

THE INTERVIEW

The interview is the most efficient way for you and the representative of an employer to get to know each other. However, research and preparation will significantly increase your interviewing performance and positive outcome. You cannot exactly rehearse your role in an upcoming interview because you don't know what cues will be given to you. Of course common courtesy, good common sense and being yourself is always encouraged. While there is no single correct way to conduct an interview, these are some basic rules and situations common to most interviews which may help you know about them ahead of time.

Before the Interview:

1. Prepare your resume and cover letter.
2. Do your homework. Research the employer with whom you are interviewing. Know the salary range and commit your interest. Match your goals and needs with those of the employer. It is important to know the background of the organization as you may wish to ask questions. Also, learn the interviewer's name.
3. Develop your agenda. List what skills you have to offer. Know your strengths and weaknesses.
4. Be rested and think positive thoughts.
5. Dress in good taste. While many employers encourage individuality, let basic good taste determine how you dress for an interview. Head to foot cleanliness and neatness also will help to create a good first impression.
6. Nervousness: It is normal for many people to be nervous, particularly in an interview. It does help to dry a damp brow or a clammy hand just before meeting your interviewer. Experienced interviewers discount a certain amount of nervousness.
7. Be yourself. Remember that the interviewer wants to get to know something about you, not hear a memorized speech.
8. Be on time. Try to be ten to fifteen minutes early. Call if you will be delayed.
9. Be prepared. There are ways in which you can help to prepare yourself for interviewing. Your college Career Services Center is experienced in acquainting students with basic interviewing techniques.

During the Interview:

1. Realize the importance of the first three minutes. This is where you will make your first impression.
2. Smile and greet the interviewer by name if you are sure of the pronunciation as you enter their office.
3. Take your cues from them at the start. If they move to shake hands, do so but not unless they make the first gesture. If they shake hands with you, use a firm grip – a “limp fish” handshake will make a bad impression. However, do not try to prove how strong your grip is by grabbing their hand and mashing it. Wait until they offer you a chair before you sit down, unless, in a very small room they remain seated or sit down immediately.
4. Do not chew gum or smoke.
5. Be aware of body language. Sit up in your chair and look alert and interested at all times. Lean forward to show interest. Do not look tense, but do not relax so much that you slouch. Show that you can be a wide-awake, intelligent listener as well as a talker. Do not let your hands betray nervousness. If you do not know where to put them, leave them in your lap and keep them still.
6. Most interviews will follow a rather simple question and answer format. If this is the case, your ability to answer quickly and intelligently is of great importance. Above all, answer honestly. Do not give confused or contradictory answers. The greatest preventive against a contradictory answer is the plain truth. A frank answer, even if it seems a little unfavorable to you, is better than an exaggeration which may tangle you up in the next question. Often, a frank admission can be turned to your advantage. Frankness is admired, and you may be able to recover in this fashion:

The interviewer may ask you if you always pitch right into an assignment and get it done ahead of time. You answer, “I am afraid I do not always get assignments done before they are due. I sometimes have a tendency to put a thing off until it has to be done. However, I never turned in a major assignment or term paper that was late. And I am sure that the supervisors I have had in my last two jobs (I've listed them among my references) will be glad to tell you that my work for them was always finished on time. Both of them told me that my work was thorough and very accurate, and both asked me to return to the job the following summer.” Score one for frankness and three for responsibility, accuracy and giving satisfaction in previous jobs.

7. Be ready for at least one surprise question right at the start. These are a few of the favorites:
 - a. What can I do for you?
 - b. Tell me about yourself.
 - c. Why are you interested in this organization?

If you think those are easy questions to answer without some previous thought, just try it. This is where preparation counts. If they want to know what they can do for you, tell them that you would like to apply for a job in a certain function of their company, with an idea toward progressing into some more advanced phase – or say anything that will show them you are interested in progress with this employer. Be as specific as you can.

Suppose they ask you to talk about yourself. If you are wise, you have thought, “If I were in this place, working for this employer's organization, what would I like to know about an applicant?” Tell those things about yourself which relate to the situation, your background, your education and your skills. Be informative without boasting, and avoid sounding like you have prepared a speech. As for the third question, if you have studied the employer's organization literature you will not be at a loss for words.

