

You Got the Interview! Now What?

Overview

This packet will assist you in preparing for interviews by providing detailed information about the interviewing process. After reading and using the information in this packet, students have reported increased confidence, enhanced interviewing skills, and increased awareness of business and interviewing etiquette.

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Before You Apply You Should...

- Have done a self-assessment
- Have developed at least 1 resume and at least 1 cover letter
- Selected industries, positions, career paths and/or organizations you are interested in pursuing
- Researched the industry, organization, position for which you are interested

Before You Interview You Should...

- Have further researched the industry, organization, position for which you are interviewing
- Prepared and practiced answers to interview questions
- Engaged in a mock interview and received feedback from a career counselor

Doing Your “Homework”

Preparing for an interview is an important and often overlooked part of interviewing. By becoming self-aware and researching the organization, you will be able to make a good assessment of how well the opportunity you are interviewing for, or position you are considering applying to, matches what you are looking for at this step in your career.

Self-Assessment

Making the right plans for your future can be difficult. Starting with a self-assessment can assist you in making career decisions by defining your skills, interests, values, achievements, strengths, and weaknesses.

Employers today have many qualified candidates from which to choose. You will only be considered for a position if you can demonstrate that you know who you are and how your set of qualifications and personal qualities can benefit their company. Through the process of self-assessment you will be able to decide what contributions you can make to the marketplace. By becoming more self-aware, you will improve your confidence and your ability to directly answer questions about your qualifications and experience.

Review Your History

Read your resume. Be familiar with all of the duties, responsibilities, projects, and accomplishments from your work history and activities that are listed on your resume. Be prepared to clarify, explain, or provide examples of anything on your resume and how it ties in with the qualifications for this position.

Research the Organization

Many candidates do not take researching the organization seriously until after they have interviewed and they know the organization may be considering them for the position. By researching the organization before the interview, you can get an edge over many of the candidates and increase the likeliness of being considered for the position. There are several advantages to this approach:

- You can determine whether this organization matches your values and needs
- You may get more excited about the organization and position
- You will be better prepared to ask intelligent questions during the interview

Ways to do research on the organization:

- Look on their website
- Conduct an internet search.
- LinkedIn and other social media platforms can be great resources.
- Research print information such as trade magazines, publications and national rankings
- Talk with people in the organization
- Talk with people in the field who have knowledge of the organization

Organization Information to Obtain Before an Interview:

- Core values (mission) of the organization
- Primary customers/clients
- If for profit and public, annual revenue of the organization and the overall worth
- The history, current status, and future outlook of the organization
- Organizational structure
- Employees: total number overall and at the location you are interviewing
- Organizations top executives (President, Director, CEO, CIO, Owner, etc.)
- Organization’s main products and/or services
- Training programs
- Other job titles you are qualified for (possible other opportunities now or in the future)
- Policies and Procedures (including dress code, work hours, flexibility in work hours, etc)
- Work environment (formal, informal ...)
- Benefits (although you should not bring this up in a first interview)

On the Organization Website, look for:

- Mission Statement
- Annual Report
- Letter to Customers/Clients
- Letter from Director or CEO
- Recognitions or Awards
- Policies and Procedures or Employee Handbook
- Benefits Package Information

In an Internet Search or Print Material:

- Recent Press Releases
- Articles about the Organization (The Non-Profit Times, Wall Street Journal, Business Week, Forbes, etc.)
- Annual Reports and 10K Reports
- Professional Organizations and Associations
- Business Trade Journals, Non-Profit Publications and Periodicals
- Standard & Poor's business magazines

Talking with Organization Employees or People Familiar with the Organization:

- Before speaking with anyone, do your research
- Ask them any questions you could not find through your search
- Other things about the organization that may not be available in print (such as morale, work environment, flexibility in hours, supervisors, performance evaluations, etc.)
- Ask why they chose to work for the organization and what they like/dislike

Check Out the Competition

- Collect similar information to the organization you are researching
- Note differences in work environment, policies (work hours, dress code, etc.), organization size, training programs, room for growth (other job opportunities within the organization), benefits, organizational structure

Research the Industry

Questions to Ask Yourself:

- Do I know job titles in the industry for which I am qualified?
 - *Where to Look:* Dictionary of Occupational Titles (www.occupationalinfo.org/); What Can I do With A Major In (<http://www.albright.edu/academics/wcidwam>); ONet (<http://www.onetonline.org>)
- Do I know the outlook for jobs in my industry?
 - *Where to Look:* Occupational Outlook Handbook (www.bls.gov/oco/)
- Do I know in what geographic areas there are opportunities for people in this field?
 - *Where to Look:* Use databases such as www.Hoovers.com. (Type in ONLY the industry code or name. Then, sort the results descending by sales or employees. This will allow you to see, at a glance, who the 20 largest companies in that sector are and where they are located.)
- Do I know how to do a search in a different geographic area?
 - *Where to Look:* Use databases such as Hoovers or Dun and Bradstreet (D&B)
- Do I know the salary range for the positions I am applying for (in each geographic area I'm considering?)
 - *Where to Look:* Online resources such as www.salary.com and NACE Salary Calculator
- Do I know the names of the organizations with major influence in the field?
 - *Where to Look:* Trade Journals, Non-Profit Publications, databases
- Are there any industry trends I should be aware of?
 - *Where to Look:* Trade Journals, Non-Profit Publications, talking with people in the industry

Interviewing Skills

The goal of the initial interview is to continue the interview process and eventually receive an offer. Interviewing can be tough, even for seasoned veterans. Your preparation will allow you to enter the interview relaxed and confident that you know how you can fulfill the needs of the company and that they have an opportunity that can enhance your career.

During the interview you will be asked some difficult questions. These questions are designed to see how you will react under pressure and unfamiliar territory. However, by being familiar with the types of questions you may be asked and identifying examples of situations from your experiences where you have demonstrated behaviors or skills, you will be better prepared. While we describe these interviews separately, your interview may be a combination of these interview types.

