

INTERVIEWING GUIDELINES

INTERVIEWING

The single most crucial part of the job-hunting process is the formal job interview; the face-to-face meeting with a hiring official when there is a definite job opportunity at stake. During the interview, both parties assess if they like each other and if they satisfy each other's needs. Not only will you be letting the employer know about your best qualities, but you will be attempting to gain a clearer impression of the employer and the position. All the time and effort you have spent preparing to make an oral presentation of what you have learned come together at this point. Now is the time to sell yourself!

The secret of good interviewing is good presentation, which requires preparation and skilled communication. You will not get a second chance in an interview. From the moment you greet the interviewer until you say good-bye, the impressions you create on that interviewer are irreversible. Making a formal, personal presentation of your knowledge, attitudes and skills, as related to the job you are seeking, means preparing by researching and practicing, just as you would if you were making a presentation to a class.

A good recruiter will attempt to evaluate those qualities you have that are not revealed in your resume: your behavior, what motivates you, your personality, your values, whether you are a leader or a follower, your ambitions, how well you communicate, and how much career planning you have really done. The interview will be a test of the preparation you have done and your ability to communicate it.

BE FOCUSED

- Develop a sound resume with experience and skills that support your objective or summary.
- Research job responsibilities for the position in advance; know what will be expected of you.
- Have a copy of the complete job description for that specific job.
- Research the potential employer.
- Know how you can benefit the employer; know the skills you have to offer.
- Prepare a “commercial” about yourself; include your background and experience and the reason you are interested in the position.

Opposite page: Bad suits happen to good people. Before you interview, buy a suit that fits properly or have your suit tailored to fix any minor imperfections to length or width!



- Have directions in advance; if driving, ask where you should park. If you are unfamiliar with the area it may be wise to drive by the area a day or so before the interview to see where you are going.
- Arrive early; find a restroom and use the mirror to be sure you are put together.
- Notify the receptionist of your arrival; ask if you need to complete an application.
- Be respectful of the receptionist or anyone else you should encounter. You never know where the power lies.
- Be sure you know how to pronounce the name of the person with whom you'll be interviewing.
- Observe the environment (corporate culture) and take note of newsletters or journals in the waiting room.
- Relax; take deep breaths.
- Reframe your thoughts if you're nervous; focus on "what it would be like to work here."
- Make sure your hands are dry.

STAGES OF THE INTERVIEW

1. Developing rapport: Follow the lead for small talk.
2. Background information: Keep them focused on your resume.
3. Match: Determining if your skills are a good fit for the position and company.
4. Closing: You should ask questions here.

Rehearse your answers to commonly asked interview questions. Keep in mind that employers are interested in HOW you respond and if it is in a logical and thoughtful manner. Try not to hurry your responses; take time to formulate your thoughts. It's fine for there to be a few seconds of silence as you prepare your answer.

Pay special attention to questions for which you answer "no." If you have to answer "no" then qualify it positively. For example, if you are asked if you can do something like sprout wings and fly to the moon and back within 24 hours, you might respond by saying "No, I didn't realize that was part of the job responsibilities. However, I know that I can learn..." The point is not to leave a negative perception with the interviewer.

Remember to analyze your answers after an interview. ALWAYS follow up with a thank you letter! If you forgot to say something, you can include the information in your thank you letter. It is a good idea to remind the interviewer of your qualifications and re-emphasize your strengths in your thank you letter.

INTERVIEWING SUMMARY

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

1. Assess yourself

Know your strengths and weaknesses before you walk in the door. Never expect an employer to tell you where you might fit in an organization—you should already know.

2. Read employer literature

You should have some knowledge of company policies, employment opportunities, products and services. Look for a chance in the interview to communicate what you know.

3. Verify the particulars

Find out the exact time and place of the interview. Arrive at least ten minutes early. There is no excuse for being late—ever! Learn the interviewer's name (including its proper pronunciation) and his/her title.

