

INTERVIEW TIPS

- **Never be late.** Always arrive 5 or 10 minutes early. Do not keep a potential employer waiting. If you run into complications, call the employer and explain your situation or book an new interview time.
- **Dress for Success!!!!** Wear clean clothes and shoes. Tattered moth eaten running shoes and faded washed out jeans do not express success. Your clothes do not have to be designer, but they need to be clean and unwrinkled. Brush your teeth, yellow teeth or bad breath is not an option.
Young men: Pay attention to personal grooming. Shave your face and comb your hair. If it is long, put it back in a pony tail. Use cologne in moderation.
Young ladies: Do not wear flashy jewelry or strong perfume. Do not show body parts such as belly buttons or cleavage. There are people allergic to perfume and cologne.
- **Use good body language.** Sit up straight and hold your hands neatly in your lap or on the table. Do not squirm or slouch or lounge back in the chair. Make eye contact with the person asking the questions. If there is more than one person, make eye contact with all of them as you answer the question. Do not blink uncontrollably, play with your hair, chew your fingernails or wave your hands around while you talk.
- **Prepare for the Interview.** Ask someone to help you perform a mock interview. Career Counselors or CALM teachers are good resources for this. Have as many of your answers as you can prepared and ready. Some examples of standard interview questions are:
Tell us about yourself?
What is your greatest strength? Weakness?
What kind of supervisor do you prefer?
Why are you the best candidate for the job?
Can you give us an example of a stressful situation you have had and how you coped with it?
Where do you see yourself in 3-5 years?
Describe a time you worked as a team member and what was your role?
Describe a difficult situation you have had in the past and how you resolved it?

- **Be organized.** Have your references ready. Have copies of your certificates or achievements to be added to your resume. Have extra copies of your resume.

TIP: IF THE EMPLOYER OFFERS YOU COFFEE OR OTHER LIQUID REFRESHMENTS. ASK FOR WATER, YOUR MOUTH MAY GO DRY DURING THE INTERVIEW AND YOU CAN TAKE A SIP OF WATER. THIS ALSO ALLOWS YOU TIME TO THINK ABOUT YOUR ANSWER TO A QUESTION.

How to Answer Typical Interview Questions

The key to effectively answering job interview questions is to understand the purpose of the questions. It's hard to respond to statements like "Tell me about yourself" if you don't know what type of information the employer is looking for!

Questions about you

- ☐ What do you consider your most important skills (abilities, characteristics)?
- ☐ What are your strengths?
- ☐ Why should we hire you?
- ☐ What five words would you say describe you best?
- ☐ Have you had any experience in this type of work?

The interviewer wants to know what makes you different from other applicants, and how well your qualifications match the requirements of the job. To answer this type of question well, you have to be prepared to describe situations in which you have demonstrated the skills and abilities required to succeed on the job. For example, if you are applying for work that probably requires patience (to deal with dissatisfied customers) or persistence (to solve problems), prepare for the interview by identifying

situations in which your actions have shown that you can be patient and/or persistent.

Questions about your interest in the company

- ☐ What is it about our services or products that interests you?
- ☐ What is your understanding of the nature of the job (or the company)?
- ☐ Why did you apply for this job?
- ☐ What do you know about our company?
- ☐ Why do you want to work for our company?

The interviewer is trying to find out if you have a good understanding of the company's business, its goals and objectives, and the nature of the work. If you don't know much about the company, the company probably won't be interested in hiring you, so do some investigating before the interview! Read company annual reports, check out the company website, and talk to people who are familiar with the company. Then you can state what you have found out about the company and its operations, and talk about why the job interests you. Emphasize how your skills fit the company's needs.

Questions about past employment

- ☐ Why did you leave your last job? (Or, why do you want to leave your current job?)
- ☐ How much were you absent from work in your last job?
- ☐ What did you think of your supervisors?
- ☐ How well did you get along with other workers?
- ☐ Why were you fired?

