

Interview Tips

The job interview is one of the most important parts of your job search. It is your opportunity to sell your strengths and present yourself as a uniquely qualified candidate.

The interview is usually divided into three parts: a few minutes of “ice breaking” to allow the candidate to feel comfortable, questions from the employer (which will take a majority of the time), and time for the interviewee to ask questions about the organization or position.

Preparation

Personal Statement - Prepare a one-minute “personal statement” or bio explaining your background, skills, accomplishments, strengths and goals. Do not include personal information such as where you grew up or sibling information. Practice this dialogue until it flows naturally - not seeming rehearsed.

Keep in mind when answering the interviewer’s questions that you want to relate your answers to the job at hand. Therefore, as with preparing your cover letter and resume, find out the skills and requirements of the job.

Skills - Consider your job-related skills and how they match the job you are applying.

Accomplishments - Prepare an array of accomplishment statements to use as needed during the interview and practice articulating these with comfort. Have any documentation available.

Relate you accomplishment in a story-like format by using the acronym **STAR**:

- Think about a **S**ituation or **T**ask you faced. Describe the situation in two or three sentences.
- Next, describe the **A**ction you took. Be very specific. While you want to avoid seeming arrogant, you should take credit for the role you played.
- Conclude by describing the **R**esult you achieved. Discuss how your work helped an employer. When possible, discuss the result in measurable terms.

Know the Company - Learn as much as possible about the company and be prepared to answer questions in a relevant manner and ask intelligent questions. Sources of information include: past or current employees, the company’s public relations office, the company’s web site, a library or a Career Development Center. Areas of research include: Services or products, types of positions available, number of employees, organizational structure, history of the company, competitors, corporate culture, and site locations.

Practice - Your success rests upon practicing - either alone, with a friend or an adult. Refine your style of interviewing and become more comfortable answering the questions about yourself. With the same importance, do not simply memorize answers or practice excessively. This will decrease your effectiveness regarding a natural, spontaneous

answer. Above all, interviewers are looking for a positive attitude, integrity and a loyalty to future company commitments.

Dress Professionally - Make sure you dress professionally and apply appropriate attire fitting a successful interview. Solid, formal attire with proper grooming will begin the interview on a positive impression or end the visit before you utter your first word of introduction.

Suggestions

- Be on Time! Arrive 5 or 10 minutes early and set the stage for your habits as a future employee.
- Check your appearance just before entering the interview location.
- Bring an updated resume and a list of references.
- Make eye contact with the interviewer(s) and greet them with a firm hand shake.
- Relax, be confident and optimistic!
- Stress your qualifications for the job opening.
- Indicate your stability, attendance and experience.
- Recount experiences that relate to the current position - transferable skills.
- Demonstrate your knowledge of the company and how you will integrate your skills within the company's business strategy.
- Answer questions honestly and straightforward in nature. Be careful not to ramble or stray from the question's topic.
- Indicate your flexibility and readiness to learn.
- Never criticize previous jobs or employers. Discussing negative experiences reveals a "red flag" which your interviewers **will** investigate.
- Do not discuss compensation (salary) until the final interview or a commitment from the interviewer. Discussing this topic initially reminds the interviewer that your primary concern is financially motivated. This indicates that you will not remain a stable employee when dissatisfied when at work.
- Most of all - relax and be yourself.

Follow-Up - At the conclusion of the interview, be sure you understand your next step and what the interviewers expect as the next step in the hiring process. Before leaving, inquire about a timeline for future contact. Thank the interviewer for his or her time.

Thank You Letters - Always send a thank you letter immediately after the interview; this can be a powerful statement. This concluding letter is appropriate for employment **and** scholarship opportunities.

A successful interview is meant to find a positive job match for both the future employee and the company.

Reference: Brookhaven College of the DCCCD-Career Development Center.