



# Interviewing

### PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

So you landed the interview. Now what? This is where you make it or break it, so it's critical that you spend time preparing.

- Research the organization (see How To Guide)
- Review the job description. Highlight the qualities the organization is looking for in a candidate and determine how your own skills match the job.
- Review your resume. Many recruiters will ask you questions directly from what you have listed.
- Be able to describe at least three situations that demonstrate your skills. Remember to use the S.T.A.R. method to discuss them:
  - Situation/Task – what was situation/task?
  - Action – what did you do?
  - Result – what was the result?
- Verbally practice the most common interview questions.
- Prepare several intelligent questions to ask the interviewer. Do **NOT** ask about salary, benefits, vacation, or days off. Focus on the future with the company—topics such as:
  - Career paths – advancement opportunities
  - Training – how long
  - Performance evaluation – when, how
- Try on your interview clothes (see How To Guide)
- Conduct a trial run to the interview site. How long will it take for you to get there? Will you have to pay for parking? Consider traffic and the time of day.
- **Arrange a mock interview at the Career Center.**
- Take with you to the interview: resume, cover letter, letters of reference, pen, portfolio, writing samples (if relevant), note pad.

### TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

**Telephone Interviews:** Employers typically use the telephone interview as a screening tool to decide whom to interview in person. This can be a very simple interview with just a few questions or it may be a full 30+ minute interview. The interviewee must be careful to speak clearly, listen attentively and communicate sincerely since the interviewer does not have the ability to read body language over the telephone.

**One-on-One Interviews:** This is probably the most frequently used interview. This meeting incorporates an individual approach to the interview process and allows you to meet

directly with one interviewer. Work to establish rapport with the interviewer, as this is the only person making a decision on whether to offer you a second interview, or even the job.

**Panel Interviews:** In a panel interview, several individuals will interview you at one time. Interviewers may take turns asking you prepared questions. If a panel is interviewing you, relax, get a feel for the group dynamics, and keep communication lines open by periodically making eye contact with all panel members as you respond to questions.

**Group interviews:** The group interview is almost the complete opposite of the panel interview. In the group interview, there is one interviewer and several interviewees, with interviewees competing to see who will surface as the leader of the group. The person who answers questions professionally and diplomatically wins the competition and the right to continue in the interviewing process or to get the job.

**Follow-up Interview/On-site Visit:** If an employer is interested in continuing the employment process with you after the first interview, you may be invited for a second interview or on-site visit. A tour of the facilities, staff introduction, and multiple interviews typically characterize this type of interview.

### ANSWERING QUESTIONS

The way you respond to interview questions tells the interviewer whether or not you are qualified. Therefore, it is important to know what types of questions may be asked and what responses are appropriate. A thorough review of the position job description will help you to prepare for the types of questions that you may be asked.

You may also wish to create an "interview study guide" where you highlight key phrases from the job description, list your strengths and challenges, and write down specific examples or experiences where you have demonstrated the qualifications the employer seeks.

Practice interviewing before your scheduled interview. A good way to get started is to obtain a list of sample



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interview questions, prepare potential answers and practice interviewing with someone. Check out the **Interviewing Handbook** for commonly asked questions.

### During an interview, remember the Three P's:

Before formulating an answer to an interview question, consider applying the Three P's to your response:

- **Ponder**  
Ask yourself why the employer has asked you a question. This will help you determine what skill, trait, value, or ability is being measured. Try to respond to the question by giving an example of a time when you demonstrated the criteria that is being sought or evaluated.
- **Prove**  
Prove every statement you make by providing clear and specific examples.
- **Project**  
Project a positive image even when the questioning gets negative. If you are asked to state one of your weaknesses, do so. However, explain what you are doing to eliminate that weakness and what you have learned in that process.

### Behavioral Interviewing:

This type of interview is very popular as employers seek to determine whether or not you can actually demonstrate the skills needed for the position. In a behavioral interview you may be asked to give examples of instances when you have demonstrated a particular skill.

### SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why did you choose this occupational field?
- What do you consider to be your three greatest strengths/weaknesses?
- What things are most important to you in a job?
- What do you know about our organization that makes you want to work with us?
- What accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction?
- Tell me about a specific occasion in which you needed to adapt to a wide variety of people, situations, and/or environments.
- Where do you see yourself five years from now?

### ASKING QUESTIONS

It is essential that you ask questions during your interview; this will demonstrate to the employer that you are interested in the position and/or company. While questions regarding salary and benefits are considered inappropriate in a first interview, the following are examples of questions that you may ask:

- How long have you been with this organization?
- Describe your career path within this organization.
- What do you enjoy most about working for this organization?
- Is there a formal orientation program?
- What is the typical career path for this position?
- What are some of the biggest challenges facing this position, department, or organization?
- How does this position fit within the organization's structure and/or mission?

### INTERVIEW FOLLOW-UP

It is important to always send a thank-you note to the interviewer(s) after an interview. Note the names and job titles of everyone you meet during an interview. Thank-you letters should be mailed to every person who interviewed you within 24 hours of your interview; e-mailed letters may be appropriate in some instances with short timeframes. Consider sending handwritten thank-you notes to people you met throughout the day but who did not interview you (i.e. support staff members and tour guides).

For help with interviewing or any other career-related issue, come see us in the Career Center!

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