Types of Interviews

Traditional Interview

Although behavioral interviewing (see section below) is being used more frequently, a traditional interview is still very common. The length is usually from ½ hour to 1½ hours. You are usually asked many of the questions from the *Common Interview Questions* section and possibly a few behavioral questions related to the job. After this interview, if you are being considered, you would be invited back for 1-2 more interviews.

Panel Interview

In a panel interview, you will be in the room with several people, usually three to five, but it could be as many as ten. Sometimes each person will ask you a series of questions, and other times a few people will ask questions while the rest listen. The purpose of having many people sit in on the interview is sometimes so several staff members can meet the candidates and also to keep the number of interviews a candidate has limited to one or two. The questions could be traditional, behavioral or a combination.

Serial Interview

This type of interview consists of a series of interviews on the same day. For example, if you are scheduled for an interview from 1-3:30, you may have 5 half-hour interviews with individual people. Each interviewer will most likely ask you different questions. Question types may vary.

If your interview is during a mealtime, like 10-2, most likely, someone will take you to lunch. Do not let down your guard; this is still part of the interview. A “lunch interview” (see section below) is more common for upper-level positions or positions in which you would have frequent “lunch meetings” with clients/colleagues.

Behavioral Interview

Behavioral interviews are designed to provide the interviewer with information about how you think and behave in situations. They are interested in your method of thinking and going about doing a task as well as how you respond in difficult situations. An effective way to answer behavioral questions is to provide the interviewer with 4 pieces of information: Situation, Task, Action, Results (STAR).

Advantages:

- The point of the question is clear
- Researching the job and the company can help
- Your recent behavior is the focus

Disadvantages:

- Missing or inappropriate behaviors are more apparent
- Work History and accomplishments may be easier for you to describe than behaviors
- Traditional interviews are more spontaneous; in behavioral interviews, you have less influence on the agenda

Examples of Behavioral questions are:

- Give me an example of how you exercised leadership in a recent situation.
- Describe a time when you managed a project.
- Think about a recent project you were assigned. How did you manage your time and organize the project?
- Tell me about how you use your communication skills, written and oral.
- What steps would you take in organizing a ____ event?
- What is the worst situation you have faced in a job? How did you deal with it? What happened?
- What would you do if you had a conflict with a co-worker?
- What was the most difficult ethical decision you have had to make? What was the result?
- Tell me about a time when you were held accountable for a problem that you hadn't caused.
- Tell me about a time when you were under a great deal of pressure. What was the source of the pressure and what did you do?
- Think about changes you have seen and tell me how you handle change.
- Tell me about a decision you have made recently and how you reached it.
- Tell me about a time you were criticized, what the issue was, who criticized you, and how you handled it.
- Please tell me about a recent team you worked on and what was the outcome?
- How do you build a team under you?
- Tell me about how you persuade people to accept your point-of-view.
- Give me an example of a time when you did not have enough information to do your job. Describe the steps you took.
- Give me a specific example of a time when you sold someone on an idea or concept.
- Tell me about a time when you made a bad decision.

Be prepared to **delve deeper** into the situation you use as an example. Sometimes interviewers will pick apart the story to try to isolate specific skills they are seeking.

Questions that dig deeper into the situation may include:

- What were you thinking at that point?
- Tell me more about your meeting with that person.
- Walk me through the steps you took in making your decision.
- What are the steps involved in...?

Be prepared to provide examples of when your results didn't turn out as planned. What did you do then? What did you learn?

STAR Method of Answering Behavioral Questions

Before the interview, **identify two or three of your top qualifying skills**. Develop examples of these qualities/skills using STAR answers. Practice saying your answers until you are confident and satisfied that you sound neither like you are "reading" nor like you are conceited.

Situation: Give an example of a situation you were involved in that had a positive outcome

Task: Describe the tasks involved in that situation (What needed to be done)

Action: Talk about the various actions involved in the situation's task

Results: What results directly followed because of your actions

Example of a STAR Answer

(Situation) During my internship last summer, I was responsible for managing various events.

(Task) I noticed that attendance at these events had dropped by over 30% over the past 3 years and wanted to do something to improve these numbers.

(Action) I designed a new promotional packet to go out to the local community businesses. I also included a rating sheet to collect feedback on our events and organized internal round table discussions to raise awareness of the issue with our employees.

(Result) We utilized some of the wonderful ideas we received from the community, made our internal systems more efficient and visible and raised attendance by 18% the first year.

Whenever possible **quantify** your results. Why?

- Numbers illustrate your level of authority and responsibility.

Ex: As a shift supervisor I was responsible for training all new employees. I trained about 12 new employees there. I was also the team leader for a group of 5 employees I assigned tasks to and evaluated their performance.

- Numbers illustrate the level of your success of the effectiveness of your actions.

Ex: The marketing campaign resulted in a 15% increase in sales of ____.

Ex: The four follow-up phone calls resulted in a 94% survey completion rate.

- Numbers illustrate the amount of experience you have.

Ex: I reconciled the sales reports of \$5000-\$20000 on a daily basis for a year.

Case Interview

This is really a type of question. Your whole interview could be made up of case interview questions, or you could be asked 1-2 case questions. You will be given a problem or scenario related to the industry and asked to solve it or describe the process in detail. The interviewer is not necessarily looking for the “right” answer, but wants to evaluate your problem solving skills. If you do not have adequate information to determine a solution, you may need to ask the interviewers questions. Case interviews are more commonly used by investment banks, consulting firms, technical positions, and for upper-level management positions. You may be asked to provide a detailed financial analysis, to plan an event or to develop a marketing campaign.

