Interviewing Skills
The Guide to a Winning Interview

Workshop Reference Package:

Guide to a Winning Interview. List of Common Questions. Following up After the Interview.
A Guide to a Winning Interview

What is a Job Interview?

- A meeting between you and the person(s) doing the hiring regarding a job opening.
- An evaluation of your qualifications and general fit for the job.
- An opportunity for you to sell yourself as the best person for the job.
- TWO WAY PROCESS! You should be interviewing the company as much as the interviewer is interviewing you.

What to Know Before Going the Job Interview

✓ Know the job. Research the general duties, day to day task, overall purpose of the job, skills needed to do the job well.
   HOW?
   A. Written or verbal job description.
   B. Check Internet, Workforce Center, your employment counselor.
   C. Shadow someone on the job/informational interview.
   D. Become a customer: observe.

✓ Know the company. Research it’s history, overall purpose and goals; how the job you are interested in fits in.
   HOW?
   A. Research the Internet; many companies have their own web sites.
   B. Check out the company with the Better Business Bureau or Chamber of Commerce.
   C. Company printed materials, annual reports.
   D. When all else fails, check their ad in the yellow pages for things like “locally owned” or “25 years of services to the community” for clues to the company’s value.

✓ Know yourself. Know if you are really interested and qualified for the job. Also know all of your desirable and relevant experiences, qualities, interests, value and skills.
   HOW?
   A. Complete a master application and / or resume.
   B. Complete career interest inventories and aptitude test at school or with the Workforce Center.
   C. Examine your values; what is important to you.
   D. Write down characteristics of a quality employee (think in terms of what you are proud of about yourself)
Interviewing Body Language – Actions speak louder than words!

- **Smile.** A pleasant expression shows the interviewer that you are happy to be there and puts you both at ease.
- **Shake Hands.** Offer a warm, firm handshake when entering and exiting the interview. A limp handshake says you are not really all that pleased to meet someone.
- **Open.** Relax your body posture. Place your arms at your side, hands in your lap, and your feet comfortably on the floor.
- **Forward.** Lean towards the interviewer. It shows him/her that you are listening and that you are interested. To easily accomplish this posture sit near the edge of the chair it also forces you to straighten your back and relax your hands.
- **Eye Contact.** Be sure to look at the interviewer in the eye- but don’t stare.
- **Nod.** A slight head tilt or occasional nod lets the interviewer know that you understand what he/she is saying.
- **Relax.** The interviewer will be looking at how tense you are. Don’t fidget, squirm, tap your fingers, or swing your feet. Use slow easy gestures, lift your chin, and compose your hands.

**WAYS TO RELAX BEFORE THE INTERVIEW**

Be prepared! Rehearse your answers to possible questions.

- Know yourself. Know the job. Know the company.

Take care of your physical self.
- Don’t use drugs or alcohol the night before the interview.
- Get a good night’s rest.
- Exercise to relieve physical stress.

**BREATHE DEEPLY….BREATHE DEEPLY….BREATHE DEEPLY…..BREATHE DEEPLY…..**

The Day of the Interview

- **Bring identification.** Bring your social security card, and driver’s license.
- **Go alone to the interview.** Never take anyone with you (friends, children, parents). If you have children, be sure to have child care plan (and a backup) well before the interview.
- **Arrive early.** Be at least 15 minutes early for the interview.
- **Be prepared.** Bring copies of your resume and a “personal history” or your portfolio, if you have one to help fill out the applications form.
- **Allow time for the interview.** Don’t make other appointments for the day. The time an interview takes may vary. You may be hired on the spot and may be asked to stay to fill out additional paperwork.
Dressing for the Interview

Should you be judged by what you wear? Perhaps not, but the reality is, of course, that you are judged. The importance of interview appearance cannot be overstated, and besides, when you dress with confidence, you feel more confident and will be able to perform better during the interview itself.

General Guidelines

- Choosing attire that tells the interviewer that you are competent, responsible, and well-mannered is the first step in presenting yourself as the type of employee that people want to hire.

- A visit to the company may help you decide the appropriate clothing to select for your interview. A good standard is to dress a step above how the best-dresses for a similar job. When in doubt, err on the conservative side.

- Just because your clothes are “fashionable” does not mean they are appropriate for a job interview. The person who interviews you is more likely to be your parent’s age than your peers’, so ask a trusted older adult to give you their opinion on your interviewing attire.

- WEAR A SMILE. Nothing will make a greater impression on your interview than a warm friendly smile.

