

Interviewing

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Interview = Two-Way Conversation to Determine Fit (for a particular position).

**Prepare for your upcoming interview
Stand out as the most qualified candidate and secure the offer**

Interview Flow and Checklist

- ✓ Do research into the employer and the specific position before the interview
- ✓ Be enthusiastic about the employer and position
- ✓ Dress professionally
- ✓ Show up 10 minutes early (but no more)
- ✓ Smile and firm handshake (not bone crushing)
- ✓ Chit chat (yes it is important)
- ✓ Introductions/position overview/background
- ✓ Questions
- ✓ Skills demonstration (if in trades)
- ✓ Your questions
- ✓ Obtain business cards or ask receptionist
- ✓ Thank you email

Key Interviewing Points

- **The strategic goal of the interview is to obtain the job offer**
- Their initial impression of you is formed almost instantly (in the first few seconds)
- Answer the question don't be evasive
- A 90-second - 2minute response is standard for each question
- Be positive and enthusiastic (resist the temptation to go negative or speak badly of others)
- Flip a negative question into a positive answer
- It's all about them! Not you (Until the offer is made then the table flips)
- All answers should be framed within the construct of "what I can do for you"
- Not "what's in it for me" (Until the offer is made then the table flips)

Prepare for the Interview

Do your research and know the employer's product lines, market share, customer base, competition, and mission and vision statements.

Review the job description and know the job responsibilities, requirements, and duties going into the interview. All your responses should speak directly to the desired qualifications listed on the job description.

Research the Organization/Company

- What is the mission, goal, or purpose of the organization?
- What does the "About Us" section say about the organization?
- Are they in the news?
- What is the organization/company demographics (size, location, organizational structure, etc.)?
- What does the Human Resources section say about the hiring process, benefits, etc.?
- Research the LinkedIn or Facebook pages of key people in the organization
- Talk with prior employees or use www.glassdoor.com

Research the Interviewer(s)

- Google each interviewer to learn more about their professional background and experience
- Look on LinkedIn and social media
- Review the company website and look for information that is relevant to the interviewer

Styles of Interviews

Traditional Interview: The "tell me about yourself" style of interview. Not seeking specific examples or situations for you to cite. Example: What is your greatest weakness?

Behavioral Interview: This style is example based. Behavioral based questions require you to focus on personal experiences and situations, so it is important to cite specific examples of challenges you have overcome in multiple subject categories (diversity, initiative, teamwork, etc.). Example: Tell me about a time you had to make a difficult decision at work?

Panel Interview: You are interviewed by a team of interviewers at the same time. Can be traditional or behavioral style.

Demonstration: You are asked to perform the duties of the job, demonstrate a skill or produce an item.

Strategies for Common Interview Questions

Tell me about yourself? = Tell me about yourself (as it relates to this job)?

- Limit personal information (No hobbies, hometown, age, etc.)
- Focus on achievements, accomplishments, and transferable skills
- Connect yourself to the job description and organization.

What is your greatest weakness?

- Keep it skill-based (try to stay away from personal characteristics)
- Choose a weakness that is not central to the position
- Discuss what steps you are taking to improve this weakness
- Discuss a weakness in relation to one of your strengths such as taking longer to finish a project because you focus on quality

Sample Interview Questions

Traditional Questions

- Why do you want this job?
- What can you do for this company?
- Why should we hire you?
- What do you know about this company?
- Why do you want to work here?
- What's your greatest strength and weakness?

Questions About the Future

- What are your goals for the next five years/ten years?
- What position do you plan to hold in five/ten years?

Questions About You

- How do you handle stress and pressure?
- What motivates you?
- What do you find are the most difficult decisions to make?
- Tell me about yourself?
- What are you passionate about?

Behavioral Questions

- Tell me about a time you worked with a difficult person? How did you handle it?
- Tell me about a time when you had to be corrected. How did you respond?
- Describe a new idea you had and how you implemented it.
- Give me an example of a time when you saw a need in your workplace. What did you do?
- Describe a situation in which you worked as part of a team. What role did you take on?
- Give me a specific example of working with co-workers or customers of a different culture.
- Give an example of a time when you had to quickly make a decision.
- Tell me about a time you had to tell people something they didn't want to hear.
- Tell me about a time when you worked with an angry customer. What was the outcome?
- Give an example of a situation where you assumed a leadership role.
- Cite a specific mistake that you made on the job, what was the outcome?