Examples of Case Interview Questions

- A chain of grocery stores currently receives its stock on a decentralized basis. Each store deals independently with its suppliers. The president of the chain is wondering whether the company can benefit from a centralized warehouse. What are the key considerations in making this decision?
- A magazine publisher is trying to decide how many magazines she should deliver to each individual distribution outlet in order to maximize profits. She has extensive historical sales volume data for each of the outlets. How should she determine delivery quantities?
- A personal finance and loan company that currently targets low-middle class people is expanding to the Philadelphia market. They need to know how many financial centers the area can support and where they should be located. What kind of information would you need in order to determine the number of centers?

Skype and Web Interviews

With the advent of technology, the internet has made it possible to interview across the country without picking up the phone. Many employers are now using Skype and other video websites to do their interviews. For these interviews, one of the most important things you can do is prepare! Do a run-through with a friend a day or two before to check lighting and make sure you are speaking loud enough and enunciating. Make sure you look at the camera, not the screen, and try to get the screen level with you so the interviewer can see you face and shoulders. Use good posture and wear a full suit, even if the interviewer will never see it all. Make sure you have a strong internet connection, which means you may need to use the fastest connection speed available and plug right in instead of relying on wireless. Have a professional username, picture, and a non-cluttered, professional background. Remember to turn off TVs, phones, and computer programs that may make noise. When the interview is over, send a handwritten thank you as well as a follow up thank you email or phone call.

Group Interviews

Group interviews may sound intimidating, but don't let them get to you. Although not as common anymore, they are still sometimes used for retail and other entry-level positions. This allows the interviews to not only interview more people more efficiently, but also see how you interact with others. Prepare as you would for other interviews by arriving early, dressing in your suit, and bringing copies of your resume. Practice your handshake and introductory speech, which should highlight your accomplishments but not seem like you're bragging. Before the interview, take time to mingle with the other candidates. This will show you're friendly and outgoing and will help you relax. Finally, try to be the first to answer questions, but never interrupt another candidate. Make sure you're also one of the first ones to ask questions at the end, too.

Phone Interview Preparation

To save the company time and money, many interviewers will schedule phone interviews as an initial screening of potential candidates. This may be an interview with a human resources representative or a hiring manager. Since this is typically your first interaction with the company, it is also their first impression of you.

Here are some tips to help you make the best impact!

- Set up a specific time for the call so you will be fully prepared.
- Treat the phone interview just as you would a face-to-face interview. Just because it is over the phone does not mean that you should take it less seriously!
- Make sure the phone you are using works well and you have reception in the interview location.
- If you have call-waiting, turn it off if possible. At least, DO NOT answer it during an interview.
- If you have a bad connection or have difficulty hearing the interviewer, offer to call them back.
- Turn off radio and television to limit distractions. Plan to sit in a quiet room where you won't get interrupted.
- Put a 'Do Not Disturb' sign on your door.
- Get yourself water and use the facilities beforehand.
- Have your resume, company research, notes, and questions to ask spread out for the interview. Make sure your information is well-organized and legible. You certainly don't want to noisily go rummaging through papers on the desk while you say, 'ummmm' because you are trying to find your list of questions.
- Stand up during the interview. You will sound more expressive and alert. (Only do this if you are comfortable.)
- Smile. Your enthusiasm and happiness will show through in your voice.
- Establishing rapport is an important aspect of interviewing. On the phone, one way to establish rapport is to "match" the interviewer's tone of voice and rate of speech. This will make you seem "like" him or her.

This is a great opportunity to sell yourself and to find out more about the job. Before you get off the phone, ask about a time to meet face-to-face. Do not be afraid to ask! The worst thing that can happen is they tell you 'no' or say they will get back to you. Have your calendar ready so you can schedule an interview easily.

Other Phone Advice

Employers will be calling you to set up interviews. Make sure your presentation is professional!

- If you have voice mail on your home and cell phone, make sure it is professional.
- If you live with family or friends, let them know to ask for the spelling of names, get a phone number and brief message. Keep a notepad and pen by the phone for messages for convenience.

Common Interview Questions & Sample Answers

Review the following questions. The keys to answering effectively are to be direct, truthful, positive and succinct! Think about these questions, prepare answers beforehand and practice! To practice in advance, you can utilize InterviewStream or access questions through <http://www.readyprepinterview.com/>

About Your Education and Background

- Why did you choose this career?
- When did you decide on this career?
- Why did you choose to attend your college?
- What changes would you make at your college?
- How has your education prepared you for your career?
- What were your favorite classes? Why?
- Who were your favorite professors? Why?
- Tell me what you learned in ___ class.
- Do you have any plans for further education?
- Why is your GPA not higher?

Your Goals & Expectations

- What are your short and long-range goals and how do you plan to achieve them?
- What do you see yourself doing five years from now?
- Where do you want to be in ten years?
- What new goals or objectives have you established recently? Why?
- What goals do you have in your career?
- What are the most important rewards you expect in your career?
- Why did you apply for this position?
- What kind of salary are you looking for?
- In what kind of work environment are you most comfortable (structured, unstructured, etc.)?
- How would you describe your ideal job?
- What do you look for in a job?
- What is the difference between a good position and an excellent one?
- What criteria are you using to evaluate the company for which you hope to work?
- Describe the kind of relationship that should exist between a supervisor and subordinates.

Your Skills, Qualifications, Experience & Competence

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why should we hire you?
- What can you do for us that someone else cannot do?
- What makes you a unique candidate?
- Do you work well under pressure, deadlines, etc.? Give me an example.
- How are you best managed?
- What are your greatest strengths? Weaknesses?
- Based on the job description, what do you think will be the most challenging aspect of the position for you?
- What qualifications do you have that make you think you will be successful in this business?
- How would you describe the essence of success?
- How would you describe yourself (personality, work ethic, etc)?
- What have you learned from your mistakes?
- What two or three professional accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction? Why?
- Describe a situation in which you were successful.
- Are you a goal-oriented person?
- Tell me about some of your recent goals and what you did to achieve them.
- If I were to ask one of your professors to describe you, what would he or she say?
- Do you prefer working with others or by yourself?

