourself.

DO'S

- ❖ **DO** map out exactly where you are scheduled to interview – get directions and make a “practice run” preferably at the same time of day when you are scheduled to interview so you know exactly how long it will take you to arrive.
- ❖ **DO** plan to arrive about 10 minutes early. Late arrival for an interview is **NEVER** excusable. If you are running late, do phone the company (make sure the reason you are running late is due to extreme circumstances not because you woke up late).
- ❖ **DO** your research, be prepared and practice, practice, practice your interview skills.
- ❖ **DO** dress for success! Be professional and if in doubt lean on the side of conservatism.
- ❖ **DO** bring extra resumes to the interview.
- ❖ **DO** greet the receptionist or assistant with courtesy and respect. This is your **FIRST IMPRESSION** with the company and could potentially “make or break” a decision.
- ❖ **DO** greet the interviewer(s) by their title (Ms., Mr., Dr.) and proper names. (Learning the names of the interviewers can be done in the preparation stage or when you arrive the day of the interview ask the receptionist for the interviewer’s names).
- ❖ **DO** shake hands firmly!
- ❖ **DO** make good eye contact with the interviewer(s).
- ❖ **DO** sit up straight.
- ❖ **DO SMILE.** Show enthusiasm for the company and the position! Positive energy usually results in positive outcomes.
- ❖ **DO** speak clearly and distinctly. Avoid slang and pause words such as (“like”, “uh”, “um”).
- ❖ **DO** avoid controversial topics (Religion, Politics, etc..).

- ❖ DO try and get business cards from each person you interviewed with, so you can send thank you notes after the interview.
- ❖ DO send THANK YOU notes to the interviewer(s) after the interview.

DON'TS

- ❖ DO NOT chew gum from the moment you greet the receptionist until the interview is complete and you have left the building!
- ❖ DO NOT smoke before or during the interview process. You do not want to walk into the interview smelling like smoke and with bad breathe.
- ❖ DO NOT rely on your application or resume selling yourself to the employer. The interview is your chance to convince the employer that not only do you meet the "qualifications" of the job, but you will fit into their workplace culture and you are the "right" person for the job.
- ❖ DO NOT tell jokes during the interview...you never know who you may offend.
- ❖ DO NOT lie. Answer all questions truthfully. If you are hired and the lie comes out.....you are now fired! Do not put all your hard work to waste.
- ❖ DO NOT answer cell phone calls during the interview process. Put all gadgets away and turn off or silent
- ❖ DO NOT interrupt the interviewers.
- ❖ DO NOT bad mouth previous employers, supervisors.
- ❖ DO NOT "play cool". You may come across as arrogant.

Commonly Asked Interview Questions & Responses:

"Tell us about yourself."

A "sharp" response to this question will make you shine. This is your opportunity to "summarize" all the great things you want the employer to know about you. Keep your response under 2 minutes (they do not want to hear your life story).

Sample response:

"I recently completed my AA degree in Business Administration with a 3.5 GPA. I am also finishing an internship with the Shelling Corporation, where I have worked on developing international business agreements and increased sales for the company by \$500k for the year. Before starting my degree program I worked in sales and had the opportunity to network with several large corporations throughout the U.S. In addition to my work and education experience, I volunteer with the YWCA helping out with fundraisers and facilitating community activities for children. I believe my work, education and volunteer experience has helped me grow in leadership and business development. I am anxious to continue learning and gain new experiences in the world of business."

"What do you know about our organization? And why do you want to work here?"

Sample response:

"You are a small electronics firm (i.e. large accounting firm, small medical office, etc.) and a leading force in the local economy. You have a history of encouraging employees to "think outside of the box". I am encouraged by your organization's interest in creativity as a desired skill and believe I could be a major contributor. You are also rated one of the top 100 best places to work in the state for the last 3 years."

“Tell us your biggest weakness.”

Be honest and give a real weakness. Employers know we all have weaknesses.....stating that you do not have any may only make you look foolish! It is not the weakness itself that the employer is looking for, it is how you deal with it and/or what you are doing to compensate for or change it. State something you do well and show how you are improving it.

Sample response:

“My computer skills are a little weak, especially in Excel and spreadsheets. I usually struggle keeping track of accounts using Excel. But to compensate for my lack of knowledge in this area I have decided to take a class in Excel and other related areas in computer (i.e. how to use spreadsheets). I am hoping to increase my knowledge in this area and willing to participate in any training that your company may have to offer”.

“What is your greatest accomplishment?”

