



A World of Opportunities to Explore

INTERVIEWING GUIDE

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It has finally happened. The time spent working on your resume, the grueling process of composing a convincing cover letter for each position, the networking with friends, relatives, neighbors and people in line at the grocery store, and the endless trips to the post office to mail your latest application have finally paid off: You have been asked in for an interview. Congratulations!

But about three minutes after you hang up the phone from scheduling the interview, you're gripped with fear -- what I am I going to do and say in this interview???

This guide is designed to help you prepare for these encounters, and although it may not entirely relieve the anxiety associated with the interview process, following these guidelines will increase your effectiveness in the interview. Remember, the employer is actually on your side. S\he has a need and has every reason to hope that you will fill it.

THE PURPOSE OF THE INTERVIEW

It is important to remember that the purpose of the interview is two-fold: (1) The employer needs to find out if you are the best candidate for the job and (2) you need to find out if this is a good opportunity for you.

From the employers perspective, they want to find out:

Can you do the job?

- Do you have the appropriate background, including education, skills, and experience?
- Do you have the expertise needed to make you "stand out?"
- Are you able to learn and adapt?

Will you do the job?

- Do you want to work for this company, or do you simply see it as a stepping-stone?
- Are you aware of and honest about your future goals and plans?
- Are you motivated and eager to learn?

Will you fit in?

- Do you work well with others?
- How do you respond to supervision and criticism?
- Do you have the skills to balance where their team is currently weak? Do they like you?

From the candidate's perspective, you want to find out:

What do I want my typical work day to look like? What are my career goals for the next five years?

- Do I want to spend a lot of time on the phone?
- Do I want to work with new people every day?
- Will this job help me to achieve these goals?

What kind of work schedule do I want?

- Does this position require a great deal of overtime?
- Will I be required to travel?
- Are evening hours involved?

What kind of work setting do I want?

- Do I want to work mostly in the office?
- Do I want travel involved?

Am I willing to relocate?

PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

Now is the time to put into practice all of the general principles you have learned as a student. Just as you wouldn't (or shouldn't) go into your final exam without having studied, you should not attempt to "wing it" at the interview. If you want to appear that you want the position for which you are interviewing, then you must demonstrate your interest by finding out everything you can about the company and the position before the actual interview.

The kinds of things you should know about the company include:

- How long has the company existed?
- What services does the company provide or what products does it make?
- Who are their major competitors?
- What divisions or subsidiaries exist?
- What is the parent company?
- What geographic areas are covered?
- How many people are employed by the company?
- What are the company's assets and earnings?
- Does the company have any international operations?

This information is available from various sources including the library (both periodicals and reference materials can help -- ask your librarian for assistance), the World Wide Web (does the company have a web page?), the Career Services Center (many companies send us their annual reports and/or recruiting brochures) and the company itself (don't be afraid to stop by their offices and pick up some information).

The kinds of things you should learn about the interview itself include:

- Know and be able to pronounce the name of the interviewer
- Find out what you can about the format and length of the interview
- Will you meet with a panel?
- Will you meet with several people individually?
- Will you have a lunch meeting?
- Be certain you have clear and precise directions to the interview site (a trial run ahead of time can save you the potentially fatal embarrassment of arriving late)

HOW TO DRESS FOR AN INTERVIEW

Good grooming

Check your hair, fingernails, and make-up application. Clothing should be neatly pressed and shoes should be in good condition.

Dress conservatively

The emphasis should be on appropriate dress; there is no rule that fits all people. For male and female professionals, a conservative and properly fitting business suit is recommended. If in doubt, dress up. Jewelry should be limited. Beards and mustaches are generally accepted when nicely groomed.

TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

Campus Interviews

Campus interviews will determine who will be invited for on-site interviews. You must impress the campus recruiter with your enthusiasm and potential.

Screening Interviews

This type of interview is often used when an organization is considering flying you out to their headquarters for a full round of interviews. They are also increasingly used by local companies who want to screen out people quickly. In five minutes the interviewer can often determine whether s/he needs to meet you. Sell your technical competence as well as your personality! (Screening Interviews are often conducted on the telephone.)

Non-directed Interviews

Nondirected interviews rely primarily on traditional questions such as "tell me about yourself" and "what are your career goals?" The interviewer asks a series of questions but often without real focus or direction. Even though the interviewer may seem unfocused, you should be very focused; although you may not control the direction of the interview, you do control the content!

Stress Interviews

Stress interviews consist of questions and situations designated to put the interviewee under stress. The theory is that the interviewee will reveal how s/he will actually handle stress when it occurs on the job. Ways to induce this stress include:

- Asking rapid fire questions so a person barely has time to think.
- Using silence. (You may have just completed an answer and the interviewer maintains silence and simply looks at you. If you break the silence, you lose.)
- Telling you that you simply don't have enough experience. (If you get flustered or defensive, you lose.)

The key to surviving this type of interview is not let yourself panic or get angry or defensive.

Group Interviews

In this interview setting, two or more people will interview you simultaneously. Try to respond to the person who asks each question, while maintaining eye contact with the group as a whole.