Your Contribution to Them

- What are your five biggest accomplishments in your present or last job?
- In what ways do you think you can make a contribution to our firm?
- How long would it take you to make a contribution to our firm?
- How long would you stay with us?
- How do you evaluate success?
- How successful have you been?
- Describe a situation in which you were successful.
- What do you think it takes to be successful in this career?
- What accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction in your life?
- Are you a team player?
- Do you enjoy doing independent research?

Work Ethic, Professionalism, Maturity

- What qualities have you liked or disliked in your boss?
- Why have you not obtained a job so far?
- What features of your previous jobs have you disliked?
- Do you handle conflict well?
- Have you ever had a conflict with a boss or professor? How did you resolve it?
- What major problem have you had to deal with recently?
- Do you handle pressure well?
- What qualities do you feel a successful manager should have?
- What is your philosophy of management?

What You Know About the Company

- Why do you want to work in the _____ industry?
- What do you know about our company?
- Why are you interested in our company?
- Do you have any location preferences?
- How familiar are you with the community that we're located in?

Other Less Common Questions

Math Questions

- How many jelly beans can fit in this jar?
- Purpose: Not necessarily looking for the right answer, but to get a sample of your analytical and problem solving skills.

“Silly” Questions

- If you could be any kind of animal/car, what would you be and why?
- Purpose: Most times this type of question is to see how well you think on your feet.

Sample Answers to Interview Questions

There is no one “right” answer to a question. Interviewers ask different questions and each looks for different responses. Please keep in mind that these are *Examples* intended to give you ideas, not quotes you should memorize. Each answer you give should be true for *you*.

How long would it take you to make a contribution to our firm?

“I would want to be sure that I understood the operating environment and the personnel, but I feel that I have the skills and experience to make a contribution in a very short time. What do you feel will be the main focus of the position for the first six months?”

What are your salary requirements?

- (1) “I am very interested in the opportunity, and I am confident I will make a meaningful contribution. I would be open to a competitive offer,” **OR** “I am very interested in this position, and I am ready to consider your best offer,” **OR** “I am very interested in this position. What are you offering for a person with my qualifications?” The purpose of this response is to avoid over or under pricing yourself.
- (2) “The average salary for an entry level person in this position in our region is in the mid 40’s. I have one and a half years of professional work experience and have had experience with many of the aspects of this position in my last internship. I am looking for something in the high 40’s to low 50’s. I believe that my knowledge and skills will enable me to make a contribution to your company very soon. What is the salary range for this position?”
- (3) “I know that the average salary for an entry level person in this area is in the low 40’s. I believe that my skills and experience are an excellent match for this position. I am looking for something in the low to mid 40’s.”

Have you ever...?

- (1) “I am confident that it would not be a problem, although I have limited/no experience with [whatever]. I would be happy to [look over the material; familiarize myself with the issue/program, etc.] and develop [a response; a report; an analysis; a presentation; a memo; a demonstration, etc.] and [provide it to you; present it to you; bring it to my next interview, etc.].
- (2) If you have no experience in an area, you can relate it back to something you learned in class or elsewhere. If don’t know anything, you can still answer the question. In both situations, provide an example of how you would complete the task and/or your plan to learn more.

How do you handle pressure/stress?

- (1) I actually work better under pressure and I enjoy working in a challenging environment.
- (2) I am a very organized person. I also prioritize my projects so that I am always aware of what needs to be done and when. Keeping my projects organized and prioritizing my responsibilities helps me manage pressure at work.

How will you achieve your goals?

- (1) I plan on taking master’s level (or additional business) courses to continue to learn. I am also a member of a few professional associations that sponsor conferences that I would like to attend.
- (2) I noticed that professional development training is offered through (this company). I would certainly be interested in taking some of those classes that would be relevant to this position.
- (3) I will continue my growth as a professional through attending conferences and seminars and continuing my education.

If You Have to Answer “No” to a Question

- You do not want to leave the interviewer with a negative impression. Make sure you add a positive spin to the answer. For example, “No, I haven’t/didn’t _____. However, I am sure I can (do it, learn, etc).”

For more sample answers, check out: www.collegegrad.com/jobsearch/16-14.shtml

What If They Ask an Illegal Question?

Illegal questions are those that ask for personal information that have nothing to do with the job or your ability to perform that job. These questions are not necessarily intentional. Often times an interviewer may not know any better because s/he is an untrained interviewer or is trying to establish some rapport or calm your nerves in an inappropriate way. If you think a question is irrelevant or illegal, how you answer is up to you.

Some options are:

- (1) Answer, “Whether or not I ... it will not affect my ability to do this job. I am confident that I will be

successful in this position.”

(2) Ask the interviewer, “I’m sorry, how is this relevant to this position?”

(3) Answer the question briefly. Then make a “selling” point about yourself to bring the topic back to the interview.

Some illegal questions are:

- Any questions about your family, origin, nationality, ancestry
 - Are you married?
 - How long have you been in this country? (They can ask if you are eligible to work in the country.)
 - What is your maiden name?
 - Marino, is that Italian?
- Questions about children, birth control, pregnancy
 - Are you pregnant?
 - Do you plan on having children?
 - Do you need childcare?
- Questions about race, religion, sexual orientation, disability, age
 - Are you considered to be part of a minority group?
 - Do you observe any religious holidays?
 - Do you have any health conditions?
 - Do you have (name any disability or health condition)?
 - How old are you? (They can ask, “Are you over 18?”, but cannot ask for your specific age.)

Just because an illegal question has been asked, does not mean there is a crime. A court would have to determine the intent and whether the information was used in a discriminatory way.

Questions Candidates Can Ask

Before the interview concludes, the interviewer will almost always ask if you have any questions. ALWAYS come to an interview with 5-7 questions to ask. Some questions you may want to ask are listed below.