Do’s and Don’ts

DO
- Dress nicely and appear well groomed.
- Dress more conservatively than you normally and even a bit more conservatively than the typical dress at the workplace at which you’re interviewing.
- Keep jewelry to a minimum, if you choose to wear jewelry, choose conservative items—no large earrings or clanging bracelets.
- Wash and comb your hair. Style your hair so that it is not is not in your face.

DON’T
- Wear jeans. They may be fashionable, but they won’t impress an interviewer.
- Use heavy makeup or glittery make-up.
- Wear revealing clothing such as short skirts, clingy tops and open-toed shoes the goal is not to be sexy.
- Wear wrinkled clothes.
Common Questions Asked During an Interview

If you prepare careful answers to those questions in advance, you'll be ahead of the game. In each of your answers, try to convey your enthusiasm and ability to be a team player. Listen carefully to what is being asked and remember to answer every question in a timely manner. Long answers make it seem like you are struggling to find something intelligent to say. Silence is OK! You may take a moment to think about what you want to say before you answer the questions. You may also ask the interviewer to clarify the question if necessary.

Work History

- What were your starting and final levels of pay?
- What were your responsibilities?
- What major challenges and problems did you face? How did you handle them?
- Which was most/least rewarding?
- What was the biggest accomplishment/failure in this position?
- What was it like working with your supervisor? What were his strengths and shortcomings?
- Why are you leaving?

About you

- Tell me a little about yourself.
- How do you spend your spare time? What are your hobbies?
- How do you handle stress and pressure?
- What do you find are the most difficult decisions to make?
- If the people who know you were asked why you should be hired, what would they say?
- Do you prefer to work independently or on a team?
- Give some examples of team work.
- What type of work environment do you prefer?
- Describe a difficult work situation/project and how you overcame it.

The New Job and Company

- What interests you about this job?
- What applicable attributes/ experience do you have?
- Why are you the best person for the job?
- Why do you want to work at this organization?
- What can you contribute to this company?
- Is there anything I haven’t told you about the job or company that you would like to know?

The Future

- What are you looking for in your next job? What is important to you?
- Where do you see yourself (what are your goals) in 5, 10, 20 years?
- How do you plan to achieve these goals?
- What are your salary requirements- both short-term and long-term?
- What are you future vocational plans?
The Tough Questions & Some Ideas on how to Answer Them

What would you say is your weakest point?

Be honest, not cliché! State a weakness or a learning curve and then tell them how you have overcome it or why it will not be a problem in this job.

“In the past, it has been difficult for me to accept criticism from my peers. However, I have learned to value and solicit this input, and it has improved my job performance.”

Tell me about the worst boss you ever had

Never ever talk badly about a past supervisor, even if they truly were the worst. Keep things neutral by saying something like “I’ve been really lucky. They’ve all been different, and I’ve learned something from each of them.” Or you can tell a story about a time when you may have disagreed with your boss. Explain the situation, accept responsibility for your part, and explain how you learned from it.

Were you ever fired from a job?

Share an honest answer, but not one that will cause the potential employer to assume that you are a trouble maker. Don’t spend too much time on this answer; address the employer’s concern and move on to the strengths that you have to offer.

If you are still very emotional about the circumstances of your separation, prepare and practice this answer! “Upon reflection, I realize that I didn’t take the time to fully understand my boss’s expectations. From that experience, I’ve learned to ask certain questions ahead of time rather than make assumptions about the boss’s ideas. I’m glad I had that experience, and I’m ready to move on…”

Interviewing the Interviewer- Ask Questions!

At the end of an interview, an interviewer typically asks, “Any questions”? Interviewers expect you to ask questions. After all, both you and the employer need to decide if you are the right fit for the job. Preparing interview questions to ask in advance shows that you’ve done your homework and are truly interested in the job. In fact, some interviewers might be impressed with your questions than your answers. Below is a list of some sample questions to help come up with your own.

- How would you describe a typical workday?
- What skill/quality do you consider to be most important for this position?
- What is the best part of working at this company for you?
- Why did you join the company?
- What will my training be like?
- Is there a dress code?
- What would my hours be?
- When would I start if I was hired?
- Is there anything else I can tell you about my qualifications?

