

INTERVIEWING

LEARNING TO INTERVIEW EFFECTIVELY IS ESSENTIAL TO GETTING THE JOB YOU WANT.



No matter where you went to school, what your GPA was, how much experience you have, or who you know — if you can't interview competently, you won't get the job! Your goal in every interview is to advance one step further toward getting a job offer. Take the time to prepare for each interview — it will pay off.

Before you step into an interview, practice articulating your skills and abilities as they relate to the position, and practice describing your experiences in detail. Also, be sure to set parameters based on your interests and values to determine whether or not the job is something that you would like to do! To shine in the interview, you must know the company or organization well enough to relate your skills, abilities, and experiences specifically to the position to which you are applying. Research and preparation are your keys to a successful interview.

Interview Preparation

Successful interviewing begins with preparation! Review the list below and complete each task before you begin to interview.

Know Yourself

- Identify your skills, interests, and work values.
- Reflect upon your strengths and weaknesses.
- Describe in detail your key accomplishments.
- Identify and be able to explain important decisions you have made.
- Think about, and be able to communicate your short and long term goals.
- Review the job description closely to identify the specific skills, knowledge, and abilities stated as success factors.
- Prepare a one to two minute story describing each important item listed on your resume.

- Prepare concrete examples of how you have gained the skills, knowledge, and abilities required to perform the position effectively.
- Think about, and be able to articulate why you are interested in this position, organization, or field.
- Prepare a portfolio of your high-quality projects or work samples (especially if you are seeking a career in the visual arts or writing).
- Write down, and critically review your answers to frequently asked interview questions.

Know the Employer and the Industry

- Research the employer by reviewing its mission statement, annual report, recruiting literature, and website.
- Find out about the firm's competitors and clients or customers.
- Learn the structure of the organization: management functions; products or services; and past, current, and potential growth.
- Conduct an informational interview with a person currently working for the organization who may have insights about the position.
- Prepare yourself to demonstrate your knowledge of the organization and position and explain how your education, employment experiences, and leadership roles have prepared you to succeed.
- Know the names, titles, and primary roles and responsibilities of individuals with whom you are scheduled to meet.
- Read recent articles about the profession or organization.
- Read periodicals and trade journals to learn about current trends in the field.

- Prepare questions to ask during the interview about the position, organization, and field based on your research.

Practice

- Attend an interviewing workshop.
- Participate in a mock interview.
- Rehearse your responses to the typical interview questions with a friend.

You can also schedule a mock interview with a Career Center consultant who can provide feedback and offer suggestions to improve your performance. Consider videotaping the interview to hear your voice quality (e.g., diction, speed) and to observe your body language.

Dress For Success

How important is proper dress for a job interview? The final selection of a job candidate is rarely determined by dress; however, first-round candidates often are quickly eliminated by inappropriate attire. Companies may relax the internal dress code, but interviews still follow the conservative standard.

While dress for teachers is more informal than the attire required for some other professionals, appearance is still important. The interviewer will evaluate the image you will project to parents, other teachers, and community members.

Therefore, dress for the world outside college is vastly different from what is worn on campus. Do not try to "get by" with what is already in your wardrobe. Go for quality over quantity. One or two well-chosen suits will be adequate. No one will fault you for wearing the same sharp outfit for every interview. If you need some variety, you can change your shirt, blouse, tie, or accessories. Start building a professional wardrobe now and keep in mind the following guidelines:

Men and Women

- Conservative two-piece business suits
- Garments should be neat, clean, and wrinkle-free
- Conservative long-sleeved shirts/blouses
- Clean, polished shoes
- Clean hands and neatly trimmed fingernails
- Best quality clothing you can afford
- Little or no fragrance
- Neat and conservative hairstyle; pull hair back from face
- Minimal jewelry; make sure that the jewelry you wear is not distracting
- No more than one ring on each hand
- Wedding and/or college rings are acceptable
- Empty pockets—no bulges or jingling coins
- No gum, candy, or cigarettes
- Briefcase or portfolio
- No visible body piercings (e.g., nose rings, eyebrow rings)

Women

- Conservative skirt with jacket or pantsuit; or tailored dress (choose classic fashions and neutral colors)

- Blouses should be coordinated colors in silk, cotton or blend; white and light blue are still the most conservative options, and long sleeves are best
- A pure silk scarf is a professional touch, but avoid flamboyant prints
- Natural tone pantyhose (no runs!)
- Classic pumps with closed toes in black, brown, navy, and burgundy are acceptable
- Heel height of 1 1/2 inches or less
- Conservative belt and purse
- No oversized handbags
- Minimal amount of natural looking makeup
- If you wear nail polish, use clear or a light conservative color
- One set of earrings only; no dangle earrings
- One single bracelet around the wrist is acceptable

Men

- Suits can be shades of blue, brown, or grey; small pattern or flecks of mixed colors are appropriate; 100% wool suits look and wear better than any other material
- Single or double breasted style suits
- Starched, 100% cotton, white or striped long-sleeved shirt

- Natural fabric tie (silk preferred) with no more than four colors
- Tie properly knotted at the neck
- Coordinate sock color with the color of your shoes and suit
- Black, brown, or cordovan shoes; tie or slip-on; lace-up wing tips are the most conservative
- Over the calf length socks
- Belts, handkerchiefs, and suspenders must match or complement your suit

Nonverbal Communication

Researchers have found that 55% of our messages are sent through body language, 38% through tone of voice, and only 7% through spoken words. Your confident attitude, non-verbal behaviors, and verbal responses help you communicate the relevance of your background and personal attributes to the employers. Be aware of your non-verbal body language: posture, eye contact, handshake, voice tone, and gestures.

- Handshake: firm, not wimpy or limp.
- Posture: well balanced, erect, relaxed, straight on, and open. Know your nervous habits and practice controlling them.
- Eye Contact: direct when listening, asking, and responding to questions.
- Tone of Voice: warm, well-modulated, and relaxed. Be comfortable with silence and pauses.
- Gestures: hands used in a relaxed way for animating and communicating interest. Make sure gestures are natural.

The Interview Process

The interview consists of three stages:

1. Establishing Rapport
2. Gathering Information
3. Closing the Interview

Each stage carries a different focus and each has its own protocol and requirements.

Establishing Rapport

First impressions are extremely important and are made within the first few seconds of the interview. You set the tone for the interview through your physical appearance and initial responses. Your positive attitude and confidence will help establish





a positive tone. This is the step where you have the opportunity to make a personal connection with the employer.

