



Job Interview

Interviewing is a skill. An interview is a conversation between you and a potential employer. Ideally, it will be a mutually informative dialogue within which each of you benefits from learning about the other. The candidate uses the interview as an opportunity to share information about her/his background and qualifications, to express interest in the hiring organization, and to pose questions to the interviewer. The interviewer uses the conversation to determine if a good match exists between the candidate and the position. This exchange of information is an integral aspect of the conversation. The “fit” between you and the interviewer(s) – how natural the conversation is, how much you enjoy one another’s company, how confident and positive you seem, and how interested they are in being stranded at an airport with you for 5 hours – can be just as important.

The more you practice; the better you will be able to interview. Career Services offers mock interviews by appointment to give you constructive feedback. Call 304.876.5317 to schedule a mock interview. Please do not wait until you have an interview to start practicing!

What’s the Big Deal with First Impressions?

Think about it: You meet someone new. You size them up. In about a minute (sometimes within 30 seconds) you can decide whether you like this person. First impressions are just as important when it comes to job interviews. Managers see a lot of applicants and they are skilled at sizing people up based on first impressions. They can tell in a flash who will fit in with the company and who will not – regardless of qualifications.

Three Basic Things that Help Mold an Impression

- 1) Your Appearance
- 2) Your Manners
- 3) Your Attitude

Appearance:

Appearance has nothing to do with brand labels you wear or good looks. Someone with a good appearance looks professional, well-groomed, and confident. If you project the wrong impression, you may not fit in with the organization. Project the correct impression and you have a good chance.

Manners:

The first manner an employer will look for is punctuality – showing up for the interview on time. This shows if you are reliable and you will show up to work on time. Showing up late for an interview could significantly hurt your chances of being hired.

Attitude:

Attitude separates the good candidates from the average candidates. It can be more important than experience. Make sure to be positive, respectful, energetic, and confident.

P’s of Interviewing

Professional: Both in dress and demeanor, look and act like a business professional.

Poised: Eye contact, posture, the way you carry yourself, and facial expression (think pleasant!) will all be observed.

Personable: Interact with everyone that you meet and treat them as if they are the most important person in the room. Genuine outgoing personalities are what interviewers remember the most.

Positive: Speak well of your former employers when answering questions. Also, when you speak, smile! A smile can go a long way.

Prepared: Resume, questions for the interviewers, attire, company research, interview skills practice, etc.

TOP 10 INTERVIEW TIPS

1. PRACTICE

Practice your answers! Not just in your head but out loud! Write out your answers – this helps you remember key words. Do not wait until the day before your interview to practice interviewing. As soon as you get scheduled for an interview, sign up for a mock interview to give yourself plenty of time to practice and prepare. (At least one week before)

2. NON-VERBAL CUES

Practice your non-verbal behavior, mannerisms, volume, and speed of your speech. Maintain good eye contact and smile to show confidence. Do not fidget or play with your pen/hair/etc.

3. PAUSES CAN BE USEFUL

- a) They give you time to think
- b) They slow you down/calm you down
- c) They get rid of Ums and Ahs

4. WORDS TO AVOID

Like ▪ You know ▪ Kinda/Sorta/Maybe/Stuff/Things ▪ Blah blah blah

5. WORDS TO USE

Definite words: I am, I have, I accomplished, I created, I know.

“I” is better than saying “you” or “we.”

6. STAY POSITIVE

Do not speak negatively about anyone/anything (school, work, previous boss). Employers can be quickly turned off by negative attitudes – stay positive! You never know who knows who. If you have to speak about a negative experience, be diplomatic.

7. USE EXAMPLES

Prove your claims - give examples, situations, or events that prove you are a good leader/researcher/communicator. Companies want to know that you have done these things in the past. Tell your story. Stay aware of your experiences and their impact on your professional development.

8. RESEARCH THE COMPANY & INDUSTRY

Your research efforts show intelligence, interest, motivation, and desire. Employers are impressed when you take time to learn about the company. Know the company’s mission, product/services, reputation, competitors, subsidiaries, and the position for which you are applying. Be aware of industry trends, jargon, and lingo. Be familiar with a professional organization or become a member of one.

