

# Preparing for the Interview

Often when we hear the phrase, “job interview,” we may think of a daunting, one-sided exchange. In a competition with several others, an employer interrogates the interviewee with questions, makes them feel intimidated, and brags about their company as the interviewee tries to “win” the job.

This scenario is not entirely accurate. Interviews do allow the employer to gather information about you, evaluate your fit in the organization, and promote their organization, yet they also serve as a way for you to evaluate your options. The interview process is your chance to learn more about an employment opportunity, decide if it is a fit for you, and showcase your acquired skills.

## **KNOW YOURSELF**

Before jumping in to practice interview questions, it is imperative to know your needs and wants from the position, as well as what you have to offer. What are you hoping to get from this job opportunity? Are you looking for experience in a particular field, a stable income, insurance benefits...all the above? What components of a position are non-

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# Anticipating the Scenario

The ability to talk comfortably about yourself, what you have done, and how you would fit into a certain position only improves with practice. After practicing on your own, set up a mock interview with the Career Center for specific feedback on the content and quality of your answers, as well as your nonverbal behavior.

## **BODY LANGUAGE**

First impressions are often lasting impressions. Within the first few minutes of an interview, maybe even before you say anything, your body language will speak volumes about your confidence, professionalism, and enthusiasm for the role. Here are a few things to consider:

- Do you smile when you meet someone and provide a firm handshake?
- Do you make just enough eye contact without staring at the recruiter?
- Do you walk into the office with a self-assured and confident stride?
- Is your padfolio, coat, and water in your left hand, or do you have to juggle them around to shake hands?
- Do your eyes travel naturally to and from the recruiter's face as you begin to talk?
- Do you remember the recruiter's name and pronounce it with confidence?
- Do you make small talk easily, or do you act overly formal and reserved, as though under attack?

Realize that it is natural to be nervous. Most interviewers will not dock you because of it, but you also want to avoid it interfering with your ability to conduct yourself professionally. To overcome jitters, mentally rehearse your interview. Imagine the interviewer asking questions, and envision yourself providing clear and solid answers. This type of preparation will, at minimum, help you feel more optimistic and self-confident.

## **PRACTICE QUESTIONS**

Your self-assessment and research will be very useful as you practice possible interview questions. Your interviewer is interested in your decision making, analysis and problem solving, initiative, interpersonal qualities, teamwork, communication, and leadership. While it's impossible to anticipate all the questions an interviewer will ask, a useful strategy is to consider why the interviewer is asking the question. What information are they seeking in relation to your ability, desire, and fit in this position?

As you consider possible interview questions, formulate responses which include specific examples of course work, extracurricular activities, or relevant work experiences. For example, if asked why you would like to work in human resources, rather than saying, "because I like to work with people," discuss your human resources courses and specific experiences throughout your HR internship. Also, try to quantify what you have done when possible. Numbers reveal the extent of your experience and accomplishments. Give concrete examples that demonstrate how you can meet the needs of the organization and position. Aligning your qualifications with a company's needs will help you stand out.

Consider what the interviewer needs to know about you during the interview. Come up with five specific reasons why you would be an excellent fit and make these themes throughout your interview. Planning ahead will ensure that you provide relevant

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1. Do you feel your GPA reflects your academic ability?
2. How has your major prepared

## **HANDLING ILLEGAL QUESTIONS**

Various federal, state, and local laws regulate the questions a prospective employer can ask you, the job candidate. An employer's questions—whether on the job application, in the interview, or during the testing process—must be related to the job you're seeking. For the employer, the focus must be: "What do I need to know to decide whether this person can perform the function of this job?" If asked an illegal question, you have three options:





**HIRING (IN DEPTH) INTERVIEW**

The hiring interview, often viewed as the “real interview,” is more in-depth and generally conducted by higher level professionals within the department. Questions are typically more specific and job-content related. If, however, the interview is conducted by the human resources department, questions will be more general in nature. Hiring interviews can be conducted by one person or could be conducted by several. Different formats abound. You may have one interview, or several in a series. Treat each successive interview as your first; equal preparation, enthusiasm, and attentiveness should be presented at each meeting.

**PANEL INTERVIEW**

In a panel interview, approximately three to five persons ask questions of one applicant. If the interview is highly structured, each panel member will be assigned a certain area of questioning to ensure a well-rounded and complete interview. Panel

# Interviewing Over a Meal

Now more than ever before, job interviews, client meetings, and company receptions are held over a meal. Knowing how to represent yourself and your organization professionally will help you avoid embarrassing moments as you seek to make a solid impression.

Here are some helpful tips in a     **a d**    :

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Dry foods not served with utensils are finger foods (celery, carrot sticks, olives, crackers, small sandwiches, etc.)

Soup is taken with the soup spoon, dipped away from you and sipped off the spoon. Crackers are eaten with your fingers.

Bread is buttered with a knife, one bite at a time.

Use your knife to cut your salad into smaller pieces, if necessary.

Foreign matter (fish bone, fruit seed, inedible material) is to be removed with utensils and placed on the side of the plate as inconspicuously as possible.



# Day of the Interview

## **ARRIVAL**

You are finally ready for the interview! Be sure you know exactly when, where, and with whom this experience will take place.

Do NOT be late for your interview. In anticipation of your arrival, be sure to allow time for something unexpected to pop up; changing clothes due to spills, road construction, or traffic accidents. Make sure to leave plenty of time to find a parking space and make one last stop in a restroom to check your hair and appearance.

Ideally, you want to be ready and in the waiting area for your interview 10 minutes in advance of the scheduled time. However, if you need to fill out application forms prior to your interview, allow yourself at least 15 to 20 minutes.

If you do not need to fill out application forms, do not check in to your interview more than 10 minutes early. Showing up too early can put unnecessary pressure on the interviewer(s) to rush to be ready for your interview. If you do arrive early, wait in your car or sit quietly outside of the building before checking in.

Unforeseen circumstances do come up. If you will be late, take a deep breath, call to warn them, and apologize for any

## **INTERVIEW DOS AND DONTS**

Here is a list of job interview “dos” and “don’ts.” Remember that no single “do” will get you the job, but any one of the “don’ts” could eliminate you from the hiring pool.

DO...

- ...ensure that your hands are clean with trimmed nails and your hair is tied back, out of your face.
- ...visit the restroom before waiting in the lobby.
- ...get a good night’s sleep before your interview. This will help you be alert and sharp with your responses.