Gathering Information

The employer will ask questions about your qualifications and experience to evaluate your answers against the position criteria. It is crucial to provide concrete examples demonstrating your relevant, job-related skills. Use stories and detailed examples of your accomplishments to show the interviewer how, when, and where you have put forth extra effort—how you beat a deadline or excelled in a project.

Closing the Interview

The interviewer will ask final questions and then give you the opportunity to ask questions about the job, organization, or selection process. Show your interest in the position and the organization by asking the questions you developed based on your research. Keep the focus on the organization's needs rather than your own. Do not ask about salary and benefits. Finally, before you leave an interview, make sure you understand the next phase in the selection process and how you can follow up.

Interview Tips

Here are some tips to help you make sure your interviews are successful:

- Be punctual for your interview. Arrive at least ten minutes early to give yourself time to check in and relax.
- Greet all employees (e.g., security guards, receptionists, recruiters, managers) warmly.

- Demonstrate a positive attitude to create a good first impression.
- Use good posture, clear speech, and direct eye contact.
- Relax. Think of the interview as a conversation, not an interrogation.
- Take a moment to think about your responses before you speak.
- Emphasize your strengths by giving detailed examples of your accomplishments. Link your answers to the position and talk about your commitment to helping the organization achieve its goals.
- Incorporate information from your research into your responses.
- Keep your questions focused on the key responsibilities of the job.
- Be prepared to summarize your qualifications for the position and express your interest in the organization and position during the closing stage of the interview.

The most important task interviewers must accomplish is to evaluate applicants objectively, basing their evaluations on the evidence and information provided in the interview. Your ability to speak enthusiastically about your goals, to provide clear and positive examples of past performance, to use terminology appropriate to your field, and to quantify your results whenever possible will help you move forward in the interview process.

So what are employers really looking for? In a recent survey of employers, oral communication, interpersonal skills, and teamwork skills were rated as the most important qualifications for new professionals. In addition, employers indicated the following as valuable qualifications:

- Positive attitude toward work
- Proficiency in field of study
- Confidence
- Critical thinking
- Problem-solving
- Flexibility
- Self-motivation
- Leadership

An invitation to interview with an organization demonstrates you meet the preferred requirements for the position. Interviews will be offered to several others who have exhibited similar qualifications. The employer will extend the job offer to the candidate who is able to communicate that he/she is the best person for the job.

Each interview will be different. Some interviews may be informal and non-directive, while others may be very formal and structured. There are five basic types of interview questions you may face during an interview: credential, experience, opinion, dumb, and behavioral questions.



Credential Questions

This type of question includes “What was your overall GPA and major GPA in college? How long were you employed at...?” The purpose of these questions is to place objective measurements on features of your background.

Experience Questions

This type of question includes “What did you learn in that class? What were your responsibilities in that position?” The goal is to evaluate your previous experiences subjectively.

Opinion Questions

This type of question includes “What would you do in this situation? What are your strengths and weaknesses?” The purpose is to subjectively analyze how you would respond in various scenarios.

Dumb Questions

This type of question includes “If you could be a wild animal, what kind of animal would you like to be? How many Ping-Pong balls could fit into a VW?” The recruiter’s goal is to get past your pre-programmed answers to find out if you are capable of original thought. There are no right or wrong answers since this type of question is used primarily as a test of your ability to think on your feet.

Behavioral Questions

Examples of behavioral questions are “Give me a specific example of how you demonstrated teamwork?” and “What were the steps you used to accomplish that task?” Behavioral-based questions enable recruiters to find out what an applicant has done — not what he or she knows, would like to have done, or says he or she would do in the future. The basic premise of behavioral interviewing is that past behavior or performance is the best predictor of future behavior or performance, especially in situations similar to those encountered on the job. There are two corollaries to this premise:

1. The more recent the behavior, the better its predictive power.
2. The more long-lasting the behavior, the greater its predictive power.

Using a structured pattern of questions, the recruiter gathers specific examples of your relevant capabilities by focusing on your past performance in leadership roles, on group projects, or as an intern or part-time employee.

Behavioral interviewing is the interview system most used by employers in Fortune 500 companies and by large school districts. The interviewer will consistently ask for specific examples. The best way to handle these types of questions is to provide specific examples of past experiences, even if you are not asked to provide them. The SOAR Model (Situation, Obstacle, Action, and Results) provides an easy framework to help you organize your responses and articulate your skills.

SOAR Model

SITUATION

Think of a situation in which you were involved having a positive outcome, or having a negative outcome from which you learned valuable lessons.

OBSTACLE

Describe any obstacles you encountered in the situation.

ACTION

Specify what specific actions you took in this situation to overcome the obstacles and achieve your results.

RESULT

Highlight the positive outcomes.

The following example shows how you might use the SOAR model to answer a behavioral question.

Question:

You indicated on your resume that leadership is one of your strengths. Please describe an experience where you used your leadership abilities to manage a recent challenge.

Situation:

During my third year of college, I was elected Vice President for Educational Programs for my student professional association. The responsibilities of the position included securing speakers for our meetings, advertising the programs to the campus community, introducing speakers, and evaluating each program.

Obstacle:

Attendance at meetings last year had decreased substantially due to a decline in the overall club membership. The goal of my position was to implement programs to address the professional development of our members and to increase attendance by 25% compared to last year.

Action:

I assembled a team to help with the program design and speaker selection. We developed a survey to assess the members’ professional interests and gather ideas for possible speakers and topics. We had each member complete the survey. Then we randomly selected members for a focus group interview. I had learned about this research technique in my Marketing Research class and thought it would help us identify why attendance had dropped.

Result:

Based on the information we gathered from the surveys and interviews, we selected speakers for the entire year and produced a brochure describing each program and the featured speaker. Under my leadership, attendance increased 150% over the previous year.

Our chapter received an award for excellence in educational programming from our national organization. The President of our chapter thinks that membership will increase next semester due to the positive word-of-mouth advertising regarding our programs and speakers. I am very proud of my leadership as Vice President for Educational Programs, and am confident that my skills in project management, marketing research, and teamwork would enable me to be successful as a public relations specialist with your organization.