8. Be prepared for a few personal questions, such as, “What motivates you?”

9. Be ready to give an answer to the favorite questions, “What do you plan to be doing ten years from now?” or “How much money do you expect to be earning in ten years?” The purpose of these questions is to determine your ambition, your ability to plan ahead and the soundness of your thinking.
10. If you are asked if you have ever been fired – and you have been, frankness is the answer. Tell them you have learned from your mistakes. Also, there is the possibility you got into a wrong job through a misunderstanding.
11. You may be asked why you left your last two or three jobs. Return to school, better pay and more responsibility are acceptable reasons. Be careful not to give the impression that you are a job “jumper.”
12. Follow the interviewer’s lead. Do not answer just “yes” and “no.” On the other hand, do not talk too much. If you find yourself talking in a monologue, give the lead back to the recruiter by saying: “Perhaps you have some other questions to ask me?”
13. Use frequent, direct eye contact with the interviewer, especially when responding to questions. Look pleasant and smile frequently at appropriate occasions.
14. Emphasize your strengths. Make sure that your good points get across to the interviewer – they will not know unless you tell them. Mention your best qualities in relation to something concrete. Try to appear factual and sincere, not bloated with conceit. Emphasizing your goals and strong points may alert an interviewer to an attribute that did not show up on your resume.
15. Never make a slighting reference about a former employer or professor. If something went wrong, suggest that at least some of the blame must have been your own.
16. Do not take notes in an interview if you can help it. This is annoying and distracting to some recruiters. If you feel that you must write something down, make a remark such as “That is very interesting. Do you mind if I make a note of it?” The best policy is to make note on paper immediately after the interview everything you want to be sure to remember.
17. A few interviewers like to do most of the talking and judge you by your reactions, the interest, comprehension, and intelligence you show. Even if the recruiter does much of the talking, remember that you can lead them by asking questions which call in turn for a question you want to answer. For example, you are strong in extracurricular organizations. They have mentioned that point and you want to go into a little detail you could not cover fully in your resume. You simply watch for an opening and ask, “Are you interested in my extracurricular activities?” They are not likely to say “no.”
18. Some interviewers hardly speak at all and expect you to sell yourself. For an amateur, these are the hardest to deal with. This is where you will have to call on knowledge of yourself and your interests in the work their company does. However, stick to the subject at hand. Do not go off on a tangent because you like the sound of your own voice.
19. The interviewer may steer the conversation into politics or economics. Be honest in what you say, and do not be evasive, but try not to say more than is necessary to answer the recruiter’s line of questioning. If you can agree in general with them, fine. If you stray off into talking about your pet enthusiasms you may hang yourself.
20. Conduct yourself as if you are determined to get the job you are discussing. The recruiter is aware that you may have other irons in the fire, but they want to think that you would like a job with their company.
21. Try to avoid giving the impression that you have come in to look over possibilities, and that you are not sure what you want. Do not say, “I’ll do anything if I am given the chance to learn,” or “I do not know what I want to do. I hope you can suggest something.” When possible, apply for a specific job or field of work. If there is no opening in the area you suggest, the way you present yourself may lead the interviewer to suggest another job or department, perhaps, better than the one you were seeking. For this reason, it is not advisable to get too far out on a limb by saying you will not consider anything but one certain job.
22. If the courses you took have not led you into preparation for a specific field of work, don’t, on that account, pass up chances for interviews. Researching the organization will better help you present your broad qualities in light of the company’s needs. If the employer has a training program you will naturally want to express interest in it.
23. Show the interviewer that you are interested; realize the demands on their time and that you appreciate the opportunity they are giving you to present your case.
24. Show your interest by asking some questions about the company. Ask about opportunity, not security. Have in mind two or three good reasons why you’re interested in this particular employer. The chances are excellent that you will be asked for your reasons.
25. If you get the impression that the interview is not going well and that you have already been rejected, do not let your discouragement show. You have nothing to lose by continuing the appearance of confidence and you may gain much. Sometimes an interviewer who is genuinely interested in your possibilities may seem to discourage you to test your reaction.
26. What if they offer you the job on the spot? If you are absolutely sure it is the one you want, accept with a definite yes. If you have the slightest doubt, ask for time to think it over. Trying to set a date when you can provide an answer will reassure them that you are giving their offer serious consideration. You may also have the opportunity to arrange a trip to the plant or office. (If you are invited to make such a visit at an employer’s expense, your expense sheet should include only costs actually relating to your trip, such as transportation, meals, housing, and tips. Costs should be prorated among employers if you visit several on the same trip.) Above all, do not create the impression that you are playing one company against the other to drive up the bidding.
27. Do not make appointments in which you are really not interested, and avoid accepting more than one offer. You will find yourself in an extremely awkward position and you stand to lose the confidence of everyone involved. If you have accepted one job and a chance turns up suddenly to interview for a really irresistible position, turn to your career counselor for advice. Breaking job engagements is possible, but the way it is done is important.
28. Salary??? Where most college interviews are concerned, the company representative has arrived on campus with a certain number of jobs to be filled in definite salary brackets. The interviewer may choose not to tell you what he or she has to offer. They may ask you how much you want. The best answer in that case is to indicate that you are more interested in a job where you can prove yourself than you are in a specific salary. There is a tendency to overrate the importance of starting salary. It is the job and what goes into it that determines an employee’s salary. It is easier to raise a salary than it is to justify a salary that proves too high for the experience and ability demonstrated. If the interviewer is interested, they will generally suggest a figure. In most cases, reputable corporations will