Behavior-Based Interviews

In behavior-based interviews, you will constantly be asked to give examples, or stories, to provide evidence that you have the skills required for the position. You will receive questions like, "Tell me about a time when you made a major sacrifice to achieve a professional or personal goal" or "Describe an experience when you were especially creative in solving a problem." Each question will require a specific example, so you must be able to recall many experiences quickly, select the most appropriate, and then describe it effectively.

Series Interviews

The series interview consists of consecutive interviews with three or more people in the organization, all in one day. The interviewers may consist of someone from personnel, the person who will be your boss, two or three people from the department, and someone from a different. The key to performing well in this interview is to know in advance that you will be having it; advance warning will give you time to get mentally prepared.

DURING THE INTERVIEW

Manners/Etiquette

1. Be on time and be sure to use a firm handshake and eye contact when greeting the interviewer.
2. Wait until you are asked to be seated before doing so.
3. Maintain a comfortable amount of eye contact during the interview, without staring. If you are interviewed by a panel, answer the person who asked the question directly, while still making it a point to make eye contact with others on the panel.

4. Express yourself clearly -- use complete sentences, don't use slang and don't ramble.
5. Be aware of body language. Your tone of voice, posture, gestures, etc., all give clues about your feelings and attitudes. Face the interviewer in an open, relaxed manner. Nod at appropriate times to show that you are listening.
6. Bring extra copies of your resume and reference list.
7. DO NOT bring up the issue of salary. Wait for the interviewer to introduce the topic; it may not come up until a job offer is made.

Key Interviewing Tips

Let others speak for you!

When you're answering questions in an interview, let others build you up by saying things like, "My boss felt some of my most valuable attributes were that I could always be counted on to get a project done on schedule and that the details had all been taken care of." Or you might quote a customer: "My customers really valued the little extra things that I did for them. In fact, one of my customers told me that none of his other vendors kept his shelves stocked as neatly as I did."

Show what you can do for them!

One of the biggest turnoffs for employers is the candidate who seems self-centered and cares only about what the company can do for him or her. During the interview, the emphasis must be on how you can benefit the organization.

Focus on the positives!

When asked to recall past problematic situations or weaknesses, stress how you overcame these obstacles. Do not criticize former employers. If you really cannot answer a question, offer how you might go about finding the answer.

WHAT TO FIND OUT IN AN INTERVIEW:

- Exactly what the job is - title, responsibilities, department and/or supervisor
- How the department fits into the company hierarchy - its purpose, structure, budget, and other departments with which it works
- Whether you would be required to report to more than one supervisor
- What type of training (formal or informal) you would be given
- Whether you will be working on your own or as a member of a team
- Whether skills you learn on this job would prepare you for higher level jobs
- How much travel is involved, if any
- Whether there have been any recent organizational changes
- What your predecessors in the job have moved on to
- Whether the position can be upgraded as your responsibilities grow
- How long the position has been open
- How job performance is measured
- What your opportunities for advancement are
- Are management positions usually filled from within or outside the company
- Following the lead of the interviewer, finding out more about salary and benefits
- More information on company products or services

ENDING THE INTERVIEW

At the close of the interview, you'll want to make certain that you will be remembered.

1. State your interest in the position, and summarize how you would be a "good match" for this position. Do this by summarizing your top three skills, based on the skills the interviewer seems to place in high value.

2. Be certain that you ask what the next steps are in the interview process. Find out what stage they are currently in, and when you could expect some kind of a response.
3. Be certain that you use a firm handshake, a confident smile, and maintain eye contact.
4. Get the interviewer's business card so you can send a thank you letter.

FREQUENTLY ASKED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The interviewer who asks you a question is looking for three things. The first thing, obviously, is your answer. The second thing is how well you can organize your thinking. The third thing is how you express yourself.

The best method to prepare yourself is to scan the following list of typical questions. When you meet a stumper in this list, take the time to compose an answer, then deliver it out loud. Do not bother to memorize every word, comma and inflection; merely memorize the key points you want to make.

ABOUT YOU

- 1) What would you like to be doing five years from now? Ten years from now?
- 2) Tell me about yourself.
- 3) What are your long-range and short-range goals and objectives; when and why did you establish these goals; and how are you preparing yourself to achieve them?
- 4) What are the most important rewards you expect to achieve in your professional career?
- 5) How do you think a friend or professor who knows you well would describe you?
- 6) What motivates you to put forth your greatest effort?
- 7) Give me some examples that support your stated interest in... (field, position or firm)
- 8) Are you willing to relocate or travel in this position?
- 9) Would you prefer on-the-job training or a formal training program?
- 10) How do you respond to criticism?
- 11) What are your greatest strengths? What are your greatest limitations? What do you plan to do to correct those weaknesses?
- 12) How do you go about making important decisions?
- 13) What personal characteristics do you believe are necessary for success in your chosen field?
- 14) What have you learned from your mistakes?
- 15) How do you perform under pressure? Give me an example.
- 16) What would you consider your greatest accomplishment?
- 17) In what kind of work environment are you most comfortable?
- 18) Why have you changed jobs so many times? Why did you leave your previous jobs?
- 19) What three things are most important to you in a job?
- 20) Give me an example of a major problem you have encountered and how you dealt with it?
- 21) What have you done which illustrates an initiative and willingness to work?
- 22) Why should I hire you as opposed to the other candidate(s)?