Questions Employers Ask

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Why did you choose this college and how did you arrive at your decision?
3. What factors did you consider in choosing your major?
4. Of the courses you have taken at college, which have you enjoyed the most?
5. Describe how your favorite course has contributed to your career interests.
6. What is your GPA? Does it reflect your abilities?
7. What accomplishment are you most proud of achieving?
8. How have you changed since starting college?
9. What has been your greatest challenge?
10. If you could change a decision you made while at college, what would you change, and why?
11. Why did you choose the campus activities you did? What did you gain from them? What did you contribute?
12. Describe a leadership role you have held and explain why you committed your time to it.
13. In a particular leadership role that you have had, what was your greatest strength?
14. Give me an example of an original idea and what you did with it.
15. Give me an example of a problem you solved and the process you used.
16. Give me an example of the most creative project you have worked on.
17. What work experiences have been most valuable to you and why?
18. Tell me about a project you initiated.
19. To what do you owe your present success?
20. Since attending college, what is the toughest decision that you have had to make?
21. What have the experiences on your resume taught you about managing and working with people?
22. What type of position are you seeking?
23. How have your educational and work experiences prepared you for this position?
24. What types of situations put you under pressure, and how do you deal with pressure or stress?
25. Tell me about a time you failed, and describe how you handled it.
26. Why are you interested in our organization?
27. What interests you about this job?
28. Where do you think your interest in this career comes from?
29. What industries, besides this one, are you looking into?
30. Why have you chosen this particular profession?
31. Tell me about your most difficult decision and how you went about making it.
32. What challenges are you looking for in a professional position?
33. What makes you think you can handle this position?
34. Why should our company be interested in you?
35. What is your most significant accomplishment to date?
36. What goals have you set for yourself? How are you planning to achieve them?
37. What can you contribute to this company?
38. What are your five-year professional goals?
39. What motivates you?
40. How do you handle stress?
41. If I asked the people who know you well to describe you, what three words would they use?
42. If I asked the people who know you to list one reason why I shouldn't hire you, what would they say?
43. Of the activities listed on your resume, which was your favorite and why?
44. When you take on a project do you like to attack the project in a group or individually?
45. Describe the project or situation that best demonstrates your analytical abilities.
46. What are your team-player qualities? Give examples.
47. Tell me about a team project of which you are particularly proud. What was your contribution?
48. Describe a situation where you had to work with someone who was especially difficult. How did you handle it?
49. What type of work environment appeals to you most?
50. With which other companies are you interviewing?
51. What characteristics do you think are important for this position?
52. Why do you feel this company will be a career for you rather than a job?
53. Name two management skills you possess.
54. What characteristics are most important in a good manager? How have you displayed one of them?
55. Describe the type of manager you prefer.

Questions You Can Ask Employers

1. What are some of the greater challenges an individual has to face in this position?
2. What are the opportunities for advancement in this position and organization?
3. What are the short and long term needs of the office/organization, and what are the most pressing needs in the next few months?
4. What type of orientation/training is offered to new employees?
5. What further training or professional development opportunities are available?
6. What would you like done differently by the next person who fills this position?
7. What opportunities exist to work with individuals from other offices, or to share ideas?
8. Can you tell me if an employee in this position is encouraged to make independent decisions on daily matters?
9. You seem very enthused about this organization. Why do you like working here?
10. Can you describe the working environment?
11. If you had an ideal candidate, what qualities and skills would that person possess?
12. I certainly intend to work hard if hired. Is there a formal evaluation process, and what criteria is it based on?
13. How do you support the organization's mission through your daily work?
14. Was there anything about your job with this organization that came as a surprise when you transitioned into the position?
15. Please tell me about the reporting relationships entailed in this position.
16. What are the department/company/organization goals for the next five years?
17. What type of computer software is used here?
18. What is a typical work week like for a person in the position for which I am applying?
19. How has your career developed with this organization?
20. What is your timeline for making a hiring decision for this position?

Interview Questions for Teachers

1. Why did you go into teaching?
2. Why did you choose your field of study?
3. Describe yourself, your background, and why you are interested in being a teacher.
4. Describe your ideal teaching situation.
5. What do you consider your strengths and weaknesses as a teacher?
6. What is your teaching philosophy?
7. Describe your student teaching experience. What was the most rewarding experience and what was the most frustrating experience? What experience taught you the most?
8. Describe your organizational skills. How do you stay organized?
9. Describe the parts of your portfolio that best indicate your teaching style and beliefs.
10. What are the most important or worthwhile qualities of a good teacher?
11. Describe your ideal classroom.
12. In what types of extra-curricular activities were you involved in during high school and college, and what would you be willing to direct if you were hired to work in our district?
13. How would your students describe you?
14. What grade level would you be most comfortable teaching?
15. What are the most important ways a teacher can help his/her students?
16. As you enter a new job in the fall (or spring) you will most likely be meeting a new staff for the first time. What kinds of things will you do to acclimate yourself and what assistance would you want from others to help you settle in?
17. How would your colleagues describe you?
18. What is your interest in our school system?
19. What do you think will provide you with the greatest pleasure in teaching?
20. What do you want to accomplish as a teacher?
21. If it were within your power, what is one thing you would change regarding education today?
22. Do you think that grades are a good indication of your ability to teach?
24. What experiences have you had with children besides in the school setting?

Classroom Management

1. What rules do you think are essential for a quality classroom?
2. How would you react to a student who challenges your authority?
3. Describe the process you would use to deal with a student who is disrupting the class.
4. What methods do you use for classroom management? Describe one difficult incident with a student and how you handled it.
5. What employment have you had outside of education? How has this impacted your education, teaching practices, and style?
6. What have you found to be the toughest aspect of discipline?
7. What steps would you take before sending a student to the office?

Curriculum/Evaluation

1. How do you go about planning a lesson?
2. What are the most important issues in developing lesson plans?
3. Describe a lesson or activity you have used or would use to develop a concept.
4. Describe your favorite lesson plan.
5. What are some new ideas you have implemented in your classroom?
6. How do you individualize learning in your classroom?
7. One of the important qualifications that is important to this position is

having the knowledge and understanding of appropriate instructional practices. Please explain your qualifications in teaching: reading, writing, math, science, social studies, technology, etc.

8. Tell me about your experiences with the following areas: grouping/learning strategies; working with computers; working with special education students (inclusion); open/closed classrooms (elementary); approaches to teaching reading; math manipulatives; and hands-on methods (lab-oriented in science).
9. What are your expectations for student achievement?
10. How do you build rapport with your students?
11. If I were to come into a classroom where you are teaching, what could I expect to see?
12. What methods have you used to assess student learning?
13. What did you learn from a failed lesson plan?



14. What types of assessments do you use?
15. What is the role of homework?
16. How will your instruction support performance based assessment?
17. How do you prepare students for proficiency tests?

Reading

1. What are the important skills/concepts in reading? For K-2 or 3-6?
2. Describe the type of reading program you would like to set up in your classroom.
3. What reading interventions are you familiar with?
4. What strategies do you use to improve reading skills of students who are far below grade level?
5. What is your view on the role of phonics in the reading program?