DURING THE INTERVIEW

4. Sell yourself

Don't just answer the questions. Illustrate your personal qualities and strongest abilities with examples from your past. Try to address any underlying questions you think the employer might have about your suitability for the job.

5. Dwell on the positive

Should the recruiter ask about past failures or shortcomings, try to explain circumstances rather than give excuses or blame others. You'll create a better impression by being honest and candid.

6. Non-verbal communication

Body language is critical. Are you sitting up straight? Are your hands and/or feet giving your nervousness away? Are you dressed in a professional manner? Your body language will leave both positive and negative messages. Ensure that yours is positive. Have a firm handshake, smile at the employer, give steady eye contact, be optimistic and confident, bright and alert. Do not twitch, scratch, fidget, slouch, mumble, talk too loudly, too softly, or sound pessimistic.

7. Always have your own questions to ask

If appropriate, ask meaningful questions. For instance, find out what the job responsibilities are, how training is provided, what advancement opportunities are available, how much travel is involved, what other individuals or departments you would work with most, how job performance is measured, etc.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

8. Follow-up

Provide whatever credentials, references, or transcripts that were requested by the prospective employer as soon as possible. Be sure to write down the name, title and address of the recruiter. You will want to write a thank you letter of appreciation for the interview opportunity.

SPECIALTY INTERVIEWS

Tips for handling telephone interviews adapted from Glenn Mandelkern, (Career Consultant):

- Go into a room with no distractions before the interview begins. Close the door to pets, family, roommates, etc. You don't want to be explaining the crash in the background when Fluffy knocked over the fish tank and is now screeching because she's wet.
- If you will be interviewing with multiple people on one end, write their names on sheets of paper and put them across from you. When "Mary" asks you a question, look at "Mary's" sheet of paper. This will help you remember who you are addressing.
- Stand when talking or sit in a chair with a straight back. Amazingly, your position affects the quality of your voice. If you are sitting down in casual clothes, you just won't project the same readiness as if you are standing or sitting at attention in a better wardrobe.

Talk only as much as necessary. Interviewers sometimes use silence in an attempt to make you talk more. You may feel that supplying more points helps you build your case, but that may work against you. Because you do not have the visual cues of body language to guide you, it can be difficult to gauge when you've said enough or if the person is buying what you have to say. You can always mark clearly the end of your response with a question such as "I believe my experience in System XYZ does apply to your current project, wouldn't you agree?"

SOME OTHER POINTS TO NOTE

- Do your best to be the one who calls. It's very disconcerting to be in the middle of something, only to have an employer call. If the employer calls, either try to schedule an appointment for the interview, or simply excuse yourself politely and offer to call back in five minutes. The person who makes the call has a certain advantage in knowing how he/she would like to structure the call, especially in terms of points he/she wants to cover. However if you sense agitation by the employer concerning you calling them back, do not insist on it. Speak with the employer at that time.
- Prepare a loose script. If you write something word for word, you will sound like you're giving a speech (like telemarketers). However, by just using trigger words on a notepad or post-its, you can make sure you get your points across by eliminating the post-it (or scratching off the notepad). You will be able to jog your memory by referring to the words.
- Practice talking about unrelated items. Open the Yellow Pages to any two pages. Many times you will find two subjects on the top of the page, such as "Bathtubs/Batteries". Talk about these two supposedly unrelated topics and link them. You can practice this alone or with others. It can be a lot of fun. Use this exercise to help build your confidence. Then if you are hit with a question from left field, you know you have the ability to tie it back to the subject at hand.
- Follow up the phone interview with a thank you letter, just as you would for a regular interview.