When they ask if you have any questions, you can also use this time to mention a key selling point that maybe you didn’t get an opportunity to make during the interview. You might say something like, “I do have a few questions. I also wanted to tell you about/make you aware of/ point out ____.” Then explain why this is important (how it would benefit the company, how it will help with this position, etc.).

Questions About the Organization and Why You Should Choose Them

- Where do you see your organization going in the next several years?
- In the recent history of the organization, what has been the biggest advance? The biggest setback?
- Why would a well-qualified person choose this position over similar ones in other organizations? What is unique and different about this position?
- When there are openings in supervisory or management positions, are they more likely to be filled with promotions internally or with external candidates?
- How would you describe your organization’s culture?
- Why did you decide to join this organization?
- What do you consider your organization’s strengths and weaknesses?

Questions About the Candidate They Are Seeking

- Can you tell me more about the position and the type of person you are seeking?
- What are the most important skills and attributes you are looking for in filling this position?

- What type of person is successful in this position/organization and why?
- What are the characteristics of your top people?
- What are some of the most common characteristics of employees that excel in this environment?

Questions About the Position

- What needs to be done in the first 6 months? The first year?
- Tell me about a typical day.

Questions About the Manager/Supervisor

- To whom does the position report?
- Would you please comment on your style of management and reporting structure?
- Why is this position available? (If as a result of a termination, ask why a person was terminated.)
- Tell me about your training program.

Before You Leave

- I am very interested in this position. What is the next step in the interview process?

Hiring Manager Interview

- What would be a typical working day for this position?
- What is the organization structure of your department?
- What is your vision for your department over the next two to three years?
- What major challenges are you currently facing as a manager?
- What makes your company better than your competitors?
- What would you consider to be exceptional performance from someone in this position in the first 90 days?
- What will be the measurements of my success in this position?
- What is your management style?
- How long have you been with the organization?
- What has been your career path within the organization?
- What are the opportunities for growth and advancement for this position?

Questions Not to Ask

- Tell me about the history/growth of the organization. (If the organization has a website, check there for the history. You don't want to ask a question that you would have found the answer with some research.)
- Who are your major competitors, and how do they stack up against you in terms of product, market share, methods of marketing, and strengths and weaknesses?
- Any questions about salary and benefits. Does the organization offer tuition benefits for advanced education or professional development like seminars and training sessions? (These are good questions, but save them until you have the offer.)

10 Strategies for Successful Interviewing

Your interview will determine whether you will be considered for a position. From the moment you walk in, your interview has begun. People make all kinds of observations and judgments including the timeliness of your arrival, your appearance, your attitude and personality, and your overall communication style and presentation. Confidence and professionalism silently speak volumes.

1. Arrive early and be friendly.

- First impressions count. Greet the employer(s) with a firm handshake, eye contact, and a smile. Say their name as you meet them. This will help you remember their names. You will want to use their names again when you shake hands and thank them at the end of the interview.

2. Be enthusiastic and professional.

- Project an enthusiastic, professional image right from the start. Your professional image includes your attire, self-confidence, maturity, a sense of humor, warmth, and quality of your answers. Be happy you are there – act like you want the job.

3. Complete the application neatly, correctly and honestly.

- Read the directions before writing. Things crossed out or incorrectly filled in may suggest you do not pay attention to detail or have problems following directions.
- Don't write "see resume". Employers may look at this as your first assignment; an example of how you would perform on the job.
- Salary: consider writing “negotiable.”

4. Ask the employer to describe the job early in the interview.

- By asking early, you will find out exactly what they are looking for and can gear your answers to reflect their expectations.
- Listen carefully and take mental notes of each responsibility/quality so you know what information you need to give them.
- Throughout the interview, tell them exactly how your experience, training, and skills relate to the position and will help you do the job. Use examples of special achievements that will help the employer picture you successfully handling the job.

5. Show your personality and communicate well.

- A major factor in many hiring decisions is the personality and communication skills of the candidate. The employer is looking for someone who will be a good “fit” in their company. You begin to develop rapport in the beginning of the interview with the handshake, smile, and enthusiasm about the position.
- To continue this rapport and make a great impression on the employer, speak slowly and clearly, and loudly enough so that everyone in the room can hear you. ENUNCIATE.
- Your non-verbal behavior is important, too. Sit up straight in your chair, lean forward slightly and maintain eye contact. (Refer to the next section on **Non-Verbal Behavior** for more details.)

6. Answer questions by speaking in terms of the position.

- Do not answer questions with only a “yes” or “no”, but do not ramble. Explain your answers and provide examples. Talk about your accomplishments and what you can do for the company, not what they can do for you. This is why practicing answers to questions is so important.
- Some employers ask very broad questions like "tell me about yourself." Instead of talking about your childhood, family or personal ambitions, mention specific accomplishments that show your abilities and determination to succeed in this job.
- Be confident and positive when answering questions. Do not make derogatory remarks about past or present employers, co-workers, or jobs. Talk about your professional growth and learning experiences.
- Try not to hurry your responses. It is okay to pause for a few seconds before you speak. This helps you to gather your thoughts, which also leads to less use of those filler words such as “um, like, well, etc.”

7. Discuss salary only after the employer mentions a figure.

- Avoid asking questions about salary, benefits, commission, vacation, or bonuses. However, know how much you are worth before the interview in case *they* ask *you*. Try checking out your geographic area on www.salary.com or NACE Salary Calculator.

8. Ask meaningful questions about the position.

- Employers evaluate applicants by the questions they ask. The questions you ask may indicate how interested or serious you are about the position, how much research you have done before the interview, and whether or not you pay attention to details. Employers like specific questions about the position and its responsibilities and the organization's plans and goals.

9. If you want the job, ask for it.

- Many employers feel that a desire for the position is just as important as your ability to do the job. A very effective interviewing technique is simply to ask for the job. Ask something like, “When can I start?” **OR** “I am very interested in your organization and this position. I am confident I can do an excellent job for you. What is the next step in your hiring process?”

