

Frequently Asked Questions About Interviewing

What is An Interview?

An interview is a screening process in which you are given the opportunity to learn more about an organization at the same time the organization has the opportunity to evaluate you as a prospective employee. The interview is an exchange of information between you and the interviewer to determine whether there is a match between your interests and qualifications and their job requirements and needs.

What Is the Purpose of the Interview?

While getting the interview is the purpose of your resume, getting the job is the purpose of the interview. The interview process provides you with a face-to-face opportunity to set yourself apart from your competition and expand on the information the employer already has about you from your resume. As a well-prepared candidate, you can use the interview process to send the message "I am the best person for this job" through everything you say and do.

To succeed in today's job market you must do more than be able to establish evidence of your talents and skills - you must be prepared to sell yourself. This requires you to have a thorough understanding of who you are including your long and short-term goals, what motivates you, and what you believe sets you apart from the competition.

How Can I Prepare for the Interview Process?

The interview process can be described as having three stages:

1. Before the interview
2. During the interview
3. After the interview

Solid preparation for each stage will increase your chances for success.

Stage 1 - Before the Interview

- Conduct a thorough self-assessment. Review your education, experience, interests, likes, dislikes, strengths, weaknesses and values. If you have never taken the Strong Interest Inventory the Myers Briggs Type Indicator, now might be a good time.

(continued)

Frequently Asked Questions About Interviewing

- Write your resume. Make it individualized and accurate. It is your best advertisement. Be able to support everything with specific examples as you will likely be asked to elaborate on some of them during the interview.
- Analyze the position for which you will be interviewing. Do you believe you will fit in and be able to contribute to the organization? Will the job enable you to reach your goals: personal growth, travel, flexibility, advancement, and geographic area?
- Research the organization. Learn as much as you can about such things as size, location, products/services, and benefits by reading company literature. Many companies now provide this information on-line via the Internet. Don't hesitate to request information directly from the company itself. Talk with employees of the company and people in the same profession when possible.
- Know how your experience, education and interests relate to the position and anticipate possible questions. This knowledge will allow you to answer why, when and where questions, and reflect your self-confidence and your ability to communicate and relate to others effectively.
- Practice Interviewing. Talk to Career Service staff members, people in the field, and even your friends. Discuss techniques, practice in front of a mirror or better yet videotape yourself. If possible, arrange a mock interview with one of these people.
- Consider creating a portfolio. Portfolios are not just for artists and teachers anymore. What documents and materials do you have that demonstrate your knowledge and accomplishments? These might include samples of your writing, portions of a successful project, letters of merit and appreciation, just about anything you believe will contribute to your attractiveness as a candidate.
- Acknowledge all preliminary correspondence promptly. This includes verifying the specifics of your interview including date, time, place, individuals conducting the interview, and an itinerary, if any. Determine who will bear the costs of necessary transportation, meals, and overnight lodging.
- Be prepared for the possibility of a drug screening test. More and more companies are requiring this. Consult with a Career Services staff member about your rights.
- Remember: If you appear prepared and competent in your interview, you will be perceived to be a prepared and competent employee.

(continued)

Frequently Asked Questions About Interviewing

Stage 2 - During the Interview

- Dress appropriately and comfortably. First impressions are important and include how you look. Look professional.
- Be punctual. It is recommended that you arrive about fifteen minutes early.
- Be aware of your nonverbal behavior patterns. Communication and how you manage it during your interview is critical. Nonverbal communication makes up as much as 65% of all communication so don't neglect it. How you dress, stand, sit, use your hands, move your head and eyes, how you listen, all work together to provide your interviewer with information about you beyond what you say.
- Play the part. Your evaluation begins as soon as you walk in the door. Maintain good posture, have a firm handshake, use eye contact, show enthusiasm, control any of your nervous mannerisms. Be polite and respectful to EVERYONE you come in contact with.
- Sell yourself. This is your opportunity to prove that you are the best candidate for the job. All your preparation will now pay off. Remember, the interviewer's job is to determine whether or not you are a good fit between you and the position for which you are applying. If you know yourself and understand the position, you can sell yourself as a match.
- Be a good listener. Focusing on the interviewer and the questions being asked will lessen your nervousness and enable you to answer questions more directly and succinctly. Although you are the one being asked most of the questions, YOU have total control of all the information your interviewer receives. When you are prepared and you listen carefully, you can make sure you answer each question with the information about yourself you want the employer to have.
- Be prepared to ask questions. Remember the interview is an exchange of information. You can ask for additional information or clarification of information you found in your research. You can also ask questions that will help you to decide if the organization can meet your goals and work needs. Your questions will demonstrate both your understanding of and interest in the position.
- Be honest and enthusiastic. The interviewer wants to learn about your background and abilities. Don't just give yes and no answers. Use specific examples whenever possible to illustrate specific skills and accomplishments and stress the positive rather than negative. Pick up a copy of FAQs About Behavioral Interviewing.

(continued)

Frequently Asked Questions About Interviewing

- Show you are likeable. Employers hire people who they like as well as those who they believe can do the job. Smile, be friendly, and maintain your composure no matter what.
- Know when the interview is over. Signs from your interview such as looking at a watch, putting papers in a pile, and moving back a chair are your cues that your interview is over. At this point you can help your interviewers by providing them with a summary of your qualifications, expressing your interest and desire to work for them, and thanking them for their time and consideration.

Stage 3 - After the Interview

- Analyze the interview. Although it is not recommended you take notes during the interview, it may be helpful for you to do so immediately afterwards. How did it go? What did you learn? What was your impression of the organization, the interviewer, and other people you may have met? It is a good idea to keep some kind of written record of each interview you have that includes any information you believe to be important.
- Write a thank you note. This remains one of the most neglected parts of the interview process. You can get an edge simply by being one who always sends a note. Reaffirm your interest and include any pertinent information you may have neglected to provide during the interview such as a response you felt was incomplete or needed to be expanded upon. If additional information or materials were requested, verify that it is being forwarded. Notes may be typed or hand written. You will have to determine which form is most appropriate for each interview.
- When appropriate, follow up. If you are told you will hear about a position by a specific date but do not, call the organization and ask about the current status of your candidacy.

(End)