ABOUT THE JOB/ORGANIZATION

- 1) What makes you believe that you are qualified for the job?
- 2) What do you think you can do for us?
- 3) Why do you think you would like this particular type of job?
- 4) Have you ever worked as a (name of position) before?
- 5) How did you learn about this job?
- 6) What interests you about our product or service? Our company? This position?
- 7) Why are you interested in joining our organization?
- 8) What do you know about our company?
- 9) Have you had any special training for this job?

- 10) Do you have any physical condition that may limit your ability to do this work?
- 11) What salary do you have in mind?
- 12) What is the lowest salary you would accept?
- 13) When would you be able to start work if you are hired?

ABOUT HOW YOU RELATE WITH OTHERS

- 1) Tell me about your best and worst boss.
- 2) Have you managed people in any of the positions you've held?
- 3) Do you prefer to work with others or by yourself?
- 4) What types of people do you find it most difficult to get along with?
- 5) What would you do if your supervisor told you to do something in a way you know is wrong?
- 6) What qualities should a successful manager possess?
- 7) Describe the relationship that exists between a supervisor and those reporting to her/him.
- 8) Explain to me a confrontation you've had with a customer, a boss and a colleague and how it was resolved.
- 9) What is your philosophy of working with people?
- 10) What supervisory or leadership roles have you held?
- 11) Define cooperation.
- 12) Can you take instructions without feeling upset?
- 13) How do you get along with people?
- 14) What kind of people do you like to work with most?
- 15) What kind of people do you least like to work with?

ABOUT COLLEGE

- 1) What led you to select your major? Minor?
- 2) What are your most memorable experiences from college?
- 3) In what courses did you get your worst grades? Why do you think that was?
- 4) Why did you decide to go to this particular school?
- 5) Tell me about your education.
- 6) What was your grade point average?
- 7) What subjects did you like most? Least?
- 8) How many days of school did you miss last year?
- 9) What will be the most difficult aspect of the transition from college to career? Why?
- 10) What percentage of your college expenses did you earn? How?
- 11) Did you change your major while you were in college? Why?
- 12) Do you feel you have done the best scholastic work of which you are capable?
- 13) Which of your college years was the most difficult?
- 14) How has your college experience prepared you for your career?
- 15) Do you have plans for continued study? An advanced degree?
- 16) In what school activities did you participate in? Which did you enjoy most?

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

After the interview, take a few moments to assess your performance. This will not only help you to put everything in perspective, it will also serve as a learning situation for future interviews.

A. Evaluating your interviewing skills

- Did I do enough research for this position?
- Was I dressed appropriately?
- Should I have brought additional materials?
- How well did I maintain eye contact?

- Did I listen carefully and attentively?
- Were my questions appropriate and well received?
- Was my voice loud enough?
- Did I appear enthusiastic?
- Were there any questions that were difficult to answer? What were they?

This is also the time to determine if you would like to work for this company, and how you would respond to an offer.

B. Evaluating the company and the position

- What skills and qualities is this employer looking for? Do I possess all of them? How could I better sell those skills in my next interview?
- What information about the job or company do I still need in order to determine whether I would accept an offer?
- What do I like and/or dislike about the job or company?

Thank-You Letter

Send a thank-you note. Restate your interest in the job, summarize key points of the interview, and add further information to help your case. This simple courtesy can make the difference between selection and rejection. Sending a thank-you note, even one as short as three sentences, can be one of the most important things you do. When employers receive thank-you notes, they immediately remember you. Sending a note makes you stand out positively because so few people send them. Thank-you notes can be handwritten or typed.

25 COMMON REASONS FOR EMPLOYER REJECTION

1. Poor personal appearance
2. Lack of interest and enthusiasm
3. Overemphasis on money
4. Weak handshake
5. Late to interview
6. Indefinite responses to questions
7. Inability to express oneself clearly (poor voice, diction, grammar)
8. Lack of planning for career -- no goals or purpose
9. Lack of confidence and poise; failure to look interviewer in the eye
10. Unwilling to start at bottom -- expects too much too soon
11. Makes excuses; evasive -- hedges on unfavorable factors on record
12. Lack of tact
13. Lack of manners, courtesy
14. Lack of maturity
15. Lack of vitality
16. Merely shopping around
17. Wants job only for a short time
18. Cynical
19. Low moral standards
20. Intolerant; strong prejudices
21. Failure to ask questions
22. Timid; lacks sufficient degree of assertiveness
23. Overbearing; overaggressive; conceited
24. Not prepared for interview; no research on company
25. Lack of knowledge of field of specialization; not well qualified