ALWAYS ASK........What is the next step in the hiring process?
After the Interview- It isn’t over until you get the job

- Close the interview properly; if you want the job- AKS FOR THE JOB! (Something like- “this position sounds great and I would love to be a part of your team”).
- Thank them for their time.
- Since you asked the interviewer what the next step in the hiring process was, you should follow those guidelines. But if the timeline that the interviewer gave you has expired, you should call to follow up.
- **Continue your job hunt**

**Thank You….Thank You Very Much!**

Write a thank-you note. It’s just common courtesy to thank people for their time, and since very few teens exercise this little gesture, you’ll stand out if you do it. For example, one teen job-seeker interviewed for a job at Kmart. As soon as she got home, she wrote a thank-you note and turned right around and went back to Kmart to hand-deliver it. She got the job. If the interviewer has a business card, ask for one to ensure you spell his or her name correctly.

```
Thank You Note Sample

Interviewers Name  
Address

Dear ____________.

Please accept my thanks for the time you spent talking with me today about the __________ job.
I am very interested in what we talked about and hope that I am selected to fill the job. Please feel free to contact me if you have any further questions about my qualifications for this position.
```

Your Name  
Address
Additional Interview Questions

If there is something on this list that you dread being asked, go ahead and prepare an answer ahead of time! Look for opportunities to tell stories, and remember that the employer is trying to discover evidence that you have the ability to do the job, and that you will be a good fit.

1. Tell me a little about yourself?
2. Name two of your strengths.
3. How do you respond to pressure?
4. Can you work this schedule?
5. Can you perform the essential functions of this position?
6. What are your salary requirements?
7. How would you describe your present (or past) responsibilities?
8. What type of supervisor do you prefer?
9. Name two of your weaknesses.
10. Tell me about a time when you persuaded team members to do things your way.
11. What are you looking for in your next position?
12. What accomplishments are you most proud of?
13. What would your peers or subordinates say about you?
14. Tell me about a time when you handled a difficult situation with a co-worker.
15. How have you handled a situation in the past that required taking care of an irate customer?
16. Could you tell me about a time when you were responsible for handling an emergency situation and what the outcome was?
17. Tell me about a time when your efforts to complete a project on time were not successful.
18. For a receptionist applicant: There are three telephone lines that you have placed on hold. You are talking with a person on the other line. There are two sales people at your desk to see a manager. How would you handle the situation?
19. Why should we hire you?
20. Is there anything else we should know about you
21. Do you manage time well?
22. You mentioned that you had a conflict with another employee. What happened and what did you do to resolve the problem?
23. Why did you say you like to work in a team environment?
24. How would others describe you?
25. Why are you interested in this company?
26. Describe yourself in one word.
27. What’s the single most important thing you can contribute to our organization?
28. What are your goals, personal and professional?
29. Where do you see yourself (What are your goals) in 5 years?
30. What is your favorite book? Movie? Website?
31. How do you deal with stress or conflict?
32. Describe your personality.
33. What work assignment did you like least in your past job?
34. What are things that bother you most about people?
35. Name three things that you like and dislike about your current position.
36. What would you like to be able to do better? How are you achieving this goal?
37. What is your most memorable accomplishment?
38. What would you say about your organizational abilities?
39. If you did not have economic or practical considerations and could have any job or jobs you wanted what would they be?
40. What kind of books do you like to read? Tell me about the most current book you read.
41. What chores or responsibilities do you dislike the most?
42. Have you ever been terminated from a job? What were the reasons?
43. How do you spend your time outside of work?
44. What kind of people do you find most difficult to work with?
45. What kind of people do you work with best?
46. Who or what in your life has influenced you most with regard to your career objectives?
47. What do you think are the most important characteristics of the manager of the future?
48. What motivates you?
49. Who do you turn to for help when making decisions?
50. What work environment is optimal for your satisfaction and productivity?
51. Tell me about a time when you worked effectively under pressure.
52. Tell me about a time when you missed an obvious solution to a problem.
53. Tell me about a time when you had to make an important decision with limited facts.
54. Tell me about a time when you were forced to make an unpopular decision.
55. Tell me about a time when you had to adapt to a difficult situation.
56. Tell me about a time when you were tolerant of an opinion that was different from your own.
57. Tell me about a time when you were creative in solving a problem.
### Interviewing Skills
Workshop Evaluation

**Date:** __________________________  **Facilitator:** __________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How useful was this workshop in the following areas?</th>
<th>Not Useful</th>
<th>Mostly Not Useful</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Mostly Useful</th>
<th>Very Useful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Understanding the importance of researching a company prior to an interview</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Identifying ways to research when preparing for an interview</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Understanding the interview from an employer’s perspective and anticipating their questions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Learning and answering common interview questions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Preparing answers to situational questions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Preparing for the interview i.e., Knowing interview formats, types of questions, what to wear, what to bring, etc</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. How to actively follow up after an interview</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Please rate the facilitator

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8. Organized and prepared</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Knowledgeable about the topic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Effective presentation style</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Responsive to questions and comments</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This workshop was helpful to me because........

I wish we had learned more about........

Other comments........