TOP TEN TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL SKYPE INTERVIEW

1. As if meeting in person, create a great first impression.
2. Maintain direct eye contact throughout the interview.
3. Be yourself – relax, smile, and let your personality show through.
4. Treat a Skype interview as a real face-to-face interview.
5. Practice on Skype before the interview.
6. Speak slowly and clearly and set the sound on the microphone so it's not too loud (it may create static).
7. Choose a background that's warm and inviting and not too busy or boring.
8. Check lighting so it's adequate and not too bright (it may close down the iris on the webcam).
9. Be sure to sit up and maintain good posture.
10. Dress for success as if it were an in-person interview.

Resource: <http://internships.about.com/od/interviewing/a/Learn-How-To-Ace-A-Skype-Interview.htm>



BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEWING

Employers predetermine which skills are necessary for the job opening and then ask very pointed questions to determine if the candidate possesses those skills. To assess which skills the employer is seeking, talk with alumni, read the company literature carefully and listen closely during the company's information session.

In the interview, your response needs to be specific and detailed. Tell them about a particular situation that relates to the question, not a general one. Tell them briefly the situation, what you did specifically and the positive result or outcome. Frame it in a four step process:

Using the STAR Method:

- Situation
- Task
- Action
- Results/Outcome

The interviewee tells a story for a few minutes. The interviewer may probe further for more depth or detail such as "What were you thinking at that point?" or "Tell me more about your meeting with that person," or "Lead me through your decision process."

- Always listen carefully to the question, ask for clarification if necessary and make sure you answer the question completely.
- Your interview preparation should include identifying examples of situations where you have demonstrated the behaviors sought by a company.
- Your resume will serve as a good guide when answering these questions. Refresh your memory regarding your achievements in the past couple of years. Demonstration of the desired behaviors may be proven in many ways.

Use examples from internships, classes, activities, team involvement, community service and work experience. In addition, you may use examples of which you may be especially proud, such as running a marathon, running for student body president or exhibiting paintings at an art show.

EXAMPLES OF BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEWING QUESTIONS:

On your people/interpersonal/customer service/supervisory skills:

- Give an example of a time when you had to deal with a particularly difficult person/client. If you had a similar situation now, would you handle it differently? Why?

On communication competencies:

- Describe a time when you had to explain a project to a group, and realized that you had been misinterpreted. How did you finally get your point across?

To identify whether you have experience in strategic planning:

- Tell me how you plan and organize your schedule to ensure that everything gets done.
- Give me an example of a time when you failed to meet a deadline. When did you realize that you would miss the deadline? What did you do? What did you learn?

On decision-making:

- Give a specific example of a particular problem you've had at work, at home or at school. Go through the process you used to analyze the problem and arrive at your decision.

TRADITIONAL QUESTIONS

INTERVIEWING: COMMON QUESTIONS

Are you qualified for the position?

- Why should I hire you?
- Tell me about yourself.
- What have you learned from your previous position/job?
- What do you consider your greatest accomplishments to date?
- Why did you choose your major? Are you satisfied with your decision?
- What have you learned from your failures?
- Tell me about your greatest strengths and weaknesses.
- Do you prefer to be directly supervised or to work independently?
- How does your background relate to this position?
- What motivates you to do your best work?
- What qualifications do you have that make you feel that you would be successful in this position?
- How would a former supervisor describe you?
- How do you determine priorities in scheduling your time? Give me an example.
- Give me an example of how you achieved an important goal you set for yourself.
- Discuss situations where you have turned ideas into action.
- Give me an example of a time when you provided a solution that was outside the box.
- What is the most creative/innovative thing that you have done?
- What have you done in your present or previous job that goes beyond what was required?
- Name three leadership qualities which you think are important.
- How have you demonstrated these qualities in your past or current position?

Are you focused? Can you articulate your career goals?

- How does this position relate to your career goals?
- Describe your ideal job.
- What other positions are you seeking?
- Do you plan to further your education?



- What classes did you enjoy most/least and why?
- Why are you pursuing this field?

What do you know about our organization?

- Why are you interested in our organization?
- Why did you agree to this interview?
- Where do you see yourself fitting in?
- What do you know about our services/products?
- How do you feel about traveling or relocation as a part of your job?
- In what type of setting do you do your best work?