Questions to Ask Employers

You should always prepare thoughtful questions based on your research of the company or the career field.

Sample General Questions

1. How would you describe the department's culture and leadership philosophy?
2. What are the top priorities for the department?
3. What are your goals for this position in the first year?

S.A.R. Technique

The S.A.R. Technique can help you tell your story in a concise and clear way. It is especially helpful when responding to behavioral style questions.

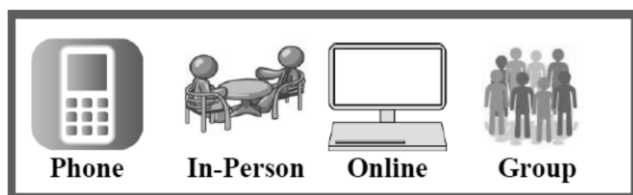
Situation (specific situation that relates to the question)

Action (what you did to solve the problem or accomplish the task)

Result (positive outcome of the situation)

<u>S</u>ituation	At the end of the month there was always a rush of work to meet our monthly order numbers. Work became bottle necked at the end of the months because my team had to OK all orders before they were released.
<u>A</u>ction	I needed additional support for my core team. So I convinced the techs to each pick up extra work. I created a work queue spreadsheet that tracked all of the incoming orders that needed to be checked and tracked who they were assigned to.
<u>R</u>esult	As a result I was able to balance the work load amongst the techs and get a larger amount done per month which prevented bottlenecks and no more rushing at the end of the month!

Types of Interviews



Note: Career fairs, presentations, case studies, professional breakfast, lunch and/or dinner, and networking events may all be part of the interview process depending on the employer and how comprehensive the interview process is.

What to Wear and Not to Wear

Do your research! What do people in the organization or company typically wear? Think one level up what is usually worn by the supervisor of employees on a daily basis. Dress like the supervisor.

Type of Work	Appropriate Interview Dress
Trades	Industry appropriate work wear (if demo expected), or one level up (dress shirt and khakis or dress slacks), clean and pressed
Medical	Button-up collared dress shirt or blouse, sport coat, dress pants or dress skirt, closed-toe, professional shoes, clean and pressed, no scrubs
Office	Full suit in navy, dark gray, or black, tie (men), button-up collared shirt or blouse, and professional shoes shined. Sensible heel. Clean and pressed

Tips on Dress

- When in doubt, opt for more professional/ conservative attire
- Black, blue, gray, no fancy patterns, keep it plain
- Women choose no-heel or low-heels less than 2 inches high
- If you choose to wear a skirt, make sure it is just above the knee or longer and covers your thighs when you sit. Neutral hosiery with both skirts and dresses
- Clean and polished appearance - omit or limit accessories, omit or limit use of cologne/perfume, avoid food or smoke smell, fresh breath but no gum or mints in the interview
- No mini-skirts, shorts, sandals, flip-flops, leggings, or t-shirts. Cover tattoos or piercings

Thank You Letters

Before you leave get business cards, or ask secretary for emails on way out. Send emailed thank-you to each interviewer within 24 hours of the interview. Check for spelling and grammatical errors -- and check again! Thank the interviewers for their time, show interest/enthusiasm and mention something you discussed.

Interview Checklist

- ✓ Bring a portfolio with notepad, pens, extra resumes, 3 questions to ask the employer
- ✓ Allow extra travel time and arrive a few minutes early (no more than 10 minutes)
- ✓ Look up directions, parking, address, do a dry run the day before if unfamiliar with route
- ✓ Have the employer phone number, just in case you will be late
- ✓ Be yourself. Maintain eye contact, erect posture, firm handshake (not bone crushing)
- ✓ Limit nervous habits such as tapping your pen, fidgeting, hair twirling, or wringing your hands
- ✓ Turn off phone or leave in car
- ✓ Limit filler words (“um” and “like”) and avoid unprofessional language (“yeah”)
- ✓ Be nice to the receptionist/secretary (Their impression of you matters)

Avoid Common Interviewing Mistakes

Arriving Late – Get directions from the interviewer or company website ahead of time and check them with an online map service. Leave home early to give yourself plenty of time to arrive for the interview. Arriving late can show disrespect for the interviewer, lack of preparation, or lack of interest in the position.

