



The Interview

So, you've perfected your résumé and cover letter for the position you want, and now you've landed the interview. The best advice for giving a successful interview is to **BE PREPARED**. Here are a few tips to help you put your best foot forward and make the best impression with your prospective employer.

Match yourself to the organization and the needs of the position.

Those who do this the best get the jobs! Illustrate the skills and experiences that make you a great fit. Use examples from past jobs, projects, volunteer work, etc. that support the skills and achievements you are conveying. The responsibility of making this match is on you, so the amount of preparation and effort will determine how well you are able to do this.

Research the organization before the interview.

A common mistake most interviewees make is failing to do the proper research on the organization with which they are interviewing. Researching an organization before the interview gives you an impressive edge in the job search process. Find out about the overall mission or philosophy of the company. Check out recent trends in the business. Has the company recently down-sized? Has it been awarded any special recognition for its role in the community? An easy way to get the scoop is to simply check out a company's website or even call the human resources division for information.

Practice makes perfect.

Practicing your interviewing skills out loud, by way of a mock interview with a friend or career counselor or by just sitting before a mirror, is an ideal way to perfect your technique. It is important to be prepared to talk with employers and answer questions thoroughly and articulately. Be prepared to explain *why* an employer should hire *you* by being able to discuss three basic areas:

- ***I am...***: Be prepared to convey personal characteristics such as being ambitious, assertive, detail-oriented, etc...
- ***I know about...***: Be able to talk about content areas such as solar energy, cost accounting, etc...
- ***I can...***: Discuss transferable skills such as design research instruments, negotiate with angry people, etc...

Dress for the occasion.

Look like a professional; be a professional. It's important to make a great impression when going on an interview. You want to present yourself as someone who takes a job seriously-- someone who is together, in-the-know, and ready to make things happen. One way to achieve this is by dressing for the occasion in a nice business ensemble and appearing clean and neatly dressed. Remember, the only thing you completely control before the interview is how you look!

Be courteous and polite.

This includes everyday courtesies like smiling, shaking hands, and listening attentively. Never interrupt the interviewer while he or she is speaking. Use body language to convey that you are engaged, such as nodding your head and making eye contact.

Ask questions.

It's inevitable that you'll be asked if you have any questions, so it's a good idea to have some questions in mind, even if the interview is quite thorough. Asking questions shows that you're interested, and it is important to remember that you are interviewing them as well to see if you are a good fit for their organization.

Send a Thank You note.

This act should actually be a common courtesy. Sending a thank you letter after an interview achieves three often overlooked imperatives: 1) Reminds the employer who you are and helps to set you apart. 2) Illustrates an important social grace that communicates two important characteristics sought by many employers--politeness and respect. 3) Presents a great opportunity to briefly restate your qualifications and compatibility with the organization. Stop by the Office of Career Services and pick up a "Thank You Letter" handout to see examples and learn more about thank you letters.

Questions That Employers Might Ask Candidates

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. What are your long-range and short-range goals and objectives? What do you see yourself doing five years from now?
3. Why did you choose this career direction? Why are you interested in this position?
4. What do you consider to be your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
5. What specific skills do you have that relate to the job? What experience have you had in connection with this type of work?
6. How would others describe you?
7. How has your college experience prepared you for this position?
8. What led you to choose your field of major study?
9. What have you learned from participation in extracurricular activities?
10. What kind of work environment do you prefer? Working by yourself or with others? Why?
11. How well organized are you? How do you work under pressure?
12. What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction?
13. What major problem have you encountered and how did you deal with it?
14. Describe a relationship that should exist between a supervisor and subordinates. Who was your best boss, and why?
15. What do you know about our organization, company, agency, etc.?
16. How do you spend your spare time? What are your non-work activities?
17. What salary are you expecting to make?
18. What are two effective leadership qualities you think are important? How have you demonstrated these skills in a past or present situation?
19. Will you relocate? Does relocation bother you?
20. Do you have plans for continued study? An advanced degree?
21. What motivates you to put forth your greatest effort?
22. Tell me about a time when you had to create something new, or look at something from a different perspective.
23. Can you give an example of a time you worked on a team?

Behavior-Based Questions

1. Describe a time you were faced with a stressful situation that demonstrated your coping skills.
2. Give me an example of a time when you set a goal and were able to meet or achieve it.
3. Tell me about a time you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get the job done.
4. Tell me about a time when you had too many things to do and you were required to prioritize your tasks.
5. What is your typical way of dealing with conflict? Give me an example.
6. Tell me about a difficult decision you made in the past year.
7. Give me an example of a time you tried to accomplish something and failed.
8. Give me an example of when you showed initiative and took the lead.
9. Tell me about a recent situation where you had to deal with a very upset customer or co-worker.
10. Give me an example of a time when you motivated others.
11. Tell me about a time when you were forced to make an unpopular decision.

Questions That Candidates Might Ask Employers

1. Who do you think would be the ideal candidate for this position, and how do I compare?
2. Where do you see this company five years down the road?
3. What would be my key responsibilities?
4. Beyond the hard skills required to successfully perform this job, what soft skills would serve the company and position best?
5. Can you describe a typical day? What would my first project be?
6. To whom would I report? Will I get the opportunity to meet that person?
7. Who had the job before me? What was his or her reason for leaving?
8. What type of training is needed for this position? How much travel, if any, is required?
9. What are the challenges of this position?
10. What have past employees done to succeed in this position?
11. What opportunities do you offer for professional development of your employees?
12. How would you describe the company's culture? What do you like most about working for this company?
13. What makes your firm different from its competitors?
14. How is the current department organized?
15. Is there a formal evaluation system?
16. Do you have any hesitations about my qualifications?
17. What's your timeline for making a decision, and when can I expect to hear back from you?
18. Is there anything else I can provide to help you make your decision?

Office of Career Services
Administration Building, Room 108 ~ Phone: (803) 641-3440 ~ Fax: (803) 641-3652
<http://www.usca.edu/career-services/index.dot>

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