Writing

1. Describe how you would set up your writing program.
2. How do you plan to teach grammar and help students develop those skills?
3. How would you respond to a child who says he doesn't know what to write?
4. What would you do with a child who consistently has many grammatical mistakes?

Math

1. What are the important parts of an effective math program?
2. Describe any math lesson you have taught. Detail the objective, the activity, and the evaluation.
3. Describe the use of worksheets in your math program.
4. How would you help students with problem solving?

Special Needs Students

1. What specific approaches or ideas do you have for teaching at-risk students?
2. How do you adapt your curriculum for special education?

3. What do you need to do as a special education teacher to build bridges with regular education staff?
4. Discuss your familiarity with special needs students.
5. How much knowledge and experience have you had with inclusion or collaborative teaching? How did you evaluate these practices?

Technology/Computer

1. Give examples of your use of technology as an instructional tool.
2. How would you use technology to facilitate learning?
3. What experience have you had incorporating computers in a classroom?

Role of Co-Workers/Principal

1. What is your feeling about working with teams of teachers/staff?
2. Describe your role on a team project.
3. What can your principal expect from you?
4. What do you expect from your administrators?

Diversity

1. How would you reinforce sensitivity to multicultural diversity?
2. Describe your experiences working with a diverse student body.
3. How do you deal with people (e.g., staff, parents) who differ from you?

Parent/Guardian

1. In what creative ways have you involved parents in what you do in the classroom both academically and behaviorally?
2. How have you handled an irate parent?
3. What steps would you take prior to a parent-teacher conference to ensure its success?
4. How have you dealt with conflict in the past?

Inappropriate Inquiries

Inappropriate inquiries or illegal questions are asked when an untrained interviewer is trying to be friendly and inquires innocently about your personal life or family background. How do you respond? You can either answer in brief and move to a new topic area, or ignore the question and redirect the discussion to a more appropriate area. Pre-employment inquiries into the following areas might be viewed as illegal questions, or imply an intention to discriminate:

- Birthplace, nationality, or ancestry (Example: Is Raul a Spanish name?)
- Birthdate or age (Example: What year were you born?)
- Applicant's gender, marital status, or inquiries regarding your roommates or family members (Example: Is that your maiden name?)
- Race or color (Example: Are you considered part of a minority group?)
- Religion or religious days observed (Example: Which church do you go to?)
- Physical disabilities (Example: What disabilities do you have?)
- Health or medical history (Example: Do you have any pre-existing conditions?)
- Pregnancy, birth control, or child care (Example: How many kids do you have?)

If a recruiter asks a question that is blatantly discriminatory and offensive, you can terminate the interview. Be sure to let the Career Center know if you feel the illegal interview questions were intentional.

Types of Interviews

On-Campus Interviews

While on-campus interviews may be the easiest interviews for you to obtain, it is not enough just to show up for the interview. You need to perform at your best to gain anything from on-campus interviewing. Choose organizations wisely. Career Center consultants are available to help you decide which organizations best meet your career needs. Large corporations with recognized names are always popular, yet some of the best employers go by unnoticed because they are less well known.

It is easy to visit a company's website to learn about their opportunities. Many of the smaller companies are often more growth-oriented and can offer better opportunities for advancement.

Access job listings frequently on WorkNet as new companies add interview schedules daily.

Telephone Interviews

There are three types of telephone interviews:

1. You initiate a call to the hiring manager.
2. A recruiter calls you based on a previous contact.
3. You schedule a time with a recruiting representative to interview over the phone.

Think of any telephone conversation with an employer as an interview, not just a phone call. Prepare yourself by having all of your materials accessible when you are on the telephone, especially a copy of your resume, portfolio, pen, paper, and appointment calendar. You may also want to include a "cheat sheet" of stories to back up your answers and to provide specific points about the company and its products. Make sure you eliminate background noises and interruptions. Turn off the TV and ignore call waiting. If you are called unexpectedly or at a time inconvenient for you, try to reschedule an appointment to call back.

Consider dressing professionally as if you were going to the interview. Doing this will help you maintain your confident and professional attitude, even though the interviewer(s) cannot see you.

On-Site Interviews

After an on-campus screening interview, the second interview generally takes place at the employer's location. The on-site interview is your next chance to present your skills and potential to the employer, and ultimately to the person making the final hiring decision. This interview also is your opportunity to evaluate the organization. You will see the work environment and meet some of your potential co-workers.

The on-site interview will probably take the entire day and may include pre-employment testing. Some companies use aptitude assessments while others use simulations of on-the-job situations. Interviews themselves are a test of your poise, stamina, and enthusiasm.

During an on-site interview, various supervisors, senior managers, potential co-workers and representatives from Human Resources will speak with you. These interviews will be conducted in a manner similar to your first interview; however, you will most likely spend a longer time with each person. While a series of individual interviews is the most common format for the on-site interview, you also may find yourself being interviewed by

a group of people. When answering questions in a group setting, try to make eye contact periodically with each interviewer.

You will be expected to talk more about your education, work experiences, and career and life goals. To prepare for the interviews, review a copy of the job description and identify your transferable skills that match the position. Prepare SOAR examples that highlight and sell your accomplishments.

Learn as much as you can by researching the industry and the organization thoroughly. Be knowledgeable about its products and services, history, major competitors, financial situation, and long-range plans. Communicating your knowledge about the organization is a terrific way to demonstrate your interest in the employer. You also will have more time to ask questions, so be prepared. This is your chance to find out more about the company or school district. It is not appropriate at this time to ask about salary and benefits. You do not want to give the impression that you are only interested in the financial rewards of the job.

If asked about your salary requirements, try to give a range that you are willing to accept. Conduct research before your on-site interview to find out the average starting salary for this type of position. The best time to discuss salary and benefits is after you have been offered the job.

As you meet individuals from different areas and ranks, consider the following:

Immediate supervisors will focus on your interest in working for the organization, professional goals, and potential fit with other members of the department. You should ask questions about the orientation and training program for new employees, primary job responsibilities, current or special projects, performance expectations, and the amount of support you can expect.

Senior managers will inquire about your long-term career and life goals. Be prepared to discuss industry trends and ask questions about the organization's long-range goals.

Potential co-workers commonly discuss your work style and your ability to function effectively within a team environment. Ask these individuals questions about the work environment, organization culture, level of interaction with senior administrators or managers, and possibilities for professional development and promotion.

A representative from human resources will meet with you, perhaps at the end of the day, and discuss your feelings and reactions to your

interview experience. The representative will ask you questions about your job search and your immediate career goals. Ask the human resources representative about new employee orientation, the training schedule, professional development opportunities, travel and relocation requirements, and the performance appraisal process.