offer the standard salary for the type of job in question. It is in your interest to have found out what the rate is. The Career Services Center can tell you what the normal range of starting rates is for a person with your background.

29. Do not be too discouraged if no definite offer is made or no specific salary is discussed. The recruiter will probably wish to communicate with the office first or interview more applicants before making any offers.
30. Most interviews last between 30 minutes to an hour. A glance at your watch will tell you if your time is almost up. Do not go on talking and talking. Be alert to signs from the interviewer that the session is up. If time is up and you still want the job, tell them you are interested and stop.
31. Summarize and have a positive close. Be certain to thank the recruiter for their time and their consideration of you. Resist the temptation to flatter them, even if they are the most fascinating person you have ever talked with. You will be misunderstood. Smile, and show as much confidence in leaving as you did in arriving. Say something like, "If you have any other questions or if there is anything you want me to do, I hope you will get in touch with me." Then say, "Thank you" and leave. By now you should have answered the two questions uppermost in the interviewer's mind:
 - a. Why are you interested in their company?
 - b. What can you offer?

After the Interview:

1. After the interview, follow-up on any further contact your interviewer suggested. Follow their instructions exactly. Sending a thank you is highly recommended.
2. If the interviewer seemed really interested in you or indicated that you would hear from them – and you do not hear from them - wait about a week after the date of contact indicated and then write a brief note to remind them of your talk. Express appreciation for the time they gave you and explain in as few words as possible your continuing interest in their company. You have little to lose at this point by refreshing their memory, and you might get a favorable response.
3. Keep in contact. If you do not get a flat rejection or the polite "no" expressed in the type of letter that says, "We will keep your letter in our files and let you know if anything..." and there is still some suggestion that you should keep in touch, by all means keep in touch. Unless you make a nuisance of yourself, you will be able to stay in the foreground if a vacancy appears.
4. Accept only one job offer. Contact the Career Services Center if problems arise in this area.
5. As other questions or problems arise, take them to your Career Services Center. Counselors work with all types of business, governmental, educational and other organizations, and they can be of great help to you. Be certain to notify them when you take a job or change your job.
6. Keep active. If you do not "connect" immediately, remember that interviewers, companies and jobs differ greatly. You will learn much from your first interview and you will almost certainly do better in succeeding ones. The important thing is to keep trying.

What the Interviewer Is Looking For:

PROFESSIONALISM:

Student teaching experience	Willingness to start at the bottom	On time to interview
Internship experience	Neat application form	Company or school knowledge
World work experience	Vocational and educational goals	Remembers to thank interviewer
Awareness of employer	Academic background	Responds directly to questions
Abilities, skills, interests	Career goals	Prompt and neat
Professional knowledge, insight, and perspective	Not salary-focused	Career purpose
Work experience	Knowledgeable about field	Educational achievements
Career planning	Interested in school organization	Grade point average

PERSONALITY AND PHYSICAL TRAITS:

Physical, mental, and social maturity	Self confidence	Values	Good listener
Loyalty	Poise	Enthusiasm	Fluency of expression
Integrity	Tact	Vitality	Happy people
Flexibility	Courteous	Decisive	Level of anxiety
Creativity	Motivation	Sense of humor	Professional attitude
Sincerity	Voice	Warmth	Grooming
Appreciation	Personal appearance	Positive attitude	Firm handshake
Articulation and command of English	Good eye contact	Relaxed	Smile

SOCIAL SKILLS:

Wide outside interests	Social adjustment	Leadership ability or potential
Hobbies	Ability to relate to others	Knowledge of current events

Questions Asked by the Interviewer

Most interviewers will follow a simple question and answer format. However, be ready for a few unexpected questions. Some interviewers have a favorite or two they like to ask, such as: “What can I do for you?”, “Why?” after any question, “Why are you interested in working for us?” or... “Tell me about yourself.”

