

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Interviewing

Why is learning about interviewing important?

Interviews play an important role in our efforts to gather information as well as to apply for admission to college or to gain a job.

What is an interview?

An interview is a conversation - controlled, but not dominated by one person who asks questions of another person. It is a conversation with a special purpose. It calls for using excellent listening skills, asking appropriate questions, and giving appropriate answers.

The interviewer is the person who asks the questions. The interviewee is the person who answers.

As an interviewer you should:

Set a goal - decide what the outcome of the interview should be.

Develop the structure - the manner in which it is conducted.

Prepare and ask questions - Prepare ahead of time rather than "winging it".

Control the direction of the discussion - Make sure interviewee answers questions rather than avoids them or talks around them.

As an interviewee you should:

Provide clear, complete and appropriate answers - helps convey the right information to the interviewer without a need for interpretation.

Gather information - research as necessary beforehand and ask questions in the interview.

Dress appropriately - depending on the type of interview and situation, dress should fit the occasion.

Types of interviews:

Information-gathering - one in which an interviewer obtains information from an interviewee. Examples include surveys, journalists, lawyers, detectives and exit interviews.

Information-giving - an interviewer gives information to an interviewee. Examples include performance appraisals and counseling interviews.

Employment - the process that employers use to judge whether a job candidate is qualified and well suited for a position.

Skill in interviewing is most important factor in getting a job - even more than grades and experience.

Types of questions used in interviews:

Open-ended - a question that leaves room for expanded answers.

Ex. "Tell me about yourself"

Closed - seeks a very specific answer.

Ex. "What hours are you available to work?"

Follow-up question: A question that follows a train of thought

Ex. After learning that a person has used photoshop, they ask where they learned the program or what version they have worked on.

Leading - a question that hints at the answer

Ex. "You want to work weekends, don't you?"

Direct - Straight-forward; asks exactly what interviewer wants to know.

Ex. "Can you work Friday evenings?"

Indirect - Seeks specific information without directly asking for it.

Ex. "What do you usually do on Friday evenings?"

Opinion - Asks for respondent's judgment about something

Ex. "What is your opinion about employees who steal?"

Hypothetical - Asks how a respondent might react in a given situation.

Ex. "If you knew someone was stealing from the company, what would you do?"

## Conducting an interview:

Respect your subject's feelings:

Choose a day and time for the interview (plus backups). Select a place, but be open. Your subject may have a preference. Prepare an explanation of what the interview will cover.

Do your homework:

Know something about the subject before the interview so you can create good questions. This takes thorough preparation. You should have 10-15 prepared questions that will get you the information you want from the interview.

Dress for success:

Dress appropriately for the person you are interviewing and the place. Use common sense. Avoid t-shirts, the latest fashion fad and messy clothing.

Be Early:

You should be at the arranged place for the interview before the subject is in most cases. Some interviewers use a tape recorder so that they can get the subject's words verbatim (word-for-word). You must get permission to record someone and you should make sure your equipment is working. Even if you plan to record, you should still have pen and paper for notes. (Have some spares as well.)

Ask effective questions:

Keep them brief and avoid complicated two/three-part questions. Use a variety of questions. Remember the 5 W's and H (Who, what, when, where, why, and How) Ask open ended questions that allow a subject to decide how best to answer and give the subject a chance to expand on his/her answers. Avoid yes/no, closed, and leading questions.

Be ethical:

Most important thing you can do is LISTEN WELL. Good listening keeps you attentive and encourages your subject. Start with routine, get-acquainted questions that are non-threatening. Use your prepared questions as a spring board for other questions. Be polite. Take quick notes and look up often.

Concluding the interview:

Shake hands again, be polite. Thank the person; then follow up with a thank you note a few days later.

## Giving an interview:

Have the right attitude:

A positive attitude is an important ingredient in a successful interview. They want to find out if you are capable, reliable and enjoyable to be around. "Your personality and how you conduct yourself during the interview have the greatest impact on your chances of landing a job." Guyla Armstrong, Business professor, University of Nebraska.

### Dress to create the right impression:

Dress in the clothes you would probably wear on the job. People take what you wear as information. Good rule: overdressed is better than underdressed.

#### Avoid:

1. An outfit that doesn't look put together, the pieces weren't meant to be worn with each other.
2. Clothes that don't fit. Too tight or too loose.
3. Poor grooming (hair out of control, overdone makeup, dirty hand, poor hygiene.)
4. Dressing too casually.
5. Wearing something too revealing.

