



INTERVIEWING GUIDE



This guide is designed to help you through the interviewing process from preparing yourself beforehand, to conducting appropriate follow-up.



10 Tips for Your Next Interview

1) Do Your Research

Prior to going to the interview, it is best to know as much as you can about the company you are interviewing with. Research the mission, culture, future trends, clients and current company news. Stay informed of current news in the industry. Familiarize yourself with the job qualifications.

2) Mock Interview

Schedule a mock interview in advance with your career coach to practice discussing your strengths, weaknesses, goals, accomplishments, relevant experiences and questions as well as verbal and non-verbal language. *This is strongly encouraged.*

3) Be on Time

Consider traveling to the company the day before your interview if you are unfamiliar with the location. Plan on arriving 15 minutes prior to the interview. Be mindful of traffic patterns. If you know you're going to be late, contact the employer/recruiter prior to your interview time.

4) Dress Professionally

Wear a business suit and be sure you are neat, clean and professional in appearance. Be conservative with make-up, jewelry, and cologne. Wear something that makes you feel confident.

5) Connect with Employers

Listen carefully to the questions being asked. Sell and match your skills and strengths with the needs of the employers.

6) Organize your Thoughts

Practice ahead of time, your answers should be like a pitch - concise and complete.

7) Be Specific

Tell the interviewer how you can contribute to the company and give examples.

8) Ask Questions

Ask insightful questions to show your genuine interest in the position/company. You can use this as a way to show you've done your research. Avoid asking about salary and benefits in the first interview. Not asking questions shows a lack of interest in the company and position (you should prepare these in advance – 5-7 questions recommended). *Don't ask an obvious question or a question that has already been answered.*

9) Send a Thank You Note

Make sure to send either a hand-written or e-mailed thank you note to all individuals you interviewed with, the day of your interview. Make sure to include details from your conversation. It is helpful to get business cards before you leave for correct name spellings and position titles.

10) Evaluate your Experience

Think about what happened during the interview and ask yourself: Is this a place you think you would enjoy working? Are the job responsibilities a good match with your strengths? Is there opportunity to learn and grow? More questions are available in the *"Questions to Ask Yourself After the Interview"* section.



Dress for Success

The way you dress can make the difference in getting the job, being offered additional opportunities, and in getting ahead once you land your first job.

Remember, interviews are professional, so it's important to be aware of the details of your appearance. The focus should be on YOU—not your clothes.

The idea here is to avoid anything that could distract the interviewer. A clean and neat, professional appearance is an important step in making a good first impression. Maintaining your hygiene for an interview is very important.

**TIP: Mute or leave cell phone in car.*

Adapted from SYMS 'Dress to Achieve'

APPROPRIATE MEN'S ATTIRE

- Neat solid suit (*navy, black, dark grey, dark brown*)
- Tie and belt
- Conservative shoes (*new-looking*)
- Dress socks
- Little or no jewelry (*watch is acceptable*)
- Limit the aftershave/cologne
- Portfolio or padfolio

APPROPRIATE WOMEN'S ATTIRE

- Neat solid suit (*skirt or pant*)
- Appropriate skirt level
- Limited jewelry (*nothing distracting*)
- Neat professional hairstyle
- Neutral pantyhose
- Light makeup and perfume
- Conservative nail color and length
- Portfolio or padfolio

WHAT TO AVOID

- Bright, distracting colors or patterns
- Overkill of fragrance
- Backpacks, oversized/casual purses
- Sunglasses
- Chewing gum
- Distracting jewelry
- Dirty, scuffed shoes





Before the Interview

- Be prepared to talk about yourself. Identify your skills, interests, goals, and values. Assess your strengths and be able to back them up with examples.
- Research the organization; you should know size, locations, services, and products.
- Prepare a few good questions for the interviewer (write down questions you want to ask beforehand).
- Review your resume and a list of your positive qualities just before the interview. Bring extra copies of your resume (prepare for potential group interview).

During the Interview

- Arriving a few minutes early will give you a chance to gain composure during the interview.
- Remember that enthusiasm is a very desirable trait to convey – both verbally and non-verbally.
- Take time to listen to the interviewer's questions, in order to give an appropriate response.
- When asked to give an example, make sure to diversify your answers with varying experiences/successes from your resume.
- Keep everything positive, even if you've had a bad experience. Don't bash previous experiences.
- It's okay to take notes during the interview, but don't let it be distracting. Jot down key words rather than sentences.
- Maintain good eye contact with the interviewer; try to be relaxed and confident.
- As the interview ends, reiterate your interest in the position; ask what the next step would be, and when you can expect to hear. Make sure to get the interviewer's business card.

