

THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

The job interview can be a very pleasant and rewarding experience. It gives you and the employer a chance to discuss your qualifications and to determine if a match can be made.

Most initial interviews are twenty to thirty minutes in duration. These interviews are usually a screening process to determine which candidates will be invited for an on location or final interview.

Interview Styles

1. **Directed** - This consists of a list of specific questions which are asked in order. Sometimes a checklist is used to record answers.
2. **Non-directed** - This style consists of broad open-ended questions designed to get you to talk about yourself. It is more conversational in tone than the directed interview.
3. **Stress** - This is an interview designed to see how well you handle stress. Stress interviews are normally used in interviewing for top-level positions.

Most interviewers do not follow a specific style, but they use their own combination of types instead. Regardless of the style used, an interviewer is basically interested in two things:

- a. Why are you interested in the company?
- b. What can you offer the company?

Stages of the Interview - An interview usually consists of four stages:

1. **Breaking the Ice** - This is to help both you and the interviewer “tune in” to the interview situation. It usually consists of small talk about the weather, your trip to the interview and so on. The content and duration of this stage is controlled by the interviewer.
2. **Sharing of General Information** - The interviewer will begin to tell you something about the company and the open position. You in turn, can begin to tell the interviewer how your skills relate to this position. You should be concise, using specific examples whenever possible.
3. **Amplification and Sharpening of Focus** - At this point in the interview, you will be offering a lot of information about yourself. You will be questioned about your work-related values, goals and aspirations. Your qualifications will be explored in detail. The interviewer will be trying to find a fit between you and the position.
4. **Trying it Together** - This is the conclusion of the interview. Find out if the interviewer will call you and how soon this can be expected. If you’re still interested in the job, this is a good time to let the interviewer know.

Planning for the Interview

1. **Self-Assessment** - Identify who you are, where you want to go, and how you plan to get there.

Analyze:

Your strengths	Personal Goals
Weaknesses	Work Experience
Academic Performance	Special Skills
Career Interests	

Upon completion of this self-assessment, you should be confident in your ability to interview. If this is not the case, contact a career counselor for assistance.

2. **Practice Your Interviewing Skills** - Take time before the interview to practice and refine your interviewing skills. Sign up for a mock interview with the Career Center staff. Responding verbally helps you articulate your thoughts and gives you confidence in the interview. (For practice questions, refer to handout “QUESTIONS ASKED BY EMPLOYERS.”)
3. **Research Your Prospective Employer** - Employers are impressed by candidates who demonstrate knowledge concerning size of the organization and their community. You should acquire some knowledge concerning the size of the organization, criteria for evaluation of personnel, orientation and development programs, geographical location, industrial and recreational profile of the community, and the employer’s products or services.

Research of this nature is easily accomplished through use of the employer’s web site, the Career Center resources, the ERC reference library, the Chamber of Commerce located in the geographic area of your choice and a variety of other sources. Research often raises questions of importance that you can have answered at the interview.

Interview Tips

- ✓ Be punctual. Always allow ample time to get ready for your interview. The interviewer is on a schedule also, and you may miss the opportunity you have anticipated for a long time.
- ✓ Dress conservatively and professionally. Men should wear a tie and suit. Women should wear a suit and apply cosmetics in keeping with good taste. Avoid “overdoing it.” Careful grooming of hair, fingernails, shoes and clothes is extremely important for both sexes.
- ✓ Expect to be nervous at the outset. Nervousness is a natural function of your system which helps you perform at your very best. The time to worry is when you do not become nervous.
- ✓ Introduce yourself with a strong, confident handshake and look the interviewer directly in the eye. A strong first impression will set a positive tone for the interview.
- ✓ Tune in with interviewer and follow the pattern he or she sets. Be alert, maintain good posture, relax as much as possible and listen.
- ✓ Talk in a normal tone of voice and maintain good posture, relax as much as possible and listen.



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- ✓ When responding to questions, pause and think about what you are going to say. Elaborate on your “yes” or “no”. Intelligent, well thought out answers put pluses beside your name.
- ✓ Look for signs of restlessness in the interviewer and for signs that he or she is about to terminate the interview. Always leave termination up to the interviewer. When asked “Do you have any further questions?” Respond as your need demand.
- ✓ Exit from the interview after expressing a sincere interest in the position. The employer will never know the extent of your interest unless you express it. If you want the job, ask for it.
- ✓ Be certain that you know the next step. For example: Will they contact you? Must you contact them? Keep a notebook to record information about follow up and results as you viewed them, both objectively and subjectively.

Behavior Based Interviewing

In recent years, employers have been using “behavioral based” interviewing techniques to more accurately select employees. Behavioral based interviewing (BBI) is a structured pattern of questions designed to examine a person’s past behavior in situations similar to those on the job. BBI is based on the assumption that the best predictor of future behavior or performance is past behavior or performance in similar circumstances.

To prepare for a behavior based interview, review your resume and target specific life or job experiences that support your candidacy and target specific life or job experiences that support your candidacy. Be very specific and pay attention to details as you develop responses to the possible questions. Remember that the key to a successful BBI interview is to be prepared to describe in detail actual events, situations and problems that will illustrate you are the right person for the job.

The following is taken with permission by Mark Van Beusekom, presenter at the 1996 CEA/CAFCE conference in Toronto, Ontario. It is a sampling of key skills and behaviors, with accompanying question(s) that you might be asked in a behavior based interview. The behaviors/skills are in bold type and the possible questions for those skills are in italics.

Communication

How do you ensure that someone understands what you are saying?

Decisiveness

Give an example of when taking your time to make a decision paid off?

Energy

When do you do your best work? Your worst?

Fact Finding

How do you ensure that you are getting accurate and meaningful information?

Flexibility

How do you get around obstacles that prevent you from doing something?

Independence

Describe a situation where you took matters into your own hands.



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Initiative

What did you do to prepare for this interview?

Judgment

Give an example of good decisions you made. What were the alternatives?

Leadership^{□□}

Give an example of when you involved others in making a decision.

Listening

Give an example of when your listening skills paid off.

Negotiation

How do you know if an issue or item is negotiable?

Planning/Organizing

Give an example of when poor planning got you in trouble.

Presentation Skills

How do you prepare for a presentation?

Rapport Building

How long does it take for others to feel comfortable with you after you first meet?

Risk-Taking

Describe a time when you weighed the pros and cons of a situation and decided not to take action, even though you were under pressure to do so.

Sensitivity

How do you deal with people who waste your time with a lot of unnecessary problems?

Stress

*Have you ever been present when someone has lost their temper?
What was your reaction?*

Teamwork

Describe a team experience you found rewarding.

Tenacity

What college course gave you the most trouble? What did you do about it?

Training

Sometimes when training a person the information just does not sink in. What do you do?

Legal Area of Inquiry for Interviewing

Federal legislation prohibits interviewers from asking you questions concerning age, national origin, race, gender, religion, citizenship, and certain physical data. For more specific information see a career counselor in the Career Center.

Following the Interview

Provide information requested by the interviewer, such as credentials, references or transcripts, as soon as possible. Follow up with a short, typed letter of appreciation for the interview. (Refer to handout "LETTER WRITING.") This does not conclude the campaign unless you have been offered a position at this point. **Now you need persistence in follow-up.**