### Be alert and energetic:

Have a good, firm handshake and SMILE. During the interview show some energy and enthusiasm. Sit up in your chair, slightly forward. Use gestures, make eye contact.

Use the interviewer's name. Rehearse comments about your strongest assets and look for opportunities to mention them. Appear poised and confident, but not arrogant.

### Make positive points

Be alert for situations where you can bring them into the conversation.

#### Possibilities

1. Puff balls. Easy questions like "Tell me about yourself." Use this as a spring board to put your best foot forward.
2. Pauses. Every interview will have down time. Use this as a chance to offer to talk about what you know.
3. Bridges. A transition from one answer to the other. If the question calls for a brief answer, think of a way to expand it into something positive.  
Example: "Have you ever been late to work? If you can offer a good explanation... not an excuse, then use it as an example.

### Confront tough questions

Good planning means thinking through the tough questions and practicing them. It is o.k. to take a moment to think about your answer.

#### Hints on buying some time:

1. Say the interviewer's name once slowly while you think.
2. Restate the question.
3. Address the issue - that is use general comments while you think about specifics.

It is also o.k. to say "I don't know." The worst mistake you can make in an interview is to try to bluff your way when you really don't know what you are talking about.

### Interview checklist:

1. Do I have a copy of my resume?
2. Have I brought a list of three references with addresses and telephone numbers?
3. Am I going to alone? (Don't take anyone else with you.)
4. Am I sure I'll be on time? Arrive 10-15 minutes before the appointment.
5. Have I dressed neatly and appropriately?
6. Can I perform a good, firm handshake?
7. Even if I feel tired, can I remember to sit up and look alert.
8. Can I remember to not to criticize others, especially past employers?
9. Can I make good eye contact with the interviewer?
10. Can I remember the interviewer's name and use it?
11. Do I have some questions to ask?
12. Can I remember to thank the interviewer?

## Questions:

Interviewer questions: See attached journals

### Interviewee questions:

- What are the specific duties of this position?
- How might you describe a typical day in this position?
- Is this a new position, or has it recently been vacated?
- How much travel is normally involved?
- With whom will I be working most closely?
- What type of computer technology is involved in this position?
- Is any special training provided?
- What else can I tell you about my qualifications?
- When do you expect to make a decision?
- What kind of benefits do you offer?
- Are there opportunities for advancement?

## Laws Governing Employment Questions:

Employers may not legally ask for information that can be used to discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, disabilities, marital status, national origin, or age.

### Cannot ask questions related to:

Gender, age, marital status, or sexual orientation

Ex. "Is that your maiden name?"

Cannot refuse employment based solely on age. (exceptions for teens and some jobs like airline pilots) Can ask if they are under the age of 18.

Can ask when they graduated from high school, however.

Race, citizenship, birthplace or information on relatives

Ex. "Pasquale -- is that a Spanish name?"

Ex. "Are you considered to be part of a minority group?"

May be required to show proof of citizenship or work eligibility upon hire.

Can ask what languages spoken, but not where learned.

Religious background or non-professional organizations

Ex. "Does your religion prevent you from working weekends or holidays?"

Disability, physical status, health or medical history (Including height/weight)

Ex. "Do you have any use of your legs?"

Ex. "Do you have any pre-existing health conditions?"

May ask specifics about ability to perform certain duties that are required of the job.

Pregnancy or childcare information

Ex. "Do you plan to have children?"

Arrest or Conviction record

Ex. "Have you ever been arrested?"

May ask about felony convictions if it is relevant to the job.

### Other areas:

Cannot require photographs of applicants (except in some jobs like modeling)

Financial status - Can't inquire about financial status or credit rating.

Birth Certificate can only be requested after hire.

If asked an unlawful question:

Can simply answer the question.

Note that you feel it is illegal, but answer anyway.

Ask the interviewer about the appropriateness of the question. "Why? Is my religion a factor in whether or not I will be hired?"

Refuse to answer directly, but rationalize that your answer would have no bearing on your ability to do the job.

Ask the interviewer how the question relates to the job and whether it really is lawful.

Redirect the focus of the discussion from the question to something else, such as the job requirements.

Refuse to provide the information.

End the interview and leave.