

THE INTERVIEW

An Effective Interview:

- Convinces the interviewer/employer that you are the best candidate.
- Creates a strong positive impression.
- Reflects self-confidence and enthusiasm.
- Demonstrates interest, willingness, and oral communication skills.

The interview is the final hurdle in the job search process. It is common for the interview stage of the Job search to bring out feelings of both excitement and apprehension. **Preparation** is the key to a successful interview. In an interview setting, your representation of yourself involves both *verbal* and *non-verbal* behavior. Candidates who best prepare for the interview and express their qualifications effectively have the best chance of being hired.

The First Ten Seconds:

What you do and say in the first ten seconds of an interview may determine whether you are hired, according to Robert Half, President of Robert Half International. Some prime examples of initial interview behavior that could result in a candidate's rejection include: weak handshake, failure to maintain eye contact, slouching in the chair, lack of enthusiasm, poor grooming, a hostile or abrasive behavior, boastfulness, and treating a secretary or receptionist in a condescending manner. Remember, the first impression is almost always a lasting impression.

Interview Preparation:

An important step in preparing for an interview is **researching** the company or organization. Researching enables you to develop appropriate interview questions. It is important to include company information in the dialogue portion of the interview. This demonstrates your interest in the company.

RESOURCE INFORMATION

Use the following sources to research the employer's culture, products, customers, new ventures and finances:

- Company Web Sites
- PR publications
- Newspaper articles
- Company advertisements
- Company literature
- Annual reports & Stock reports
- Organization chart
- Library references

EMPLOYER INFORMATION

Size of the organization
Annual sales, growth and history of the company
Company product lines, services, programming
Organizational structure
Company subsidiaries, locations, plants, distribution centers
Formal/on-the-job training programs
Typical career paths in your field
Target populations, prospective customers/clients
Company reputation, philosophy, policies and benefits

You've probably heard the old adage, "You never get a second chance to make a first impression." **Visual impressions** are very important in the interviewing process. Dressing professionally requires an investment in quality career accessories. Invest in quality clothing with classic styles.

- *Proper attire for men:*
Traditional business suit (navy, black, brown or grey)
Polished shoes
- *Proper attire for women:*
Traditional business suit (navy, black, brown or grey)
Dress with matching blazer Limited make-up and jewelry Polished shoes (low heels) and nylons

Listed below are some **typical questions** employers ask during an interview. Take time to practice and prepare answers for these questions.

1. *Tell me about yourself.*
Spend 30 seconds on autobiographical information, 30 seconds on education, 30 seconds on work history and 30 seconds on personal characteristics and qualifications.
2. *What are your long- and short-term career objectives?*
3. *Why have you chosen to pursue this career/academic major?*
4. *What are your strengths/weaknesses?*
Minimize faults and never disclose anything that might disqualify you. Be objective about yourself.
5. *In what ways do you think you will contribute to the company?*
6. *Why did you decide to seek a position with this company?*
7. *Why should I hire you?*

Types of Interviews

Screening Interview

The first interview, usually with the human resources department, is generally short in duration (1 - 1 1/2 hours). This is used as a "weeding out" process by the employer. This type of interview may be conducted via telephone. General questions are asked to determine if you meet their minimum qualifications.

In-depth Interview

The second interview can be a half- to full-day in duration. The candidate will meet with various personnel (perhaps in a group setting) within the company or organization. Specific or situational questions are asked during this interview. It is important to establish a rapport with the interviewer.

Behavioral Interview

The objective of behavioral interviewing is to ensure a match of values and style, not just skills. Applicants are asked specific situation-related questions, such as: What examples can you give me in which your work made a difference? How would you approach this assignment or problem on the job? What would you do in this situation?

Group Interview

Several individuals may interview you at the same time. The best strategy is to ask questions and differentiate yourself from the competition.

Telephone Interview

Make sure you are in a quiet place, eliminate all distractions, take notes and concentrate on the interviewer's voice.

Meal Interview

Let the interviewer order first; then choose a similar item, equally priced. Order meals that can be cut up instead of messy items such as pasta.

The Interview Process

You will encounter many different **interviewing styles and techniques** in the job search process. Interviews may be very structured within an office setting or casual, more dialogue-oriented in a relaxed environment. Techniques range from very high pressure/stress-oriented questioning to a scenario of good/bad interviewer between two interviewers. Whatever style or technique you encounter, it is important to be prepared for anything and everything; focus on the interview; respond accordingly to questions; maintain your professionalism.

An interview progresses through a **series of stages**.

1. The Introduction develops rapport between you and the interviewer. Shake hands firmly with the interviewer and maintain good eye contact. The interviewer will usually open with an icebreaker (i.e., Did you have any problems finding our office/parking?); smile and listen carefully. The interviewer will set the tone of the interview during the introductory stage. Evaluate the interviewer's tone, intensity, fashion and approach.

2. The second part of the interview is **Question & Answer**. Typical questions are asked by the employer to establish a dialogue. Build a connection and demonstrate your knowledge about the company. **Articulate what you can do for the employer.** This is the most critical point of the interview for the candidate. Answer questions in detail, citing specific experiences to substantiate your response. Reiterate personal qualities.

Interviewing "Hot Spots" - Every interview has a few tense moments when candidates might feel defensive. Evaluate these moments: Is the interviewer being obnoxious or does he/she have a valid concern about your ability? You must be prepared to discuss a troubled personal or professional history.

Dealing with illegal/unfair personal questions - Based on federal laws, certain personal questions (marital status, children, religion, national origin) are illegal. Nevertheless, interviewers will ask those questions. In the event that they do, here are some suggestions: Try turning the illegal question around to your advantage by determining what job-related quality they are seeking and respond to it. Use the opportunity to sell yourself, stress your ability to perform all aspects of the position regardless of age, marital status, etc. Be courteous but firm in your response and think through possible responses beforehand.

3. The final stage of the interview is **Closure**. This concludes the interview. Reaffirm your interest in the position. Ask any questions you may have or ask for clarification on some of the information that has been exchanged during the interview. Smile and thank the interviewer for his/her time and consideration. Shake hands firmly before leaving.

The Thank You Letter - Send a brief thank you letter to the interviewer within 24 hours of your interview. This will again reaffirm your interest in the position and/or company, draw attention to your name as a potential candidate and show your appreciation.