When answering, be sincere, honest and concise. The following questions are frequently asked in interviewing situations:

1. What are your long and short range goals and objectives; when and why did you establish them and how are you preparing yourself to achieve them?
2. What specific goals, other than those related to your occupation, have you established for yourself for the next ten years?
3. What do you see yourself doing five or ten years from now? What are your future plans?
4. What do you **really** want to do in life?
5. What are your long range career objectives?
6. How do you plan to achieve your career goals?
7. What are the most important rewards you expect in your career?
8. What do you expect to be earning in five years?
9. Why did you choose the career for which you are preparing?
10. Which is more important to you, the money or the type of job?
11. What do you consider to be your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
12. How would you describe yourself?
13. How do you think a friend or professor who knows you well would describe you?
14. What motivates you to put forth your greatest effort?
15. How has your college experience prepared you for a career?
16. Why should I hire you?
17. What qualifications do you have that make you think that you will be successful in business or teaching?
18. How do you determine or evaluate success?
19. What do you think it takes to be successful in our organization?
20. In what ways do you think you can make a contribution to our organization?
21. What qualities should a successful manager possess?
22. Describe the relationship that should exist between a supervisor and those reporting to him or her?
23. What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction?
24. Describe your most rewarding college experience.
25. If you were hiring a graduate for this position, what qualities would you look for?
26. Why did you select your college or university?
27. What led you to choose your field of major study?
28. What college subjects did you like the best?
29. What college subjects did you like the least?
30. If you could do so, how would you plan your academic study differently?
31. What changes would you like to make in your college or university?
32. Do you have plans for continued study? An advanced degree?
33. Do you think that your grades are a good indication of your academic achievement?
34. What have you learned from participation in extracurricular activities?
35. In what kind of a work environment are you most comfortable?
36. How do you work under pressure?
37. In what part-time or summer jobs have you been most interested?
38. How would you describe the ideal job for you following graduation?
39. Why did you decide to seek a position with our organization?
40. What do you know about our organization?
41. What two or three things are most important to you in your job?
42. Are you seeking employment in an organization of a certain size?
43. What criteria are you using to evaluate the organization for which you hope to work?
44. Do you have a geographical preference?
45. Will you relocate? Does relocation bother you?
46. Are you willing to travel? Have you traveled?
47. Are you willing to spend at least six months as a trainee?
48. Why do you think you might like to live in the community in which our company is located?
49. What major problem have you encountered and how did you deal with it?
50. What have you learned from your mistakes?
51. What are your interests? Hobbies? What do you like to do in your leisure time?
52. What are your personal goals?
53. What experiences have you had? How is your previous experience applicable to the work we do here?
54. Why are you in this field?
55. What would you do if ...?
56. Why did you leave your former job?
57. Is there someone we can contact who is familiar with your activities?
58. Where do you see yourself in this company ten years from now?
59. What do you want to be remembered for?
60. Are you applying to other companies?
61. What kind of compensation are you looking for?
62. What positions of leadership have you held?
63. How did you finance your education?
64. What skills do you possess?

Questions You Ask the Interviewer

Be prepared to ask questions at your interview. This allows you to determine if you would be satisfied with this position. Asking questions emphasizes that the job interview is a two-way process set up to establish a mutually satisfying work relationship (for you and the employer). Do not ask basic questions about the employer (these should be known through your research), instead, inquire about something more specific. The following are some examples of questions you, the interviewee, can ask the interviewer:

1. Would you describe the duties of the job?
2. Could I see a job description?
3. What is a typical day like in this position?
4. What characteristics do you most like to find in people in this position?
5. Is there anything unusually demanding about the job I should know about?
6. Could you tell me about the primary people I would be dealing with?
7. What would be the working relationship with my superior?
8. What are the primary results you would like to see me produce?
9. Did the person who last held this job promote out of the position?
10. May I meet some of the staff I would be working with?
11. Can you tell me the prospects for advancement beyond this level? How frequently does this occur?
12. Could you tell me about your benefits program? (Vacations, insurance, retirement, profit-sharing, bonuses, hospitalization, etc.)
13. What type of training program does your organization have?