

## Beyond the Suit...Effective Interview Tips

The Interview is the most important stage in the job search process.

This is where you will make or break the deal. The moment of truth. How can you ensure success?

### PREPARATION and PRACTICE

This guide will provide preliminary information to assist you in preparing for your job interview.

It is up to you to take the next step and diligently prepare for the opportunity.

## PREPARATION

**RESEARCH, RESEARCH, RESEARCH** – Demonstrate your knowledge of the employer and ask intelligent questions.

### Where do you start?

- Company websites
- Employer Literature
- Chamber of Commerce
- Directories such as Glassdoor
- Newspapers and Magazines
- Business Journals

### What do you look for?

- Mission Statements
- Vision Statements
- Current Projects
- Industry Trends
- How the position you are applying for relates to the organization

### What do you look for...continued?

- Company Philosophy
  - Policies
- Organizational Structure
  - Potential Growth
- Organization's reputation, awards or recognition

**WARNING!!! Social Networking Sites** – Recently, it has become a common practice for employers to do research of their own on potential candidates. This includes browsing social networking sites to gather information. Our advice if you utilize these site: Clean up your page and utilize the security features offered by the site. Ensure that friend comments are approved by you before posting, and when in doubt leave it out.

**DRESS** – Appropriate Interview Attire is essential to make a good first impression with the employer.



### Women

- Navy, Charcoal, Black
- Skirts or Pants, however, skirt length just below knee
- White or Pastel colored blouse
- Basic Heels – 1" to 2" heel
  - Neutral Hose
- Simple Accessories
- Conservative Make-up
  - Minimal Perfume

### Men

- Dark colored suit - Navy, Charcoal
  - Conservative tie
- Long-sleeve oxford shirt in white, cream or light blue
- Dark Shoes – No loafers
- Dark, calf-length socks
  - Minimal Cologne
- Neatly trimmed hair
- Clean, trimmed nails



**References** – Select and notify your references. Have at least three individuals lined up who can discuss your work ethic and skills. These may include professors, supervisors, academic advisors, student organization advisors, etc.

Provide them with a copy of your resume and notify them of the positions for which you are applying.

**Portfolio** – Prepare a portfolio to showcase concrete evidence of your knowledge, skills and abilities. All items selected should be relevant to the position and should be customized to reflect the qualifications you possess which make you the best candidate.

**Portfolios can include:** Cover letter, resume, transcripts, copy of degrees awarded, copy of awards received, writing samples, project samples, professional affiliations, letters of recommendation and more.

## PRACTICE

Take a list of frequently asked questions and write down your answers. Practice these answers in front of a mirror. Have a family member or friend ask you the questions. Don't memorize your responses; you do not want to sound "too rehearsed". However, having an idea of what you would like to say will assist in alleviating your anxiety.

Participate in a "Mock Interview" through Career Services. This exercise is a great way to practice for the REAL interview, and you will receive constructive feedback on how you can improve your interview skills.

## INTERVIEW



### STAGE 1: OPENING MOVES

- Arrive at your interview 10 minutes prior to the scheduled time.
- Browse through company literature in waiting room.
- Respect office staff.
- The Handshake: Not too firm, but no dead fish.
- NO Cell phones.
- Go Alone.

### STAGE 2: SELLING YOURSELF

- Responses should be 30 seconds to 2 minutes in length.
- Match your abilities & accomplishments to the job responsibilities.
- Give examples (see the CAR method described below).
- Project enthusiasm. They want to know that you are the right person.
- Ask intelligent questions. Have several ready when you are asked.



### STAGE 3: CLOSING THE DEAL

- Summarize your skills, abilities and accomplishments.
- Re-state your interest in position.
- Ask when the final decision will be made.
- Ask for a business card.
- Thank the interviewer and close with a handshake and smile.

### STAGE 4: FOLLOW-UP

- ALWAYS send a thank you note.
- Restate your interest in the position.
- Provide additional information if appropriate.
- Send letters to each interviewer – they can be handwritten, typed or emailed.



### Using the C.A.R. method when answering questions.

Circumstance -- describe a project and give some background information.

Action -- describe what skills you used to solve the problem.

Result -- describe the outcome.

### EXAMPLE:

C -- Our office inventory system was ineffective so

A -- I developed and organized a system using an Excel spreadsheet to streamline everything.

R -- We decreased monthly spending by 10% due to more effective tracking of supplies.

**Second Interviews:** Save salary and benefit questions for the second interview. If an employer asks about your salary requirements during the first interview, be prepared to have an appropriate range in mind based on your research.

Compare salary information at: <http://www.collegegrad.com/salaries/salaries.shtml>

**Handling Illegal Questions:** Overall you have three basic options: (1) answer truthfully if you feel your response will not hurt you, (2) inform the interviewer that the question is illegal and risk offending them and ending your chances for the position, or (3) base your answer on the requirements of the job and your ability to perform it.

(Source: <http://www.careerbuilder.com/>)

**Illegal Questions:** religion, color, race, national origin, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, childcare arrangements, or other family plans.

# Frequently Asked Interview Questions

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Why did you choose this career or industry?
3. Describe a situation when you were part of a team. How did you contribute to the overall goal?
4. What made you decide to apply with \_\_\_\_\_?
5. Why should we hire you over other candidates?
6. One of our company values is a high level of customer service. What is your understanding of this and how do you plan to assist in continuing this?
7. Provide an example when you put in extra effort to get the job done.
8. Define success.
9. What motivates you most in a job?
10. How do you think the work you've done with your thesis will assist you with your efforts here?
11. Tell me about your accomplishments as a leader on campus, in the community, or at work.
12. Do your grades accurately reflect your abilities? Why or why not?
13. What do you know about our company?
14. What skills do you feel you've developed that will most assist you as you take on your next job?
15. Give an example of a situation in which you provided a solution to an employer.
16. Where do you want to be in 5 years? 10 years?
17. What experience do you have with meeting national standards?
18. Tell me about a time you had a personality conflict or disagreement with a supervisor or co-worker. How did you resolve it?
19. Tell me about a time you were on a team and one of the members wasn't carrying his or her own weight.
20. What is your philosophy of team leadership?
21. What is your greatest strength? weakness?
22. We often have to push ourselves harder to reach a target. Give a specific example of when you had to give yourself that extra push...and what was the outcome.
23. Describe a time when you went above and beyond what was expected of you. What motivated you to put forth this extra effort? How did you feel when it was over and done with?