Dressing Wrong – Candidates make an impression on the interviewer literally within seconds after meeting him/her. You want to be sure that you make the best impression possible.

Bad Mouthing Other Employers – Even if you can’t stand your former boss, a job interview is not the time to “trash talk” or complain about your former employer. Avoid any negative references to your former boss. If you were laid off or fired from a previous position, be prepared to give a simple explanation that puts a positive spin on what happened. A potential new employer may figure that they could be the next target of your negative feedback, if this position doesn’t work out!

Appearing Disinterested or Arrogant – Make sure you are familiar with the position that you are interviewing for, and practice talking about your experience, strengths, education, and abilities and how they directly relate to the position and the company. Do not just sit there like a zombie, waiting for the interviewer to draw information out of you. Worse yet, do not brag endlessly about how amazing you are! Smile, sit up straight, answer the questions appropriately and ask your own. Be engaged in the interview and show your enthusiasm for the position. Finally, thank the interviewer for taking time with you.

Lack of Research – Prepare ahead of time for the interview; the interview is NOT the time to do your research on the company. Know about the company’s products, services, clients, goals, annual sales, and other important information that you can learn from the company’s website, other internet sources, professional organizations and magazines, and current and former employees. By demonstrating knowledge of the company, you show enthusiasm for the position and are more likely to be taken seriously by the interviewer.

Insufficient Answers/Not Prepared – PRACTICE for the interview ahead of time; an interview is not the time to “wing” it. Be familiar with the job description of the position and ready to articulate your strengths, abilities, and what you bring to the job. The more you can connect your experience, education, and strengths to the position the more likely you are to land the job by clearly showcasing WHY you should be hired for the position. Don’t ever lie in an interview. If the conversation turns to a topic that you are unfamiliar with, be honest with the interviewer and use the opportunity to show how you would find a solution to a particular problem for example.

Failure to Ask Questions – Use your research to prepare a list of 3 questions in advance to ask the interviewer. Your questions will help you better understand if this is a company that you are interested in working for. Employers appreciate candidates who ask insightful, intelligent questions since it shows your interest in the company and in the position. Not asking questions can show an interviewer that you don’t care or that you came unprepared.

Talking Too Much – Be careful not to talk too much and about topics that are of no interest to an employer. Do not bring up personal matters about a divorce, family problem, etc. Be careful not to interrupt an interviewer. Listen carefully and thoughtfully answer an interviewer’s questions, feeling free to take a moment to think about your response. Don’t let your nerves cause you to blather endlessly. Instead practice ahead of time so you give well thought out responses, to the point responses to questions.

Discussing Salary Too Soon – Don’t talk about compensation too soon in the interview process. Wait for the interviewer to bring up the topic, after you have already discussed your qualifications and the company’s needs. To focus on benefits, salary, and other employee perks early in the interview, may cause you to lose the position. Salary will certainly come up in time but follow the employer’s lead and let he/she bring it up when ready. Usually at the time of the job offer.

Forgetting to Follow Up – Follow-up the interview with a thank you letter expressing your appreciation for the time the interviewer shared with you. Be sure to re-state your interest in the position and why you think you are an excellent candidate for the job. Follow up after that, several days to a week later, with a phone call to the employer to make sure you “stay in front of them.” Do not make a pest of yourself though, by constantly calling and/or emailing the employer.

*For educational videos about job interviewing go to www.gtc.edu/library then “Films on Demand”

Please Note: This document was created by Career and Employment Services (CES) at Gateway Technical College. It is intended to be a guide and may not be all-inclusive to meet your specific needs. Check out the CES website at www.gtc.edu/ces for additional resources or to make an appointment please call (800) 247-7122.