If the on-site interview is your second chance to make a good impression, your report of your interviewing expenses will be the third. In most cases, the employer will tell you which expenses are covered when scheduling your on-site interview. If expenses are not mentioned, ask about the employer's policy on reimbursing candidates for their travel and hotel expenses before you purchase airline tickets or make hotel reservations.

The following guidelines will help you manage your interviewing expenses appropriately:

- Keep and make copies of all receipts. Be prepared to submit them with the records of your expenses. If you drive, record your route and the round trip mileage. When you meet with your host at the end of the trip, you will usually be asked to fill out an expense report.
- Ask for reimbursement only for the expenses of your trip, not extras like entertainment, flight insurance, evening snacks and beverages, or tips.
- Be sensible. How you spend an organization's travel allowance is a good indication of how you might spend their money as an employee. Reimbursement policies vary among organizations. Some set fixed dollar rates, while others ask the candidate to use his/her own judgment.
- If you visit other organizations on the same trip, pro-rate your expenses for each.
- You may be reimbursed on the spot, but most organizations will mail you a check approximately one to four weeks after your visit.

After the Interview

Evaluate your performance in the interview

Were you able to describe your skills and abilities clearly? What questions were difficult for you to answer and how did you answer them? What were your interview strengths and weaknesses?

Assess your fit for this position

Is the job a good fit with your professional goals? What was your impression of the work environment?

Interview Turn-Offs

- Arriving Late. This gives the employer a good reason not to hire you.
- Seeming over-eager or desperate.
- Being too humble about your accomplishments.
- Appearing overconfident, arrogant, or too egocentric about your accomplishments.
- Giving canned, unoriginal responses.
- Using poor grammar or slang in your speech.
- Being dishonest or fabricating information.
- Criticizing your previous employers, bosses, or co-workers.
- Being uninformed about the employer and the position for which you are interviewing.
- Making negative statements about the organization's products, services, or employees.
- Asking questions to which you should already know the answer.
- Asking about salary and benefits before you receive a solid offer.
- Taking the interview for practice or conveying a "just shopping" attitude.
- Wearing unprofessional attire, heavy cologne or perfume, too much make-up, not bathing, showing multiple piercings, and/or unusual tattoos.
- Answering your cell phone during the interview because you forgot to turn it off.
- Assuming you are entitled to the job because you have earned a college degree.
- Failing to thank the recruiter for the interview.

What was your impression of your potential co-workers? What is the potential for growth and advancement?

Write a thank you letter

Be sure to thank the interviewer, reiterate your interest in the job, and highlight your strongest qualifications. If you spoke to more than one person, consider writing thank you letters to each individual with whom you spoke.

On-the-Spot Job Offers

It is not uncommon in today's highly competitive market for some employers to make job offers at the conclusion of the on-site interview. Some will even offer a signing bonus to encourage expedient acceptance. It is appropriate to ask for time to consider any offer received at the second interview. Usually the employer would like a response within several days to three weeks

after an offer is extended. If possible, ask for a written offer. Chapters 6 and 7 cover job offers and decision-making in more detail.

Once you decide to accept an offer, contact your future boss by telephone to communicate your decision. It is also a good idea to send a letter confirming your acceptance of the terms of the offer and expressing your excitement about joining the employer's team.



Practice Interview Questions

1. Tell me about yourself.

2. What are your greatest strengths? Tell me about a weakness.

3. Tell me about a time in which you effectively demonstrated your communication skills.

4. Please give an example that best demonstrates your leadership skills.

Practice Interview Questions

5. Why did you choose this major/field of study?

6. Tell me what you know about our company and why you are interested in this position.

7. Please describe an experience where you used your teamwork skills to manage a recent challenge.

8. What goals have you set for yourself?

9. Do you have any questions for me?

Sample Responses to the Practice Interview Questions

1. Tell me about yourself.

Give a thirty-second commercial about yourself. Be sure to link your experience, skills, course work, and accomplishments to the position at hand.

Poor example:

My name is Joe Smith; I am an IPC major.

OK example:

My name is Joe Smith, and I am an Interpersonal Communications major. I am interested in this position because I like meeting new people and I have some experience in sales.

Excellent example:

My name is Joe Smith and I am an Interpersonal Communications major. My interest in sales began in high school, where I sold candy for band fundraisers. As one of the top sales representatives at We Sell That Company, I gained experience in consistently meeting and surpassing the sales quota. I have also constructed an effective sales plan for my marketing class, in which I helped a local business increase revenue by 30%. I am especially interested in your sales position because it involves developing marketing strategies to increase the sales volume of existing customers and developing new accounts.

2. What are your greatest strengths? Tell me about a weakness.

Be sure to emphasize your strengths, which are pertinent to the position. Present your weakness as an undeveloped or untested skill, and explain what you are doing to improve.

Poor example:

My greatest strength is my high GPA. A weakness I have is that I am always late.

OK example:

My greatest strength is my high GPA, which is a reflection of my strong work ethic. A weakness I possess is that I have a hard time saying “no”.

Excellent example:

My greatest strength is my dedication. I always give 100% to everything that I do. For example, in my role as President of the Sales and Marketing Club, I dedicated a great deal of time to improving our recruiting efforts and increased club membership by 45%. A weakness I possess is a tendency to take on too many projects. To overcome this weakness, I am working on setting more realistic goals, sharpening my time management skills, and

learning to say “no”. I have learned that producing high quality work is more important to me than accomplishing a long list of low priority tasks. If hired for your sales opening, I will commit my full energies to the position.

3. Tell me about a time in which you effectively demonstrated your communication skills.

This is an example of a behavioral interview question. Employers ask behavioral questions to anticipate your future behavior or accomplishments based on your past behaviors or accomplishments. The SOAR model provides you with a framework that will help organize your response. The model has four components:

Situation (Think of a situation in which you were involved.)

Obstacle (Describe the obstacles you encountered in the situation.)

Action (Specify the actions you took to overcome the obstacles and achieve your results.)

Result (Highlight the positive outcomes and link your example to the position.)

Poor example:

I had to give a speech for one of my classes and I received an A on it.

OK example:

For one of my classes, I gave a speech on the current fashion trends in Europe. My speech went well and I believe I was able to communicate clearly my findings.

Excellent example:

For my fashion marketing class, I was assigned to give an hour-long speech on the current trends in European fashion. At first it was difficult to find the information I wanted. However, after researching many sources, I found many interesting facts. I prepared for the speech by writing key points on note cards, and I rehearsed the speech several times to make sure it was the proper length. My speech went well and I believe that I was able to communicate the emerging trends in European fashion to the class in a clear and concise manner. I understand that your trainees have the opportunity to give a presentation to senior management on the results of their projects. I am confident in my public speaking skills, and I would enjoy sharing project results with managers.

