

Tips for Successful Interviewing

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These guidelines for successful interviewing are provided to help you in preparing for job interviews. The staff at the Career Development Center is also available to help answer specific questions you have about your job interviews. A number of videotapes about proper interviewing techniques are available to view at the Career Development Center.

In addition, [mock interviews](#) are available (by appointment) to help you practice your interviewing skills. For questions about what to wear to a job interview, please review the guidelines for [“What to Wear to an Interview”](#). We have also provided [special instructions for International Students](#) on interviewing for jobs and internships in the United States.

INTERVIEW GOALS

Job Seeker –

1. To obtain information about the job and the company/organization.
2. To determine their own suitability for the job and whether or not they are interested in it.
3. To communicate important information about yourself to the employer.
4. To make a good impression on the employer.

Employer –

1. To promote the organization and attract the best possible employee.
2. To gather information on potential employees.
3. To assess how the potential employee’s qualifications match the job requirements.
4. To determine whether the potential employee will “fit” with the staff and the company/organization.

DO YOUR HOMEWORK (before the interview)

Investigate the company/organization

1. What is the size of the company/organization?
2. Who is the CEO/President/Superintendent, etc.?
3. Where is the company/organization headquarters?
4. What are the main products/services that the company/organization provides?
5. Who is their major competitor? (if applicable)

Where to find information

Company/Organization web site(s)

www.hoovers.com

www.symlicity.com

Annual reports

Library (ask at the Reference Desk)

Business periodicals, trade journals, local newspapers

PREPARE THOROUGHLY

1. Map out your route to the interview; if you have the time, practice driving there at the same time of day as the interview, so you'll have an idea how long it will take.
2. Make sure you have enough gas in your car; fill up the night before so you won't be delayed.
3. Be sure your clothing is cleaned and pressed. If at all possible, hang your suit coat in your vehicle as you drive to the interview, rather than rumpling it by sitting on it.
4. Take a cell phone or change for a phone call (and the phone number of the employer) so you can call if you are delayed by traffic, weather, etc.
5. Arrive on time, preferably 10-15 minutes early for the interview.
6. Be aware that you are making an impression on everyone you come in contact with when you are at the company/organization site. Be friendly to everyone you meet no matter what their job description.
7. Recognize that you may be on videotape as you are entering/leaving the company/organization site!
8. **TURN OFF YOUR CELL PHONE PRIOR TO THE INTERVIEW.**
9. Practice your handshake. Be sure it is firm, but not bone-crushing!

DURING THE INTERVIEW

1. Try to avoid "yes"/"no" answers during the interview.
2. Relax as much as you can; everyone is nervous at job interviews!
3. Watch your body language – don't slouch in your chair, maintain appropriate eye contact, smile often, and keep your hands in your lap if you tend to "talk with your hands" when nervous.
4. If you don't know the answer to an employer's question, it is better to admit that than make up something.
5. If you don't understand the question, ask them to rephrase it or ask a clarifying question of the employer (i.e., "Do you mean...").
6. Try to have at least 3 questions prepared to ask during the interview about the company/organization, or the position, or to follow up on something the interviewer said earlier in the interview.
7. The interviewer will typically offer you an opportunity to ask them additional questions towards the end of the interview; be sure to have at least one additional question.

8. **NEVER ask about salary and benefits!** This changes the dynamics of the interview and turns it into, “What’s in this for me?” Employers do not appreciate this.
9. Be enthusiastic and remain positive throughout the interview; avoid negative comments and statements.
10. **NEVER criticize a former supervisor or company.**
11. Request business cards of all that interviewed you, so that you may follow up with them.

ILLEGAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Employers may unknowingly or even purposefully ask you illegal interview questions during your interview. While you do not have to answer these questions, you must not respond in a rude or hostile way to the employer. The following information will help you in handling illegal interview questions.

Inquiry Area	Illegal Questions	Legal Questions
National Origin/ Citizenship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you a U.S. citizen • Where were you/your parents born? • What is your native tongue? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you authorized to work in the United States? • What language do you read/speak/write fluently? (This question is okay only if this ability is relevant to the performance of the job.)
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How old are you? • When did you graduate? • What’s your date of birth? 	Are you over the age of 18?
Marital/Family Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What’s your marital status? • With whom do you live? • Do you plan to have a family? When? • How many kids do you have? • What are your child-care arrangements? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would you be willing to relocate if necessary? • Would you be able and willing to travel as needed for the job? (This question is okay if it is asked of all applicants for the job.) • Would you be able and willing to work overtime as necessary? (This question is okay if it is asked of all applicants for the job.)
Affiliations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What clubs or social organizations do you belong to? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List any professional or trade groups or other organizations that you belong to that you consider relevant to your ability to perform this job.
Personal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How tall are you? How much do you weigh? (questions about height and weight are not acceptable <i>unless</i> minimum standards are essential for the safe performance of the job.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you able to lift a 50-pound weight and carry it 100 yards, as this is part of the job?
Disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you have any disabilities? • Please complete the following medical history. • Have you had any recent or past illnesses or operations? If yes, list them and gives dates when these occurred. • What was the date of your last physical exam? • How’s your family’s health? • Do you need an accommodation to perform the job? (This question can be asked only after a job offer has been made.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you able to perform the essential functions of this job? (This question is okay if the interviewer has thoroughly described the job.) • Can you demonstrate how you would perform the following job-related functions? • As part of the hiring process. After a job offer has been made, you will be required to undergo a medical exam. (Exam results must be kept strictly confidential, except medical/safety personnel may be informed if emergency medical treatment is required, and supervisors may be informed about necessary job accommodations, based on exam results.)

Arrest Record	• Have you ever been arrested?	• Have you ever been convicted of _____? (The crime named should be reasonable related to the performance of the job in question.)
Military	• If you've been in the military, were you honorably discharged?	• In what branch of the armed forces did you Serve? • What type of training or education did you receive in the military?

Source: National Association of Colleges and Employers - www.jobweb.com

FOLLOW UP AFTER THE INTERVIEW

Many interviewees fail to do appropriate follow up and the employer does notice. In fact, employers so rarely receive thank you letters from job seekers that those who do send them really stand out.

Be sure to send a prompt [thank you letter](#) either the same day as the interview or the very next day. Always type your letter as a business letter and do not use flowery or cute paper. **NEVER send a handwritten thank you letter!** Reiterate your interest in the position and the company/organization and offer to provide the employer with additional information if they require it.