Give a specific illustration from work or school where you might have done the following:

Saved the organization money.

Helped increase their profits.

Created a new system, program, etc...

Improved efficiency in the organization.

If you just graduated from college, think of some accomplishments from your schoolwork, internships, and extracurricular activities.

Question Types Include:

Personal

1. What are your major strengths? (Mention qualities or skills you have that would be helpful to the organization)
2. How does your education or experience relate to this job?
3. Describe your ideal job.
4. Are you willing to relocate or travel as part of your job....and/or work evenings, weekends, or holidays? (They want to know how flexible you are)
5. How would you handle an angry, argumentative customer? (They are evaluating more problem solving skills and how your personality or style (are you passive or aggressive) will fit into their work culture)
6. Tell us about your experience with using computer programs/software related to “the specific job” you are interviewing for. (This would be an example of a “specific” question, a question related specifically to the job you are interviewing for)
7. Have you had difficulty getting along with a former professor/supervisor/co-worker? And how did you handle it?

Experience Related Questions

1. What job-related skills have you developed?
2. What did you enjoy most about your last employment? Least?
3. Give an example of a time when you provided a solution to an employer.
4. Give an example of a time when you worked under deadline pressure.
5. How do you think a former supervisor would describe your work?

Behavior Based Questions

1. Multi-tasking: Describe to me a situation at one of your previous jobs where you were required to do multiple duties/things at the same time. What were the tasks involved? How did you feel about the situation? How did you accomplish the task?
2. Conflict/coping/attitude: Tell me about a past situation where a co-worker or supervisor gave you constructive criticism on your performance. How did you handle it? What was the result? How does it affect you today?
3. Ability to follow directions: Tell me about a work situation where you've had to follow written/verbal instructions to complete a task. Describe your actions when you became confused or unsure about any part of the process. What was the result?
4. Teamwork: Describe a time when you were responsible for completing a project at work as part of a team. What challenges/successes did you have on this project or duty?

A technique used to demonstrate "problem – solving skills" when answer questions:

STAR Technique

S – What was the Situation? (Define the problem.)

T – Discuss the Task involved/Brainstorm ideas

A – Discuss the Action plan/Decide and Act

R – Discuss/Evaluate the Results

So, how important is your interview outfit?

This is your opportunity to make the BEST first impression possible, which is usually made within seconds of meeting someone and can shape future impressions as well, so is dressing professionally important?....ABSOLUTELY!

Employers will not only be critiquing your skills, abilities, and experience, but your appearance too. The difference between two qualified candidates and who gets hired could quite possibly be their attire and appearance... Want to know how you should dress to impress?? More info in the pages to follow!!

DRESS FOR SUCCESS

What is proper attire and fit?

Guidelines to follow:

- Appropriate size – avoid baggy and tight fits
- Shape – fits appropriately to your body size; avoid revealing, low cut tops and pants
- Style – clean cut and professional
- Color – avoid flashy, bright or overly patterned colors

Personal Appearance/Accessories

No perfumes: Some people are very sensitive or allergic to perfumes and you do not want to offend a potential employer on your 1st impression.

Jewelry: Small single strand necklaces; gold or silver; earrings small and close to the ear/no large dangles. Pearls are a classic option! A nice watch is always a great accessory.

Make – up: Light application, natural looks are recommended, avoid looking too glitzy (keep it professional).

Hair: Washed and neatly groomed. Wear hair away from face so you can make eye contact with interviewer. Men should be clean shaven and trim beards as needed for a professional look.

Nails: Clear or neutral colors and NOT too long or flashy. Make sure nails look clean and neatly groomed.

Handbags/briefcases: Small & conservative style purses and/or briefcases. No backpacks! A professional dark/solid color portfolio or binder is acceptable.

Scarves: Conservative and NOT flashy.

Colors: Try to stick with solid colors or pinstripes for men.

Winter/Fall colors: Navy blue, black, grey, dark green, browns
Spring/Summer colors: Light blues and greens, pale yellow or pastel colors

Tips for shopping

- Budget – Buy what you can afford, but remember this is an **investment in your future**, not just another outfit for the weekend. Use good judgment.
- Try on every garment before you buy it and move around, sit down and stretch in it. You want a good fit!
- Ask yourself if you really like it. Is this something that feels professional and proper for your interview?

