

All About Interviewing!

Preparing for the Interview

Once you have been offered the opportunity to interview with a company or an organization, it's time to turn your attention to research! The more you can learn about the organization before the interview, the more confident you'll feel and the more positive impression you'll make.

Any and all information you can collect about the company is useful. You will need to know the types of products or services the company offers, trends and issues facing the organization and the overall mission and/or purpose of the organization.

In addition to researching the company, it is important to prepare for the actual interview by practice interviewing. Setting up a mock interview with the [Career Services Advisor](#) in the Graduate Education Office is an excellent way to prepare for your interview. The mock interview allows you to practice answering questions that may come up in the real interview. It also gives you an opportunity to hear yourself describe your own skills and experiences and allows for you to get feedback about your performance. Practice is the key to a winning interview!

Interview Formats

An interview can occur in a variety of formats. Here are a few of the most utilized types:

- **Screening:** The primary purpose of this type of interview format is to determine whether or not you would be a good fit for a company. Screening interviews can take place on the phone or in person and usually last 30-45 minutes.
- **On-site Interview:** Getting a face-to-face interview means that the company has already determined you to be qualified for the position. This interview is their opportunity to find the best candidate for the position.
- **Phone Interview:** This is a good way for companies to screen candidates without having

to bring them to headquarters. Before accepting the call, be sure you are in a quiet location, able to focus your attention on the conversation at hand and speak clearly. Have your resume, job description, references and notes with you during the phone call. If using a cell phone make sure your batteries are charged and your reception is good!

- **Lunch Interview:** A more casual way of getting to know the prospective employee, interviews over lunch or dinner are quite common. Table manners are very important. The best course of action for this type of interview is to follow the lead of your dining companions.
- **One-on-One Interview:** One interviewer and one interviewee, is the most common interview type. You may have individual interviews with several members of an organization.
- **Committee Interview:** This type of interview allows several employees in decision-making positions within a company to interview one candidate at the same time.

On the Day of the Interview

Being nervous before an interview is normal. To make sure the day goes smoothly, remember:

- **Dress Appropriately:** Make sure to be well groomed! Employers will assume a lot about a candidate based on how professional he/she looks. Black, navy blue and charcoal gray are still the best colors to choose from.
- **Be prepared:** Map out the route to your destination before hand. Even better, do a practice drive-by the day before. Don't forget to bring an extra copy of your resume.

- **Be courteous to everyone you encounter at the interview location:**
You don't know who will be interviewing you, so be polite and pleasant to everyone.
- **Arrive Early:** Plan to arrive at the interview site 15 minutes before your scheduled interview. Do not be late!

The Interview Process

No matter what the format of the interview, generally it follows the same process:

- **Introducing Yourself:** Make a strong first impression by maintaining eye contact, offering a firm handshake, and engaging in appropriate small talk.
- **Casual Conversation:** The interview will begin with light conversation meant to make the interviewee feel at ease. This is your opportunity to relax and settle into the interview process.
- **The Interview:** The actual interview begins when the interviewer starts describing the position and organization. The employer will then ask questions about skills, education, training and work history. Use the following tips to help guide your responses:
 - *Be selective about the experiences you present and always emphasize the positive, but never exaggerate or falsify information.
 - *Downplay the negative if asked by an employer to describe a difficult situation or task. Briefly explain the story and then try to find some positives to work with.
 - *If asked about a weakness, do not reveal a major flaw and be very cautious about revealing a personal problem. Stick to weaknesses that you've overcome or that could be thought of as a positive by the interviewer.

Types of Interview Questions

Be prepared to answer questions from all three of the following categories!

- **Traditional Interview Questions:** These questions seek insight into who you are, your experience (educational, work and leadership) and how you would fit into the job and organization.
- **Behavioral Interview Questions:** These types of questions are based on the theory that your past behavior will determine your future performance. Take some time to think about your previous work experience, class projects, leadership and community service activities and showcasing your talents, problem solving skills, and professional manner.
- **Case Study Interview Questions:** These questions allow the interviewer to test your analytical and problem solving skills by handing you a complex problem to solve.

The End of the Interview

The last question the interviewer will ask you is if you have any questions of your own. Even if you feel that you've learned everything there is to know about the organization, ask a question or two. Make sure to ask a question that the interviewer has not already answered during the interview. Here are some other important tips to remember:

- *Ask when you can expect to be contacted.
- *Re-emphasize your interest in the position.
- * Shake the interviewer's hand and sincerely thank her/him for considering you.
- * Remember to send a thank you note within 24hrs.

Salary

Salary is almost never discussed during the interview. In general you should wait for the interviewer to bring up the topic. However you can ask about salary if you have been offered a job without the salary being disclosed. Do your homework ahead of time! Know the market salary range for your position and if asked how much you expect to earn, always cite the range, not a single figure. If you are offered a salary that is unacceptable to you, respond with a counter offer that includes information about the going market salary and your qualifications. Remember to be diplomatic when negotiating on your own behalf.

General Interview Questions:

It is impossible to know which questions will be asked at an interview. Practicing ahead of time helps prepare for those curve balls!

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. What do you consider to be your greatest strength?
3. What do you consider to be your greatest weakness?
4. Have you ever had any failures? What did you learn from them?
5. What motivates you most in a job?
6. Have you had a difficult relationship with a professor/supervisor/co-worker and how did you handle it?
7. Where do you want to be in five years?
8. What did you like most about your last job? What did you like the least?
9. How do you think a former supervisor or co-worker would describe your work?
10. Do you prefer to work under supervision or on your own?
11. Do you prefer to work alone or as a team member?
12. Describe a team project that you have worked on.
13. Tell me about your last project. What were you trying to achieve?
14. What products and/or ideas have you designed or developed?
15. Tell me about the most challenging engineering job or project that you've successfully completed.
16. How many people reported to you in your last position?
17. What job-related skills have you developed while in school?
18. Do you plan to return to school for further education?
19. Why should we hire you rather than another candidate?
20. Tell me about an accomplishment at work that you are most proud of.

Questions to Ask Employers:

Even if the employer has gone over the position thoroughly in the interview, prepare a couple of questions ahead of time that show you are interested in the position.

1. Please describe the duties of the job to me.
2. What kinds of assignments might I expect the first six months of the job?
3. Is this a new position or am I replacing someone?
4. What challenges is the department (or company) facing?
5. What skills are especially important for someone in this position?
6. What qualities are you looking for in the candidate who fills this position?
7. Does the company have any programs to support employee education/training?
8. How long do people tend to stay in this position?
9. What would the last person who had this position say about the job?
10. When do you think you will be making a hiring decision? How will I be contacted?

Useful Interviewing Links:

http://jobsearch.about.com/od/interviewsnetworking/Interviews_Networking.htm

<http://www.rileyguide.com/interview.html>

<http://jobsearchtech.about.com/>

<http://www.acetheinterview.com/>

http://www.jobweb.com/Resumes_Interviews/default.htm