4. Please give an example that best demonstrates your leadership skills.

This is another example of a behavioral interview

question. The purpose of behavioral questions is to anticipate future behavior based on your past behaviors or accomplishments. The SOAR model provides you with a framework that will help organize your response. Remember to apply all four components of the SOAR Model (see SOAR explanation in the sample response to question number three) when you answer behavioral questions.

Poor example:

I believe the best example of my leadership abilities is the fact that I was elected to the position of secretary of Psi Chi, a national honor society for psychology.

OK example:

I am the secretary of Psi Chi, a national honor society for psychology, and I have organized many activities and service projects for the club.

Excellent example:

As secretary and member of the executive committee of Psi Chi, a national honor society for psychology, I have organized many activities and service projects for the club. One activity that was quite successful was a five-day service project working in a soup kitchen in Baltimore, Maryland. It took a considerable amount of planning, coordination, and investment of time and money, but in the end I believe it was worth it. We were able to help out the community while gaining a greater understanding of the needs of homeless individuals and families. Personally, I refined my project management and communication skills and learned about poverty and other social problems. I believe this experience will help me to understand and relate to your clients.

5. Why did you choose this major/field of study?

Relate your response to the position.

Poor example:

I never really thought about it. The field of sociology is just interesting to me.

OK example:

I chose sociology as my major because I have always been interested in group process and social issues.

Excellent example:

I chose sociology as my major because I am very interested in group dynamics and social relationships, and I want to be able to apply theories to real life social problems. One of my research papers was on substance abuse and addiction. I learned about successful educational

programs and prevention strategies for teaching college students to drink responsibly. I believe this knowledge has prepared me to be a successful counselor at your Alcohol Awareness Program.

6. Tell me what you know about our company and why you are interested in this position.

Demonstrate that you have done your research and express interest in the company.

Poor example:

I really don't know much about your company. Could you please tell me more?

OK example:

I know that your company is involved with the paint industry and its headquarters is in Cleveland, Ohio.

Excellent example:

I know that your company is a global producer of paints and coatings, and is known for new product innovation. As a chemist, I am excited about your new developments in coating formulations for automotive finishes. There are several reasons I wish to work for Sherwin-Williams. Through your extensive training program, I can develop my technical skills and knowledge while working on "hands-on" projects in a team environment. I am a solution-oriented individual who enjoys challenging applied science projects.

7. Please describe an experience where you used your teamwork skills to manage a recent challenge.

This is another example of a behavioral question. Remember why employers ask behavioral questions? They ask them to anticipate your future behavior based on your past behaviors or accomplishments. Remember to apply all four of the components of the SOAR model (see SOAR explanation in the sample response to question number three) when you answer behavioral questions.

Poor example:

Even though I don't like working in group projects, I worked on a group project for my communications class and we got an A on it.

OK example:

In a communications class, I worked on a group project. Group projects are often challenging for me, but I was able to work well with the other people in my group because we all divided the tasks and each person did his/her fair share of the work. In the end, we did well on our group project and earned an A.

Excellent example:

During my junior year, I took a communications class, in which the majority of the grade was dependent upon a final group research project on time management skills. At first it was challenging working in the group because I was tempted to try to do all of the work by myself. However, I learned to trust my group members because they demonstrated an excellent work ethic and put forth tremendous effort. We divided the research project into key components and each of us took one aspect. We met weekly as a group and gave each other constructive feedback. In the end, we had a successful group project and I learned a great deal about delegation, follow through, and communication.

8. What goals have you set for yourself?

For this question, you want to focus on your professional goals. Be sure to have specific, measurable goals that you can discuss. Try to link your answer to the position and company.

Poor example:

I guess my goal would have to be to graduate on time and get a good paying job.

OK example:

My main goal is to get a job in the computer science field so I can use and enhance my programming experience.

Excellent example:

One goal I have is to enter the computer science field as a programmer with a company such as yours. I have taken classes in advanced programming concepts, systems programming, and software components and data structures at BGSU. The curriculum is quite challenging, and I have learned much about computer programming.

I would welcome the opportunity to use my education and knowledge as a programmer with your company.

9. Do you have any questions for me?

You always want to prepare a few questions to ask during the interview. Here is another opportunity to use the information you gathered during your company research. Ask questions about the position responsibilities, typical projects, an orientation program for new employees, the structure and length of training, and supervisor expectations. It is a good idea to ask about the decision timeline, so you have an idea of when the interviewer is going to make a hiring decision. Before you leave the interview, ask for the recruiter's business card, so you can send a thank you letter within

48 hours of the interview. Examples of thank you letters can be found in Chapter 4, the Job Search Letters chapter, of this guide. Remember to thank the interviewer at the conclusion of the interview.

Poor example:

I really don't have any questions for you, but I guess I want to know how much I will be making. (Avoid asking questions relating to salary during your first interview.)

OK examples:

- What is it like to work at your company?
- How many openings do you have?
- Will you train me?

Excellent examples:

- How would you describe the work environment?
- What is a typical day like in this job?
- Please describe some projects that are planned for this year.
- What qualities seem to typify the most successful people in this position?
- What opportunities exist to work with employees from other business units?
- How often will I meet with my supervisor?
- Is there a dress code I would be expected to follow?
- If you had to do it all over again, would you make the same decision to join this organization? Why?
- How often and by whom are performance reviews given?
- What are the opportunities for professional development and learning on the job?
- What is your decision timeline for filling this position?
- What is the next step in the selection process?
- What else can I tell you about myself to convince you I am the best person for this job?

For more ideas about what to ask an employer during an interview, check out the Questions you Can Ask Employers section of this chapter (located on page 76).

Practice Interview Questions for Educators

1. What motivated you to become a teacher?

2. Take me through the steps you used to create and execute a successful lesson beginning with the planning, then the delivery, and ending with indicators of student success.

3. Tell me about a specific experience you had addressing a student's disruptive behavior in the classroom. When would you involve others on the educational team such as counselors and/or administrators?

Practice Interview Questions for Educators

4. What has been the most challenging aspect of your student teaching experience?

5. How would you collaborate with other teachers to integrate learning across the curriculum?

6. Please tell me about your teaching philosophy and what you consider to be the essential constructs.

Sample Responses to the Practice Interview Questions for Educators

I. What motivated you to become a teacher?

Poor example:

I wanted to become a teacher because I love kids.

OK example:

Growing up, I always knew I wanted to become a teacher. I have worked with children in a variety of settings, which sparked my desire to work with children in a school setting.