10. Say Thank You.

- Say thank you at the end of the interview, shaking hands with the interviewers again. “I really appreciate your time. Thank you for taking the time to interview me. I look forward to working here,” will suffice.
- Write a Thank you note!!! Although this is recommended to everyone, only a very small percentage of candidates write thank you notes. This is another way to gain an edge on the competition. In the note, you have the opportunity to remind them who you are, mention the key points of the interview and why you would be an asset to the company, clarifying anything from the interview that may not have gone the way you wanted, and expressing your interest in the position. (Please see the **Thank You** section in this packet.)

Top 5 Non-Verbal Interviewing Behaviors

Everyone uses **Body Language** during the interview, but very few think about it in advance and modify so they have the most positive effect on the interviewers. Body language is our nonverbal behavior that sends subtle messages to other people.

Think about a person you meet who looks over your shoulder while you are talking to them, or the person who never smiles, or the person who says “like”, “um” or “ya know?” frequently, or the person who has an inappropriate, nervous giggle when they are anxious. What is your impression of these people? Non-verbal behavior is important because you will make an impression on the interviewer. With practice and preparation, you can control what kind of an impression you make.

Following are the top 5 most important non-verbal behaviors:

1. Eye Contact.

- Of utmost importance. If you fail to maintain eye contact while speaking, it can be interpreted as a lack of confidence in what you are saying and may even be interpreted that you are lying. If you look away while someone else is talking, it sends a message that you are not listening or that you have a lack of interest and a short attention span.
- Do not just assume you have good eye contact. You can ask other people if you maintain eye contact while speaking and listening. Ask them to pay attention to your eye contact for a while and tell you what they observed. It is important to assess eye contact while you are both speaking and listening because some people

have excellent eye contact in one situation and not the other.

- Watch yourself on video. Participate in a taped mock interview and watch it. This is helpful for many other things besides seeing whether you have good eye contact.
- Make eye contact with everyone, not just the person asking the question.

2. Facial Expressions.

- Smile and show enthusiasm. Many candidates go into an interview with no expression on their face. This is largely due to nerves. It is, however, often interpreted that you are bored, depressed, moody, or uninterested in the position.
- If you stand in front of a mirror with no expression on your face, what do you see? Myself? The corners of my mouth seem to point down a little. Maybe I am unhappy, tired, or grumpy... Not the best impression to make on a potential employer. Look at yourself in the mirror and change your expression to one that looks relaxed and add a smile (not the smirk or grin that makes you look like you are enjoying your own private joke and not the big toothy smile that makes you look like maybe you had too much caffeine this morning.) You do not have to make your face ache by keeping the smile in place throughout the interview, but remember to use once in a while.

3. Posture.

- Posture sends out a signal of your confidence and your professionalism. Stand, walk, and sit tall. No slouching! When seated, sit at the front edge of the chair. If you lean forward slightly, it will give the impression that you are interested in the conversation and position.
- Plant your feet firmly on the floor, a few inches apart, rather than with your legs or ankles crossed or your legs spread apart. None of these is attractive when you are sitting on the edge of your seat, and all of them tend to give way to slouching.

4. Awareness of Personal Space.

- Recognize the boundaries of your personal space and that of others. If you are typical of most Americans, it ranges between 30 and 36 inches. Be aware that some people's personal space may be less than yours, as is often the case in different cultures. Do not back away from a person who stands closer than your comfort level. This appears that you are shrinking from them or that you may be intimidated. Stand your ground.

5. Gestures.

- If you are a person who talks a lot with your hands, that's okay, but you may need to try to limit during an interview. When you do use gestures, make sure they are natural and meaningful. The last thing you want is to be looking like a bird flapping your wings during an interview.

Following are some typical interpretations of body language cues:

Openness and Warmth

- Open-lipped smiling, open hands, tall, but not stiff posture.

Confidence

- Leaning forward in chair, chin up.

Nervousness or Boredom

- Whistling, tongue clicking, fidgeting, swaying side to side, pacing, jiggling pocket contents, running tongue along front of teeth or lips, clearing throat frequently, hands touching the face, playing with hair or running fingers through hair, pinching skin or pulling on ear, wringing hands, clenching fists, twiddling thumbs, biting on pens, biting fingernails or picking at fingers, clicking pens or flicking pen cap on and off.

Untrustworthy, Defensive or Uptight

- Lack of eye contact or looking down when speaking, chin down, frowning, squinting eyes, tight-lipped grin, arms crossed in front of chest, clenched hands, pointing at interviewers with fingers, chopping one hand into the open palm of the other to make a point, rubbing back of neck, clasping hands behind head while leaning back in the chair.

Do you have a habit of doing any of the above negatives?

How to improve your non-verbal behavior.

- Engage in mock interviews, receive feedback, watch a video of yourself, and PRACTICE! Practicing is essential to eliminate these behaviors so that you are not constantly thinking about them during the interview (which will mean that you are not listening and thinking about the interview itself). Not only will eliminating them help you get the job, but it will help you in your interactions with people in general.

How you say it is as important as what you say.

- Eliminate phrases like “To be honest with you,” “Just between you and me,” “Well, I’ll be completely honest about this,” or other such qualifiers. What? Do you normally *lie*?
- Eliminate “like”, “um”, “ya know”, “know what I mean?”

What Are They Looking For?

The prospective employer will make his hiring decision based on these factors:

1. Your Qualifications, Experience, and Education
 - Internships
 - Professional or Related Work Experience
 - Your Education
 - Any class projects from classes that highlight desired skills
2. Your Skills Sets, including:
 - Interpersonal Skills
 - Verbal and Written Communication Skills
 - Teamwork Skills
 - Leadership Skills
 - Analytical and Problem Solving Skills
 - Technical and/or Computer Skills
 - Ability to Multi-task
3. Personal Qualities, including:
 - Positive attitude toward work
 - Confidence
 - Professionalism
 - Flexibility
 - Self-Motivation
 - Overall Personality

Pre-Interview Preparation Checklist

Before the Interview

- Research the organization and the industry.
- Take a trial run to the organization so you make sure you know how to get there and where to park.