Guidelines for Women

Suits, Jackets and Coats

2- Piece, long sleeve, professional suit (skirt or pants are acceptable)

Jackets and coats should hang straight from the shoulder to the hem and fit smoothly over other clothing (Avoid bulky clothing)

Skirts and Dresses

Fit smoothly across the seat and stomach

No pulling or wrinkling

Skirt length: At the knee or 1" below the knee

Fit to your body shape, at or around knee length

Fits your natural waistline – belts should be at your waist

Tops/Blouses

White or neutral colors, bright colorful patterns are not recommended. Button down or round neck sleeved shell (Avoid low cuts)

Slacks

Fit comfortably in the crotch area- not tight to the body, pockets should lie flat. Pleats should hang slightly loose, not tight fitting to your body

Shoes and Stockings

Closed toe, dress flats or dress pumps (comfortable highly recommended!)

Stockings/hose: Taupe or natural tone

Guidelines for Men

Suits

Color: Navy, dark grey or pinstripe - Matching color, texture and pattern Two shoulder shapes, described below:

1. **Natural (soft – shape)** – minimum padding and fits a more muscular build and a heavier frame
2. **European (roped/squared off)** –more heavily padded and fits more snugly around the armholes; chest area fits tighter and the waist is nipped in slightly. This type of suit best fits a slimmer body shape.

Jackets

No rippling of material when the jacket is buttoned Jacket should be smooth across the back from shoulder to shoulder, Cuff length should allow for shirt to show slightly

Shirt

Make sure the fit is comfortable, not too tight.

Color: White

Style: Button down, long sleeve

Fabric: 100% cotton or polyester blend

Tie

Burgundy, deep greens, dark blue, paisley or stripes work well

Should blend well with shirt and suit (solid on pinstripe or solid on solid or paisley/stripes on solid) Avoid paisley/stripes on texture/non- solid shirts

Pants/Trousers

Should fit well across the stomach, hips and rear

Fit comfortable and not pull in the crotch

Pant leg should hang straight from the waist with a slight break of fabric on the top of your shoe

Whatever you decide to wear, make sure it is a good fit; being comfortable is a priority along with looking professional!

Thank You Notes

The thank you letter can be the difference between getting the job and being eliminated from the hiring pool. If you want to stand out from all the other qualified candidates, this is your chance. Most job seekers ignore this advice. Be the exception and follow through!

Reasons for sending thank you notes:

- Emphasizes good people skills....your "thank you" says you are good with people.
- Your name will now be remembered...the thank you note has just refreshed their memory.
- You can express any last interest in further discussion.

Thank you letters are useful in several situations

- After an employment interview
- When someone has helped you with your job search
- After an information interview

Guidelines for your thank you letter:

To be effective, a thank you letter should be sent before the hiring decision has been made. So, send your thank you note the same day that you have your interview to assure it arrives on time.

Get the names and/or business cards of each person that interviewed you, so you have the addresses and necessary contact information needed to send out thank you cards. This also allows you to personally address each of your thank you notes.

For a more personal impression your thank you note can be a hand-written card or in business format for a more professional type. In most cases, a simple 2 paragraph format is all that is necessary. There is no absolute right or wrong...it is your choice.

1st paragraph:

Thank the interviewer for the opportunity to interview with them. State your interest in the position and mention the name, date, and job number (if applicable) of the position you interviewed for.

2nd paragraph

The information in this section is going to vary depending on the reason for the thank you note.

For interview thank you notes List the qualifications you most want the interviewer to remember.

For informational interview, job search or networking:

Explain how it helped your job/career situation.

Thank the addressee for their time and list a contact number in case they have further questions.



Sally Jobseeker
1111 Woolly Avenue
Whatacity, PA 012034

December 10, 2016

Mr. Martin Bozeman, CEO
ABC Corporation
1234 International Avenue
Whatacity, PA 012034

Dear Mr. Bozeman,

I enjoyed having the opportunity to meet with you and interview for the position of Manager with ABC Corporation. I continue to be very impressed with the high level of professionalism among all members of your company. This certainly is an important factor in the sterling reputation that ABC Corporation holds worldwide.

I want to reiterate my interest in the position. I feel confident that my seven years of acquired sales experience, combined with well-seasoned communication and interpersonal skills, would make me an ideal candidate for this position. Thank you again for allowing me the opportunity to interview with your company and I hope to hear from you soon. I can be reached at (916) 222 - 3344, if you have any further questions.

Sincerely yours,

(Your name signed here in black ink)

Sally Jobseeker

*For further information or assistance contact the SCC Career Center
916-558-2656 | scc-careercenter@scc.losrios.edu*