Excellent example:

My interest in teaching began in high school when I participated in a mentoring program designed to improve the social interaction skills of elementary students, in grades 1-3. Through the program, I mentored a second grade student on a weekly basis for the entire school year. Following a set of objectives, which included building rapport and a relationship with the student and creating educational activities tied to the curriculum, I helped him develop his interpersonal communication skills through cooperative learning, peer interaction, and play. It has been five years and I still stay in contact with that student. As a result of my positive experience mentoring this student, I interviewed for and was offered a position at the local YMCA as a summer camp counselor. In this position, I gained experience working with children of various ages, socioeconomic backgrounds, and developmental levels. Completing my student teaching experience at McKinley Elementary in the Toledo Public Schools has solidified my interest in and commitment to teaching in an urban school setting at the second or third grade level. I was pleased to learn your students also participate in the Character Counts program, which rewards children for good manners and helps them learn positive character traits.

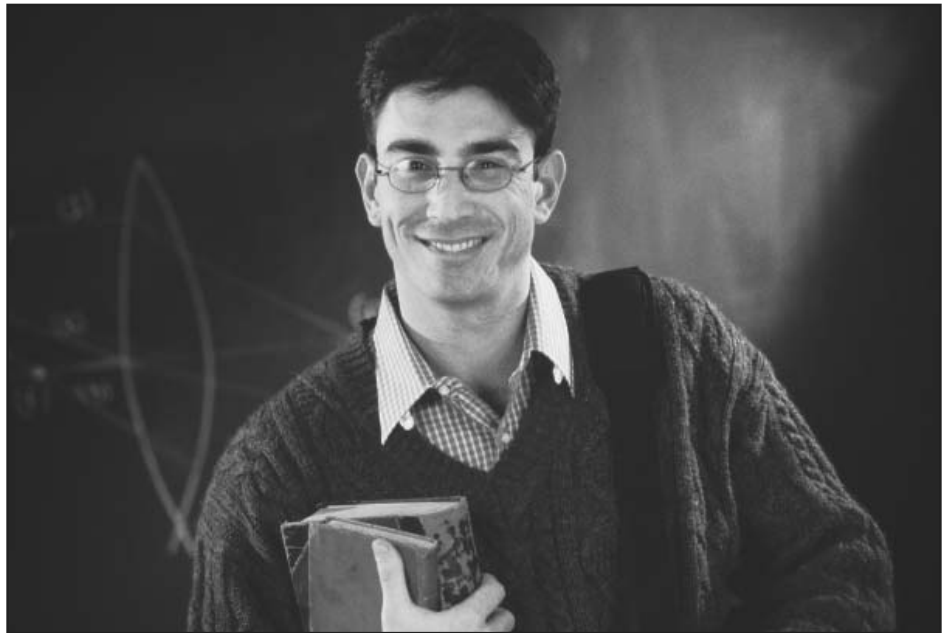
2. Take me through the steps you used to create and execute a successful lesson beginning with the planning, then the delivery, and ending with indicators of student success.

Poor example:

The basic step in creating a lesson plan is to know the students and their needs.

OK example:

Lesson planning involves creating activities to meet the needs of the students. As an indicator of student success, assessment is an important component for creating an effective lesson plan.



Excellent example:

Successful lesson planning begins with several essential questions. What are the academic content standards (e.g., what should every student know and be able to do) for the subject area and grade level? What are my learning objectives for this lesson? What type of learning experiences and methods will be most effective? What resources (e.g., worksheets, computers) will the students need to support learning? How will the students demonstrate their new knowledge and skills (direct and indirect assessment methods)?

It also is critical that I take into consideration my students' prior knowledge, attitudes, motivation for learning, and individual needs as I develop lesson plans.

Next, I write a step-by-step description of how I plan to achieve the learning objectives. This includes the following: how I will to introduce the topic/concept, strategies to capture students' attention and engage them in active learning, my ideas on the most effective ways to teach the topic/concept and manage various activities, and a plan to assess my students' learning. In my experience in student teaching, I learned to break up the lesson into short segments. For example, 10-15 minutes on an introduction and mini-lesson, 10-20 minutes for an activity where students apply the skill, and 5-7 minutes for a closing activity. I believe it is important to vary the types of activities to get the children moving around, working in groups, and working individually to discover the information. I have used scavenger hunts, games, and creative art projects that enable the students to practice or apply skills. If I expect my students to apply knowledge and skills, I know it

is critical to provide them with the opportunity to practice during the lesson.

3. Tell me about a specific experience you have had addressing a student's disruptive behavior in the classroom. When would you involve others on the educational team such as counselors and/or administrators?

Poor example:

My cooperating teacher dealt with all of the discipline problems that arose.

OK example:

As a student teacher, I developed a very good rapport with my students. I did have one classroom management issue that was resolved after I spoke with the child's parents and learned that he was exceptionally bright and bored with school.

Excellent example:

In my role as a student teacher at an urban middle school in downtown Toledo, I was faced with a student who often spoke out of turn disrupting the entire class. My cooperating teacher had established class rules at the beginning of the school year, so I know she understood the expected behaviors and consequences for infractions. I reminded the entire class that interrupting other students "robs" them of a learning opportunity. After class, I spoke with her privately about her inappropriate behavior. I also wanted to get to know her personally and begin to establish trust. It has been my experience that students are more receptive to feedback when you show concern about them as individuals and reassure them your motivation is to help them succeed and not to control them. We actually spent

most of our conversation talking about her siblings and involvement in extracurricular activities.

When the behavior persisted, I had her write a reflection paper, explaining what she did wrong, why her misbehavior is a problem, what behavior is expected, and what she will do in the future to correct the situation. When we reviewed her paper together, I learned she was having issues with self-esteem and anger management and referred her to the school counselor for professional help. I am glad she trusted me enough to talk about her feelings. After counseling, her behavior and attitude toward school improved noticeably.

This experience reinforced for me that referrals to and consultation with counselors and administrators may be required to resolve serious issues. I am also cognizant of the need to establish open lines of communication with parents as they can be invaluable allies.

4. What has been the most challenging aspect of your student teaching experience?

Poor example:

The most challenging aspect of my student teaching experience was learning to plan and organize my day. Most of my planning revolved around grading papers, preparing worksheets, and writing my lesson plan and questions for the day. My primary form of instruction was lecture, reinforced through student worksheets.

OK example:

I found it difficult to gauge the amount of time needed for a specific activity. Directing activities enabling students to interact in groups or teams requires skillful management of time. Over the semester, I learned to combine direct teaching methods with self-determined student activities. Using this approach, the students found the material easier to comprehend.