- Practice shaking hands – not too hard, not limp. If you get nervous sweaty palms, try rubbing some talcum, baby powder or antiperspirant on your hands before an interview.
- Be sure you know how to pronounce the names of the interviewer(s).
- Make a list of all of the requirements the employer is looking for. For each requirement, think about your skills and qualities. Write down all of those qualities that fit each requirement.
- For each requirement, use one or two of your skills and qualities that match and develop an example of how you have used those qualities and skills.
- Read over the behavioral questions and common interview questions. Prepare 3-5 STAR answers.
- Prepare your 30-second commercial and answers to common questions.
- Prepare a list of questions to ask the interviewers. Do not make this an exhaustive list. Choose 5-7 questions. Type your questions and leave space for you to write each answer (either brief answers during the interview or as soon as you leave).
- Print out or write down directions and the name and phone number of your contact.
- Be *prepared* to talk about money, but don't YOU bring it up!
- Get permission from your references to use their names. Let them know that you are going for an interview and that they may get a call. Send them a new copy of your resume.
- Get confident! The night before, spend time with 1-3 people. Tell them why you are the best for the job.
- Get a good night's sleep the night before.

The Day of the Interview

- Brush your teeth and tongue. Use mouthwash. Do this after coffee.
- Check your clothing, teeth, hair in the mirror before you leave the house.

Bring:

- A comb.
- Women, extra pantyhose in case of a run.
- Extra copies of your resume (on good resume paper).
- 2 copies of your reference sheet.
- Your questions to ask.
- Information about the company that you may want to read.
- A padfolio and portfolio (if you have one).
- Directions and name and phone number of contact (in case you are in traffic or get lost).
- Change/cash in case of meter/parking garage.
- Do you need an umbrella?
- Give yourself plenty of time to get there.
- Arrive 15 minutes early.
- Empty pockets of change and bulky wallets.

When You Arrive at the Company

- Take time to use the facilities. Check your suit, tie (for coffee or food), teeth (for gunk or lipstick), and hair.
- Do you need a breath mint?
- Turn cell phone off.
- Check in with receptionist.
- Take off your coat.
- Read the company information or your prepared answers as you wait.
- Observe the environment/culture of the company.
- Take any literature that is available.
- If you are nervous, try this technique: Quietly take a deep breath, hold it for about five seconds, and quietly and slowly exhale. Repeat 5 times. Try silently telling yourself, "I am the best candidate for this position."

Dress for Success

Men

Appearance & Accessories

<i>Scent</i>	Use antiperspirant, no cologne or very little, consider scent of hair products
<i>Jewelry</i>	Conservative in style – not flashy, limit to one ring per hand, and dress watch
<i>Hair</i>	Good haircut, well-groomed, eliminate funky colors
<i>Facial Hair</i>	None preferably
<i>Nails</i>	Clean, no hangnails
<i>Briefcase</i>	Not necessary, but consider a padfolio and portfolio

Clothing

<i>Suit</i>	Well-fitted two-piece matching suit, conservative color
<i>Shirt</i>	Collared long-sleeved dress shirt, conservative color (white, light color)
<i>Tie</i>	Silk or silk-like, with understated pattern
<i>Belt</i>	Matching either your suit or your shoes
<i>Socks</i>	Dark, mid-calf
<i>Shoes</i>	Polished dress shoes, black or brown, no sandals, sneakers, hiking boots

Women

Appearance & Accessories

<i>Scent</i>	Use antiperspirant, no perfume or very little, consider scent of hair products
<i>Jewelry</i>	Conservative in style – nothing flashy, limit to one ring per hand, one necklace, one small pair of earrings, dress watch or one bracelet
<i>Hair</i>	Well-groomed, eliminate funky colors, not in your face, minimal hair products
<i>Nails</i>	Clean, no hangnails, no polish or unchipped clear or pale pink polish
<i>Make-up</i>	Minimal, natural looking (avoid red or super-glossy lipstick and thick, dark eyeliner and shadow)
<i>Scarf</i>	Not necessary, but can add a polished look, no sequins
<i>Purse</i>	If you bring one, it should be small, match your suit, shoes, or neutral. Consider not carrying a purse and carrying a wallet or personals in your attaché case
<i>Attaché</i>	You may want to bring a professional attaché case or women's briefcase

Clothing

<i>Suit</i>	Well-fitted two-piece matching suit, pants or skirt just below knee, conservative color, or dress with matching jacket
<i>Shirt</i>	Blouse or dress shirt (no tees), conservative color, no midriff showing
<i>Socks/Hose</i>	Dark mid-calf socks or non-pattern panty hose - no runs (a must for skirts)
<i>Shoes</i>	Polished, basic, dark flats or low heels - no sandals, open toes, backless, sneakers, hiking boots

Other

- Empty Pockets – no bulging wallet, cell phone or jangling coins
- Turn cell phone off
- No gum, candy, cigarettes
- No visible body piercing
- If you need a coat: preferably a long dress coat – no ski jackets, puffy winter coats, team sports jackets, varsity jackets, windbreakers

Summer tips

If you walk to interviews, bring an extra shirt and deodorant with you – in your briefcase or attaché case. When you arrive, enter the bathroom. Use paper towels to clean up, apply more deodorant, and change your shirt if you perspired in it. On the way to the interview, think about carrying your jacket instead of wearing it.

Winter tips

When you arrive at the office where you will be interviewing, remove your coat. See if there is somewhere you can hang it up. You do not want to be wearing your coat throughout the interview.

The Importance of Shoes

Some interviewers believe that if a person pays attention to details like their shoes, this is the kind of detail and care they will give to their job. Also, many ex-military officers now working in business are especially aware of a person's shoes. That said, make sure your shoes are conservative, clean, and polished.