9. ASK GOOD QUESTIONS

Prepare questions that show you researched the company. Ask questions that are thoughtful, original, and show your knowledge of the company. The only way to determine if this company is a fit for you is to ask the right questions. Write your questions out and carry them in your portfolio. Come up with more questions than you will ask, as you never know what may get answered in the interview as well as what questions will seem more important to you after the interview.

10. THANK YOU

Thank your interviewers in person after the interview and send every participant a thank you note in the form of a card, letter, or email. Going the extra mile makes a good impression!

SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEWING

Analyze the Job Qualifications

The first step prior to the interview is to analyze the job qualifications and develop accomplishment stories from your background to show you are a good fit for the position. Use the job description and contacts to gather information on the position. In preparation for the interview:

- Identify corresponding work experiences, projects, or classes that demonstrate the required skills
- Use accomplishments to express the experience in positive, concise, and results-oriented terms
- If you cannot locate a specific enough position description prior to the interview, identify more general skills applicable to the position to express your qualifications
- If you do not have a position description, ask the interviewer early on, "What qualifications are you looking for in this position?" Then present appropriate examples from your background

Preparing Accomplishments for Interviews

Use the following criteria to brainstorm for situations where you can demonstrate your accomplishments:

- Your performance exceeded past performance
- Equal results were achieved with fewer resources
- Potential problems/issues were resolved with little or no increase in time or money
- Saved or made money for the organization
- Something new was achieved for the first time
- Things were made easier, simpler, or were done more quickly
- Added new systems/methods which improved service/product quality

Use this three step process for describing your accomplishments:

- 1) Identify the problem, situation, or challenge you faced
- 2) Outline the main action you took to solve the problem/meet the challenge
- 3) Determine the positive benefit of your action(s) and express the results in quantifiable terms whenever possible.

Research the Company

In addition to analyzing the job qualifications, make sure you have researched the company. Try these resources for company research:

- Company's web site
- Annual report and recruiting literature
- Edgar - <https://www.sec.gov/edgar.shtml> - The Securities and Exchange Commission's database which includes SEC filings by any publicly traded company.

Plan Ahead

- Take at least 3 extra copies of your resume and list of references to the interview
- Have questions to ask the employers (at least ten); never say you do not have questions
- Be cautious when discussing salary during a first interview; only do so if brought up by employer. It's better to discuss during a second interview. Give a range, not an exact number.

Get a good night's sleep the night before the interview!

Show up on time! (10-15 minutes early is ideal, but no more than 15!)

Establish a rapport

Be courteous to everyone with whom you make contact. When the interviewer arrives, stand to greet him/her, and give a firm handshake.

Show an interest

Make an effort to look interested and be enthusiastic about what the recruiter is saying. Watch body language!

Demonstrate your competence

- Use personal stories/experiences to illustrate answers to questions
- If you do not understand the questions, ask for clarification before responding
- Take time to listen to what is being asked – never interrupt the interviewer

State your skills

- Back them up with an example
- Relate the skills back to the company and how your experience will benefit them

Towards the end of the interview

- Ask questions of yours that have not been answered
- Find out the next step in the interview process
- Let the interviewer know you are interested in the company and the position (do not come off as being desperate)
- Ask for a business card
- Thank the interviewer

After the interview

- Thank you letters – send a letter to everyone that you interviewed with or that assisted you during the day. **Send the letter within 24 hours after the interview.** Reiterate your interest in the position, mentioning something that was discussed that increased your interest in the position or company. You may also highlight a few reasons why you are a good fit for the position.
- In addition to the letter, **send an Email within 24 hours after the interview.** This way they are sure to receive it immediately; however, the email can end up in junk mail, but a letter or note will be received. If you want to stand out and show how interested you are, be sure to also send a letter or note.
- Reflect – Did you prepare enough? What did you do well? What can you do differently next time? Are you still interested in the job and/or company? Be honest with yourself. It is acceptable to say “no”.