The interviewer is trying to find out if you have had problems in the past that indicate you may not be a good employee. Focus on the positive - your desire to learn new skills, assume more responsibility, seek new opportunities, grow and develop. Avoid getting emotional, and be as positive as you can honestly be about your performance in past jobs, job requirements and benefits, and the people you worked with.

Questions about your commitment

- ☐ Why have you changed jobs so often?
- ☐ Are you thinking of going back to school or to college?
- ☐ What are your long range goals?
- ☐ Don't you think you are over-qualified for this job?

The interviewer wants to know if you will stick around. Talk about your career plans and how the job is related to your career goals. Let the employer know that you won't quit after a short time, so time and money invested in training you will not be wasted. If you have changed jobs many times, provide a short, reasonable explanation. If you are over-qualified for the position, stress your adaptability and flexibility, and your willingness to assume more responsibility.

Questions related to job requirements

- ☐ Are you willing to relocate? retrain?
- ☐ Do you prefer working by yourself?
- ☐ Can you work under pressure?
- ☐ What would you do if . . . ?
- ☐ Do you like repetitive work?
- ☐ What kind of boss do you prefer?
- ☐ How do you react to criticism?
- ☐ What salary are you looking for?

Directly or indirectly, the employer is trying to find out if you can satisfy the requirements of the job. Answer tactfully and honestly. When interviewers describe situations and ask how you would respond to them, demonstrate your skills and knowledge to the best of your ability. For questions that are more direct, talk about your willingness (e.g. to relocate, work alone, do repetitive work) and give examples of your ability. If you cannot or would not be willing, say so. There is no point in taking a job, then quitting because you are not willing or able to do what is required!

The salary question deserves special attention. If you have done some investigating and know the typical wage range, quote the range and say that you would expect to be paid at the same rate as others who have similar qualifications.

Interview Questions and Your Skills

"What can you do?" is the real question behind many questions asked in job interviews. In fact, the primary purpose of an employment interview is to find out if you have the required skills and abilities.

To make a good impression in a job interview, you have to be able to do more than tell employers what you can do, you have to be able to describe situations in which you have demonstrated what you can do.

If you have limited work experience or most of your work experience is in one particular field, don't despair. Employers are looking for more than just work-specific skills (e.g. the ability to operate a particular type of equipment), especially if those skills can be learned on the job. If you have been invited to come in for an interview, the employer has probably already decided that you have or can learn the necessary work-specific skills. What employers are looking for during a job interview is evidence of your transferable skills and personal management skills. When you are preparing for a work search, ask yourself what you have done in the past that demonstrates each of the skills listed below.

Transferable Skills

Transferable skills are key skills used in almost any kind of work. Interpersonal skills, communication skills, computer literacy skills and thinking skills are good examples of transferable skills.

Interpersonal skills are the skills required to work well with other people (e.g. the ability to work co-operatively, express opinions in an assertive-but-not-aggressive way, recognize co-workers' needs, build mutual respect and trust in team

environments).

- Communication skills □ include both oral and written skills (e.g. the ability to explain concepts clearly and accurately to individuals or groups of people, in person or over the telephone, and/or to communicate effectively via letters, e-mail messages and reports).
- Computer literacy □ refers to keyboarding skills and the ability to use computer programs for word-processing or other applications (e.g. spreadsheet or presentation software).
- Thinking and decision-making skills □ refer to the ability to gather, analyze and apply information, and use good judgement to make decisions.

Personal Management Skills

Personal management skills are the skills you use every day to "manage" your life. Organizational skills, time management skills, managing yourself-as-a-business skills, and health and lifestyle-related skills are good examples of personal management skills.