Business Casual vs. Interview Attire

While many work environments have shifted to business casual as the work standard, business suits are still the interview standard. Bear in mind that it is almost always better to be above the standard than below.

For more information about what to wear, check out one of these books:
New Dress for Success or *New Women's Dress for Success*. By: John Molloy

What Not To Do

25 Ways Candidates Strike Out When Interviewing

This is a combination of information from a survey of 153 employers asking why they did not hire qualified candidates and what employers have told the preparers of this document.

1. Poor personal appearance
2. Arrive late for the interview
3. Limp handshake
4. Failure to have good eye contact with interviewer(s)
5. Failure to express appreciation for interviewer's time
6. Lack of interest and enthusiasm during the interview (for position or company)
7. Lack sufficient detail when responding to questions asked by the interviewer
8. Lack of factual information
9. Does not ask enough detailed questions about position
10. Criticism of past employers
11. Overbearing, over-aggressive, conceited "know-it-all" complex
12. Inability to express oneself clearly; wishy-washy answers or does not answer questions directly
13. Indecisive; evasive or non-committal answers
14. Poor voice diction, grammar (speaking too fast, not speaking clearly or loudly enough,
15. Lack of planning for career; no purpose for seeking this job or no short/long term goals
16. Lack of confidence, ill at ease
17. Lack of manners, courtesy, tact
18. Lack of maturity
19. Lacks a strong work ethic
20. "Shopping around" or wants job for only a short time
21. Appears lazy or disinterested
22. Strong prejudices or intolerant of people, cynical
23. Narrow interests
24. Inability to take criticism/not open to being mentored
25. High pressure type

Thank-You Letters

The Purpose of the Thank You Letter

Most job candidates write off the importance of the thank you letter. In fact, according to www.monstertrak.com, only 10% of candidates write a thank you letter after an interview. Just as your resume and cover letter get your foot in the door, think of the thank you letter as a way to get your leg in the door; another way to keep your name fresh in the minds of the interviewers. Not only thank them for their time, but reiterate the key points covered in your interview, reinforce how you are qualified and why they should hire you.

Guidelines in Brief

- Send the letter as soon as possible. This allows you to convey a sense of urgency and a high interest level in the opportunity. Ideally, your letter should go out the same day or at the latest, the next day.
- Be as brief as possible. It shows respect for other's time.
- Use a thank you note card (the kind that is blank inside)

Thank You Letter Contents

- Be as brief as possible. It shows respect for other's time.
- Use a thank you note card (the kind that is blank inside)
- Thank them for their time.
- Express interest and enthusiasm towards the company and position.
- Highlight experiences/ accomplishments that amplify your qualifications, using the manager's own words from the interview.
- Ask for the next interview.

Phone Follow-Ups

Tip: Write out what you are going to say if you get to speak to the person. Also write out what you will say if you get a voicemail. Practice it beforehand, but DO NOT sound like you are reading when you talk to the person or leave a message.

The situation: The interviewer gave you a date s/he would get back to you. S/he does not call that day.

Why this happens: It almost always takes longer than expected to reach a decision or get the proper approval.

What you can do: Call the interviewer (or contact) 2-3 days after the date they gave you. You may say something like, "Hello, this is Pat Smith. I just wanted to follow-up with you about the ____ position I interviewed with you for on (date). I am still very interested in this opportunity with (name the company). Do you know the status of this position? (possible discussion) Do you have any questions or concerns that I can answer for you that may help in your decision process? (possible discussion) Thank you for your time. I look forward to hearing from you soon."

Why ask if they have any questions of concerns? By asking this question, you open the door to another opportunity for you to reassure them that you are the right candidate.

How you may respond: If s/he tells you of a concern, do not say "oh, thank you for your candor." Respond by telling them you *can* do whatever concerns them. If possible, cite an example of a time when you have successfully done a similar task. Then, state your confidence, "I am confident that I will be successful in this position," or "I can understand your concern about my lack of experience in (doing whatever it is). However, I am capable and ready to do this job. My (class work or name a project) has prepared me well for this exact task. If I am given this opportunity, you will not regret hiring me." Lastly, continue with the 'thank you' and 'look forward to hearing from you.'

Sample Handwritten Thank You Card

(Top of Page)

Date

Dear Mr. Smith:

Thank you for the time you spent with me discussing XYZ Company and the (title) position. It was a pleasure meeting with you, (other name) and (other interviewer). Now that I have learned more about (title of position) I am more convinced that my qualifications and skill sets in (skill), (skill), and (skill) reflect those necessary to be successful at XYZ company.

Again, I really appreciate meeting with you and your team. I look forward to our next meeting to discuss this opportunity in greater detail.

Sincerely,

J. Doe

Sample Thank You Letter on Resume Paper

Address
City, ST Zip

(Date)

(Mr./Ms./Dr. Interviewer)
Company
Address
City, ST Zip

Dear (Mr./Ms./Dr. Interviewer):

Thank you for meeting with me yesterday. With the new products you plan on carrying, it appears that (Company) is poised for tremendous growth.

I'd like to reiterate some of my successes and responsibilities as they relate to the Director of Sales position we discussed:

- Currently manage a six-person sales team. I recently hired three people to replace three underperformers that I had inherited.
- Continuously train the sales force on new products as well as on prospecting, closing, and relationship-management techniques.
- Grew sales 40% the first year versus a goal of 25%.
- Accompany sales reps on calls to large customers to assist, as necessary, in closing business.
- Motivate the sales team through introducing performance incentives.
- As I had mentioned to you, I sell in addition to managing, and my sales volume continuously serves as a motivating factor. My team members get to see what can be done if things are done right.

Based upon my record of achievement in building and managing a sales force in the computer business, I feel confident that I will be able to recruit and hire a team that will achieve all the goals that you've set forth.

Again, I really appreciate the meeting and am extremely interested in joining your company. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Your Name