CASE QUESTIONS

Tip: Don't worry about getting the question right. The goal is to learn how you would logically try to solve the problem.

- How many golf balls can you fit in a swimming pool?
- How many pennies, standing end to end, would it take to reach from the ground to the top of the Empire State building?
- How many telephones are there in the U.S.?
- How would you redesign an ATM machine to make it more user friendly?
- If I gave you an elephant where would you hide it?
- Why are soda cans tapered on the top and bottom?
- You are in a boat on a fresh water lake. In your hand is a rock. You throw the rock into the lake. How is the lake's water level affected?

EDUCATION SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

General

- Briefly describe your philosophy of education.
- Tell me about a recent lesson that you taught that was very successful. What were the techniques or strategies that made it so? What about a lesson that was not very successful. What went wrong? What will you change next time?
- Imagine that you were watching a lesson being taught. What would tell you that this is an effective lesson?
- Describe strategies that you have used (or will use) to teach the same standards to students with different learning styles or learning abilities or levels of motivation.
- What types of thematic units have you created? How have your students participated and what have the results been?
- How have you incorporated technology into your units? Why do you think that this is important for learning in the classroom?
- Describe a behavior management situation that you handled well. What made it work? Would you apply this technique to other situations? What about a situation that you handled poorly? What could you improve on?
- What methods have you used (or will use) to assess or evaluate student learning?
- As a new teacher to our school what do you see yourself doing to fit into our school community? What can you contribute to our school?
- Give some examples of how you've used cooperative learning in the classroom?
- What types of teaching methods/techniques do you use? How have these methods benefited your students?
- What methods do you use to encourage your students' ability to retain material? How do you know these methods are successful?

Elementary

- As an elementary teacher what have you done (or what will you do) to motivate parents to become involved in the classroom and in their children's education. What did you learn from your TOSS and student teaching about communicating with parents?
- What activities have you incorporated into your lesson plans that make learning more enjoyable and engaging for your students?
- How will you integrate reading and writing into your curriculum?
- It's the first day of school and you are a first grade teacher. What does your classroom look like?

Middle and High School

- How does "teaming" at the middle school level support instruction?
- What are some of the characteristics of middle grade students that need to be considered when planning instruction?
- What methods of teaching, besides lecture, have you used to present material to your students? Give examples.
- What would your supervisor say were your greatest strengths in teaching and what areas would they suggest need growth? Do you agree with this assessment?
- How have you (or will you) modified your teaching to meet the needs of a gifted student?
- What methods do you use to encourage student focus and participation?

NURSING SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

- Why did you choose this area (ER, OR, ICU, etc.) as your specialty area?
- Describe your most ethically challenging nursing situation.
- Tell me about a recent clinical experience when you had a difficult patient, and/or difficult relatives. How did you handle the situation?
- Give me an example of a time when your critical-thinking and problem-solving skills were tested.
- What do you do to stay current? What journals do you read?

BEHAVIORAL QUESTIONS

- Give me an example of a time when you did not meet a deadline. When did you realize that you would miss the deadline? What did you do? What did you learn?
- Describe the most significant or creative presentation or idea that you developed or implemented.
- Tell me about a tough decision you made. What steps, thought processes, and considerations did you take to make that decision? Were you satisfied with your decision?
- Describe a situation in which you were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to approach things your way.
- Tell me about a course, work experience, or extracurricular activity in which you had to work closely with others. How did it go?
- Give me a specific example of a time when you had to address an irate customer. What was the problem and what was the outcome? How would you assess your role in defusing the situation?
- Tell of a time when your active listening skills really paid off.
- Tell me about a time when you had to present complex information. How did you ensure that the other person understood?
- Tell me about a time in which you had to use your written communication skills in order to get across an important point.
- Describe a time where you were faced with problems or stresses that tested your coping skills.
- When working on a team project, have you ever had an experience where there was strong disagreement among members or a team member didn't do their part? What did you do?
- Describe a situation in which you were able to overcome a "personality conflict" to achieve a positive outcome.
- Tell me about a time when you influenced the outcome of a project by taking a leadership role.