After the Interview

- Write a thank you note to the interviewer and e-mail or send a typed note by mail. If you have interviewed with several people, make sure to send personalized thank you letters to each individual (and make sure the letters are different).
- Use your interview notes to guide the content of your thank you letter.
- Be sure to provide any requested information (transcripts, references) as soon as possible.
- If you have not been notified in the provided timeframe follow up with the interviewer by phone or email.



Interview Questions

COMMON QUESTIONS INTERVIEWERS ASK

- Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?
- What made you choose _____ as a major?
- What are you looking for in an internship/job?
- What makes you an ideal candidate for this position?
- What do you know about our company?
- Do your grades reflect your abilities? Are you happy with your GPA?
- In what ways do you expect to make a contribution to this organization?
- What do you want to learn in this position?
- What are some of your strengths?
- Can you tell me about an area you may need to improve on?
- What do you consider your greatest achievement thus far (academic or personal)?
- Where do you hope to see yourself in five years?
- What are your long-term goals and how would working for our organization help you to achieve those goals?
- What adjectives would you use to describe yourself?
- How would a former supervisor describe your work ethic?
- What do you expect from a supervisor? How do you like to be managed?
- How do you take initiative? Set priorities and goals? Manage your time?
- What have you learned from your involvement in extracurricular activities?
- What experience have you had (insert job qualifications) i.e. with public speaking? Statistics? Writing professional reports?
- What steps do you take to stay knowledgeable in your field?

COMMON BEHAVIORAL QUESTIONS

Can you tell me about a time when you...

- Demonstrated strong teamwork?
- Exercised leadership skills?
- Handled a difficult customer or client?
- Made an important decision?
- Worked under pressure and completed the assignments?
- Had to juggle several things at once? How did you manage the multiple demands and what was the result?
- Overcame a major obstacle?
- Managed a project, from beginning to end?
- Took initiative to improve a challenging situation?
- Went above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done?
- Were in a situation in which you thought you could handle alone?

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

- How many tennis balls would it take to fill up this room?
- Estimate how many windows are in New York City.
- Two U.S. coins add up to thirty cents and one is not a nickel. What are the two coins?
- How many times a day does a clock's hands overlap?



EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS TO ASK THE INTERVIEWER

- What do you think are the most important qualities for someone to excel in this role?
- Can you tell me about your company culture?
- What type of training would I receive if hired?
- What has been your most rewarding experience while working for the company?
- What are the prospects for growth and advancement?
- How do you measure performance?
- What are some of the challenges that former interns/new hires have faced?
- What are the prospects for growth and advancement?
- Are there opportunities to collaborate with/contribute to other departments?
- What is the next step in the interview process?

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF AFTER THE INTERVIEW

- Describe the employees you met. Did they seem energetic, efficient, and organized? Or did they appear unenthusiastic?
- Did your interviewer(s) answer your questions in a direct and positive manner?
- Do you see yourself working for the company five years from now?
- Do the job and the company fit in with your lifestyle?
- Can I honestly give 150% to this role?



Thank You Letter

-Sample Thank You Email-

Dear Ms. Smith,

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me this afternoon. It was great to learn more about the (COMPANY NAME)'s commitment to personal development and diversity initiatives. The many services provided by the center are so critical to personal growth. I am very excited about the possibility of obtaining the (POSITION TITLE). I am confident that my leadership and volunteer experience would be an asset to the organization.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jane Pioneer

Closing & Follow-Up

- ALERT YOUR REFERENCES**
If you have not done so already, let your references know that they may be contacted soon by a potential employer.
- DON'T STOP YOUR SEARCH**
Although you feel confident you may receive an offer for the position, continue to apply and interview to find additional opportunities.
- BE PATIENT**
Relax, the hiring process often times takes longer than the employer anticipates.
- NEVER BURN BRIDGES**
Even if you find out you did not get the position, try and turn the situation into a positive one; reply and be grateful for having had the opportunity. Consider bringing the interviewer into your network and ask for feedback. Keep in mind, employers are not obligated to give you feedback.
- COMMITTING TO A JOB OFFER**
Carefully consider an offer before you accept. Once an offer has been accepted, you are expected to fulfill the commitment and properly decline other offers.
For more information about accepting, denying, delaying, or negotiating an offer, please contact the Center for Career & Professional Development.