Excellent example:

One of the fundamental skills I improved during student teaching was my ability to plan and organize daily lessons. Initially, I found it difficult to balance all of the different elements of teaching, such as, stating objectives for every lesson and exercise, presenting and demonstrating concepts, structuring and directing in-class activities to get students to practice skills and apply concepts, asking open-ended questions to probe for understanding, evaluating students' responses, providing feedback, and summarizing the essential ideas.

At first, I had a tendency to rely heavily on lecture and other teacher-centered instructional

methods. Over time, I learned to shift the focus of my instruction to methods incorporating active learning and cooperative learning. For my general science class, I designed activities and projects in which students worked in teams to select appropriate resources to find information, brainstorm possible alternatives, design and conduct experiments, discuss and debate choices, identify risks and consequences, and reach consensus on the best strategy or solution. Through cooperative learning, my students learned to respect and use others ideas, formulate their own questions, assume responsibility for understand relationships across subjects, and apply new knowledge and skills to solve real-life problems.

5. How would you collaborate with other teachers to integrate learning across the curriculum?

Poor example:

I prefer to work autonomously, however, I would volunteer to serve on committees and take advantage of team teaching opportunities.

OK example:

Collaborating with and learning from experienced teachers is important for my professional development. Although I have limited experience working with colleagues to integrate learning across the curriculum, I would offer my opinion, when asked, and listen to veteran teachers and administrators to broaden my perspective.

Excellent example:

Collaborating with colleagues on curriculum would be extremely exciting. I would welcome the opportunity to exchange ideas with others about lesson plans, instructional methods, instructional and learning technologies, and assessment strategies. By using a collaborative approach, both students and educators benefit. Developing integrated plans across the curriculum promotes deeper learning by helping students understand the interrelatedness of all subjects. As educators, we are more invested in curriculum when directly involved in the design process. I recognize my success as a teacher depends on my understanding and application of curriculum standards, ability to build collaborative relationships with other teachers and administrators, and commitment to ongoing professional development.

6. Please tell me about your teaching philosophy and what you consider to be the essential constructs.

Poor example:

I don't have a teaching philosophy. What philosophy does your school district suggest?

OK example:

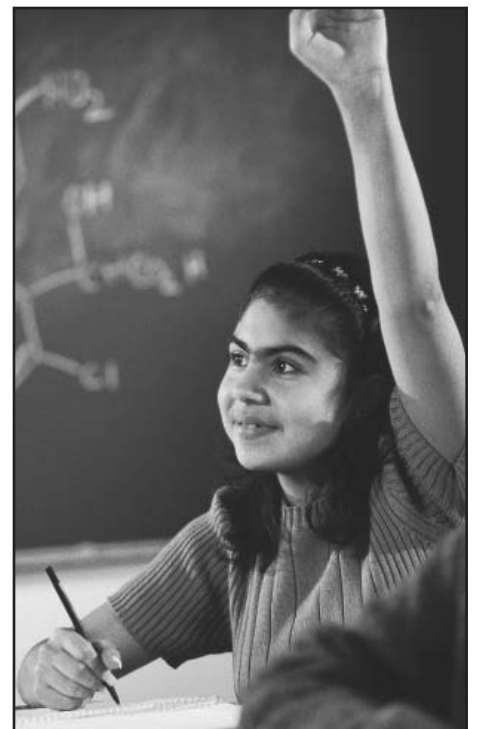
My philosophy of teaching is based on Jean Piaget's Theory of Constructivism. I demonstrate this by incorporating hands-on activities in every class.

Excellent example:

I have several guiding beliefs about teaching and learning that shape my actions in the classroom. I believe students work harder when my high expectations and performance standards are communicated clearly. My primary role as an educator is to facilitate learning by helping my students construct and make meaning of concepts and theories for themselves.

I believe all students have the ability to learn and contribute to society. This is accomplished through their persistence and commitment to reaching their full potential as citizens, workers, and learners. I hope to instill in my students a love for life-long learning and model for them active learning. I believe success is not gauged by inherent talent. Students' active participation in classroom activities and lessons demonstrate desire to learn. I am committed to encouraging and rewarding their effort.

An illustration of my philosophy of education is my approach to student engagement. I use various methods to promote active learning, including learning centers, group and team activities, technology stations, hands-on projects, and library visits. Ultimately, my goal is to help students become self-confident and motivated learners.



Interview Checklist

Before the Interview

- Research the organization. If possible, talk with people who work there prior to your interview. Be able to discuss the organization's products and services. Check into the organization's competition.
- Gather materials you need such as extra copies of your resume and a list of references.
- Expect to fill out application forms and encounter many different questions, personalities, and interviewing techniques (especially behavioral interviewing techniques).
- Organize your thoughts. Plan answers to possible questions and know how to describe your skills.
- Dress appropriately, neat, and conservative. Keeping your audience and your potential employer in mind is critical, because first impressions are lasting. This applies to your total appearance: hair, outfit, shoes, posture, and accessories.
- Reassure yourself. Interviewers want to hire someone who will benefit the organization. Confidence in your abilities will convince them you can be a great asset.

During the Interview

- Be on time!
- Relax and be yourself.
- Show interest and enthusiasm! If you appear bored throughout the interview and seem uninterested in the organization, the employer will think you are not interested in the job. Also, try to relate your interest to the organization's goals and mission.
- Take brief notes. Write down people's names and important facts about the organization to reference at a later date or in your thank you letter.
- Listen carefully and answer all questions completely.
- Ask questions. This is your chance to use your prior research to impress the employer. Using the information you have collected, ask questions to show you are interested in the organization's mission or goals. Ask about hours, travel, and advancement opportunities—this is also your chance to find out as much as you can to help make informed decisions about employment.
- Make points politely. Stress your best qualities and tell the employer what you can bring to the position and to the organization without boasting.
- Convey a positive attitude about yourself, the organization, current employees, and former employers.
- If you are asked about previous employment: never exaggerate, underestimate, cover up past records, or complain about previous employers or their practices. You never know how those experiences or people may influence a current job search.
- Ask when you can expect to hear about the hiring decision. You may also want to ask about the next step in the selection process.

After the Interview

- Send a thank you letter within 48 hours. Stress to the recruiter your interest in the position and organization.
- Make inquiries if you have not heard from the organization within the amount of time discussed in your interview. Phone to see if the job has been filled. If you do not get the job, you can check back periodically to see if new positions open up and continue to express your interest in employment with the organization.
- If you are rejected, do not be discouraged. Review your job search plan, continue to find ways of improving your job skills, and plan your next move!

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