- Organizational skills □ refer to the ability to work in an organized manner that saves time and makes you more effective.
- Time management skills □ refer to the ability to meet project deadlines by deciding what is most important and accurately predicting how much time activities will take.
- Managing self-as-business skills □ refer to the ability to market your services and skills, maintain your effectiveness as a worker by learning new things, and build working relationships and networks with others.
- Health and lifestyle-related skills □ refer to how well you take care of yourself. Eating well, exercising, and getting enough rest and relaxation are required to manage stress effectively and balance the many

different roles you play in life (e.g. student, parent, worker).

Employers are becoming increasingly aware of how much the success of their businesses depends on finding employees who have good transferable and personal management skills. Therefore, when you are looking for work, you need to let employers know that you have these skills.

You don't have to be an expert at something to consider it a personal skill. The level of skill you need will depend on the job. Identify all of your skills, even if you're not an expert. You can decide later if your skill level is adequate for the work you want to do, or if you need to find ways to develop or improve a skill.

Questions You Can Ask at a Job Interview

Toward the end of an interview, most employers will ask if you have any questions. Employers often have a list of prepared questions and likewise, so should you. The best time to formulate questions is before the interview, when you are doing research on the position, company and industry. This should help you identify relevant and specific questions.

Reasons to Ask Questions

- You impress the employer by asking thoughtful questions that show an interest in the position and company.
- You gain valuable information to help you decide if the job is the right fit, should you be offered it.
- You will have a better understanding of the employer's expectations of the prospective candidate and most pressing challenges the organization is facing. You can effectively use this information in your summary of what you can offer the employer and in future interactions with the company.

Avoid asking questions about salary and benefits (particularly in a first interview), unless the employer mentions these topics first. You do not want to give the impression that money is your primary concern. It is best to wait until you have an actual job offer before asking questions about the company's compensation package.

Use the following questions as a guide, modifying them to your own language and adding more specifics from your research. Remember that attitude goes a long way in how your questions are received. Genuine interest and assertiveness shines, whereas an "I demand to know the answers" attitude gets you nowhere. Also be aware, the employer may turn some of your questions around and ask you for the same information. Be prepared!

Questions about the company or department

☐: What are the company's biggest challenges currently? (This shows that you are interested in helping them meet those challenges.)

☐: What are the company's long-range plans for expansion?

☐: In what ways does this company assist the professional growth of employees?

☐: How could I check the financial stability of your company (if it is a non-public company)? This may seem a bit forward, and you may not want to ask this question on the first interview. If you have ever been burnt financially with a company going under, this may be very important to you.

☐: Is the company in any negotiations to merge with another company?

Questions about the position

☐ How does this position fit into the company?

☐ How would you describe the ideal candidate?

☐ Can you describe a typical work day, or week, for this job?

☐ What immediate projects or tasks would I be working on?

☐ Why is this position vacant?

☐ What is the turnover rate for this position?

☐ What training program do you have to help employees move into a new position?

☐ Who would my immediate supervisor be? What management style do they have?

☐ How soon after being hired can I expect a performance evaluation? What process is used?

Questions about the work environment

☐ What relationship do employees have with upper management?

☐ How is success measured in this company? (This information may give you some indication what you have to do and how long you have to do it, before moving up the ladder?)

☐ How would you describe the culture of this company?

Remember the interview is a two-way street. Not only is the employer assessing you, you also are deciding whether you would want to work for the company. Accordingly, use the invitation "Do you have any questions?" to find out information that will help you make a good decision.

The 4 P's of a Successful Interview

You've got the interview, you're nervous and you're inventing 'what if' scenarios! With the 4 P's you'll increase your chances for a successful interview!

☐ PREPARE

Know Yourself

Thorough preparation is the first step towards a good interview! It takes time and hard work, but it's crucial. You must self-assess to identify what you have to contribute to the company and the job. You need to take stock, by listing on paper, your:

☐ skills and competencies

☐ knowledge

☐ values and needs

☐ beliefs

☐ interests

☐ personal characteristics

Knowing your profile and what you want will give you more confidence and demonstrate to the interviewer you are purposeful and reflective - skills employers want employees to have.