AN EXAMPLE OF AN ANSWER TO A BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEW QUESTION USING THE “STAR” METHOD

Question:

- Tell me about a time when you successfully led a group or team.

Situation:

- Recently, I was part of a group project in my Organizational Communication class. We had an assignment to design an effective public relations campaign for a fictitious company.

Task:

- We chose to market a bank that is opening a new office in a small community. We had to come up with a marketing plan and media kit designed to introduce the company to its new community and to solicit new bank customers.

Action:

- As the project team leader, I set up an appointment with the director of marketing at XYZ Bank and got her insight on the project. After the opening, I came up with a creative marketing plan, which was enthusiastically received by the other group members. I then assigned each group member a particular task based on his or her area of expertise. For example, one member of our group was responsible for designing the bank’s logo and another member was responsible for writing a press release. I monitored the group’s progress to make sure we were meeting our deadlines and also put together a strong oral presentation to make to the class.

Result:

- The project was lots of fun and allowed me to develop the management skills necessary to lead a diverse group of 6 people. The most rewarding part was that our group received the highest marks in the class and the professor currently uses our project materials as an example to his classes.



At the end of the interview, you will be asked if you have any questions.

Below are examples of things you may want to know:

- What are typical career paths for new employees?
- Why did you choose to work for this company and why do you stay?
- How is an employee evaluated and promoted?
- What is the retention rate of people in the position for which I am interviewing?
- Describe the typical first year assignments.
- Tell me about your initial and future training programs.
- What are the challenging facets of the job?
- What are the company's plans for future growth?
- What industry trends will occur in this company?
- What makes your firm different from its competitors?
- Describe the work environment.
- What are the company's strengths and weaknesses?
- How would you describe your corporation's personality and management style?
- Is it company policy to promote from within? Tell me the work history of your top management.
- What are your expectations for new hires?
- What is the overall structure of the department where the position is located?
- What qualities are you looking for in your new hires?
- What characteristics does a successful person have at your company?
- What is the next step in the interview process?

POSITIVE PHRASES AND WORDS EMPLOYERS LIKE TO HEAR

Well organized	Versatile
Works well under pressure	Ability to motivate
Thorough	Good time manager
Good long range planner	Sense of priorities
Problem solver	Attentive to detail
Good short range actions	Diplomatic
Negotiation skills	Establishes good rapport
Flexible	Relates well (upwards & downwards)
People oriented	Good trainer/teacher
Ability to make quick decisions	Sense of humor
Writing/editing skills	Ability to get cooperation
Cost conscious	Enthusiastic
Decisive	Easily wins confidence
Can affect the bottom line	Creative
Can make tough decisions	Good sense of goals
Can hire and fire people	Cost-effective
Clear vision of the future	Aggressive with sensitivity
Good oral skills	Persuasive
Original thinker	Adaptive

INTERVIEW SAMPLE EVALUATION

Candidate's Name:

Date:

Charecteristics

Please use Check or Comments:

Appearance:

Grooming Bearing
Posture Manners
Dress Neatness

Outstanding (A)	Above Average (B)	Satisfactory Acceptable (C)	Limited Potential (D)	Not Acceptable (F)
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Comments:

Preparation for Interview:

Company Position Pertinent
Knowledge Knowledge Questions

Comments:

Verbal Communication:

Delivery and Presentation of Grammar and
Animation ideas Vocabulary

Comments:

Direction:

Well-Defined Confidence in Realistic and
Goals Abilities Practical

Comments:

Maturity:

Responsible Social Leader
Self-Reliant Judgment Work
Decisive Leader

Comments:

Personality:

Enthusiastic Aggressive
Extrovert Unresponsive
Motivation Noncommittal

Comments:

Qualifications:

Preparation Work Experience Position Match

Comments:

Overall Evaluation:

Long-Range Potential
Drive/Ambition
Ability/Qualification

Comments:

Strong Points
Sour Notes
Advice
Hiring
Problems
Background
Amplify Above
Suggestions
Plans
Personal Hints

Candid Comments Please:

Probable Action:

Invitation:	<input type="text"/>
No Job Match:	<input type="text"/>
Uncertain at this time:	<input type="text"/>

ILLEGAL/IMPROPER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Pay attention to “illegal” questions that the interviewer may ask. If you perceive that the information is irrelevant to the responsibilities, you could ask how that information would affect your employment with the company or your ability to perform the responsibilities of the position. If you think that the interviewer is asking about something that may be an issue at some point in the future, you may want to address the subject up front and help put the interviewer at ease.

ILLEGAL/IMPROPER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Improper interview questions are those that do not pertain to the nature of the job, to the applicant’s ability to perform that job, or those that are not asked of every candidate. They are illegal only if the information is used to make a hiring decision. Due to Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity legislation, most recruiters now know what they can ask candidates and what they cannot. However, if you are confronted with a question you think is unreasonable, it is best to deal with the underlying issue (i.e. why it was asked) rather than become defensive or hostile. There are legal/proper ways to ask some of these questions; be sure to notice the difference.

ILLEGAL/LEGAL

- Do you have any children? (Legal: What hours (shifts, days) are you available to work?)
- How old are you? (Legal: Are you over the age of 18 (or required age)?)
- Are you a U.S. citizen? (Legal: Of what country are you a citizen?)
- Do you have a car? (Legal: Will transportation be a problem when overtime is required?)
- With whom do you reside? (Legal: What is your current address?)
- Are you disabled? (Legal: Are you able to perform all essential functions of the job and perform them with or without any accommodation?)
- What is your VISA status? (Legal: Are you eligible to work in the United States?)

IMPROPER (IN THE USA)

- Do you attend church regularly?
- What are your outstanding debts?
- Your last name is _____. What kind of name is that?
- Do you have a girlfriend/boyfriend? Are you planning to have children?
- This is a (fill in the blank religion) company. Do you think you can be happy working here?
- What does your father/mother do for a living?
- What is your IQ?
- How much do you weigh?
- What is your religion?

THANK YOU LETTERS

is essential for two primary reasons. First, it is common courtesy, a trait admired by most employers. Second, it is another chance for you to express your interest in the position and re-emphasize why you are the best person for the job.

RULES FOR THANK YOU LETTERS

- This was a professional interview, not a social engagement. Do not handwrite or use thank you cards.
- As with other job search correspondence, you should provide your thank you letter on professional stationary.
- Email thank you letters are also acceptable.
- It is important to address your thank you letter to the individual(s) with whom you interviewed.
- Restate anything you liked about the organization and how you feel you could meet their needs.
- This is also your second chance to provide additional information or clarification.
- If you really want this job, now is the time to let them know.
- If you decide this isn't the job for you, now is the time to politely tell them.
- Close by saying you are looking forward to the next step.

SAMPLE THANK YOU LETTER

(Your Address)

(Date)

Ms./Mr. _____

Director

ABC, Inc.

63 Main Street

Atlanta, GA 32456

Dear Ms. _____:

I want to thank you once again for your interview and tour of the plant last Wednesday.

I enjoyed meeting you and your outstanding division.

After researching many corporations, I am convinced that ABC, Inc. offers the best opportunity for utilizing my management experience. Once I spent the day actually "in the trenches" as you said, I was convinced that this place was where I would like to put my energy to work.

Again, I enjoyed spending the day with you and your staff and will look forward to your decision by May 15th.

Thank you again for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

James P. Jones

Salary negotiation begins during the interview. How well you sell your accomplishments and skills increases your