Know the Company

Learn all you can about the company you want to work for and the position you've applied for.

☐ Call or visit the company and ask for information brochures, the latest annual report, and the CEO's current speech, with the goals and direction of the company.

☐ Find out the company's vision and mission statement. You'll get a feeling for how the company operates and how it sees its employees.

☐ Surf the Internet for a company website; you might get all the information there.

☐ Be sure you know what the position requires. Ask the human resources department for a job description or find out more about the job from another worker in the company. Or perhaps you could talk to a friend who does similar work.

Knowing this information will show you're keenly interested in the company and motivated about the job-qualities employers look for.

Know Your Contribution

With research in hand you're ready to anticipate and prepare for questions you might be asked. Remember the employer is trying to find out three things: can you do the job, will you do the job, and will you fit with the company's style? Keep these needs in mind during your interview and take opportunities to demonstrate how you will meet them.

Create a master list of accomplishments from your work, leisure and volunteer

activities, and include the results achieved.

Review your accomplishments. Which are key to the position's needs?

Write down questions the interviewer might ask. Put yourself in the interviewer's shoes and think about what you would like a potential candidate to answer.

Tap your memory for stories that illustrate your skills and successes. Use the Situation, Action and Result (SAR) formula. For example, you saw a problem in the manufacture of a product and you took the initiative to find a way to solve it, or you worked on or managed a difficult project. Using SAR, describe the situation, explain your approach and tell the results.

Employers want to know what your track record is in achieving results and how you will contribute to successful outcomes.

PRACTICE

Step #2 is easier than all the research you did in Step #1, but it is still time consuming. Practice what you're going to say and how you will say it on video or audio tape, to see and hear how you perform.

It's best not to memorize questions and answers, but be sure that you develop key points, based on the preparation step, that you want the interviewer to know about you. These key points can be used to respond to a variety of questions. Now listen to and/or watch yourself make these points in a role-play scenario.

It's also important for you to ask relevant questions during the interview. Make a list of about three things you want to know about the position or the company (make sure these are questions you wouldn't be expected to already know from your research.)

The employer wants to hear how your skills, knowledge and expertise match the needs of the position and wants to hear how you communicate.

PARTICIPATE

This step is all about how to act in the interview.

- ☐ Are you fully involved; do you appear to be motivated; are you enthusiastic about the opportunity; are you on your best behaviour?
- ☐ Sit with good posture, leaning slightly forward to show interest. Body language is important.
- ☐ Your tone of voice is key to communicating participation and perspective.
- ☐ Make good eye contact; interviewers will expect you look them in the eye with confidence.
- ☐ Watch the interviewer's body language and expressions for keys to how you're doing; it's also a good idea to match some of the interviewer's style.
- ☐ Listen closely to the questions so you can answer them accurately.
- ☐ Be direct. Don't ramble or go off topic.
- ☐ Take time to think before you respond.
- ☐ If you want the job, ask for it at the end of the interview.
- ☐ Giving your utmost attention to the interview and the interviewer tells the employer you are dedicated to your commitments.

☐ BE POSITIVE

Most people feel anxious when going on a job interview! But you can choose to be positive and confident, even if you are nervous. It's up to you! If you were the interviewer, what attitude would you prefer to see in a potential candidate?

You can decrease your anxiety if you realize that an interview is simply a meeting - a meeting in which the goal is for both parties to find out beneficial information. Yes, the employer wants to know if you can do the job, if you will do the job, and if you will fit into the organization. But it's not a one-way exercise where he or she

has all the power. After all, you also want to know if this is where you want to use your skills and knowledge, if you will learn and grow in this position, and if this is an organization that will respect and compensate you for your input.

Your attitude is crucial to show the employer you are responsible to make your own choices.

Choose to make your interview a positive and successful learning experience!
Using the 4 P's might even help you enjoy the experience!