Interviewing

Can you do the job? Will you do the job? Will you fit in?

The interview is your chance to shine. Show enthusiasm by your knowledge of the company and your interest in the job. Show intelligence by clearly communicating your strengths. Use the power of your personality to demonstrate how your skills will benefit the company. Dress for success.

Identify Your Skills

Make a list of all your skills. Practice talking about your skills in front of a mirror, with a partner, then do a mock interview with a Career Services Counselor. The more you practice, the more confident you will become.

Consider:

- Your strongest skills
- Your greatest areas of knowledge
- Your greatest personality strengths
- Your key accomplishments
- Determine what skills you have that the employer needs relevant to the job opening

Be Prepared for These Interviews

The Screening Interview:

The purpose is to weed out candidates. You will be asked general questions and specific questions that are aimed at assessing your ability to do the job and your fit with the organization. Do your research! If the company regularly asks people to relocate, you better be prepared to answer a question about your willingness to relocate. Your resume will be questioned for truthfulness. Be sure to show your enthusiasm. They will be interested in your energy level. If you sound intelligent, articulate and don’t make any social blunders, then you will get a second interview with the manager, supervisor or boss.

The Behavioral Interview:

The purpose is to see how you have handled situations in the past. The premise is that your past behavior will determine your future behavior. These kinds of interviews are fairly common. Questions will involve how you have handled specific situations. What did you do right? What did you do wrong? How would you change your behavior to improve the outcome?

The Situational Interview:

The purpose is to weed out candidates. You will be asked general and specific questions aimed at assessing your ability to do the job and your fit for the organization. Do your research! If the company regularly asks people to relocate, you better be prepared to answer a question about your willingness to relocate. You will be asked questions to verify the information on your resume. Be enthusiastic—they will be interested in your energy level. If you sound intelligent, articulate and don’t make any major errors, you will get a second interview with the manager or supervisor.

The Panel Interview:

This kind of interview can be intimidating. Think of it as a way to connect with several people at once and improve your chances for success. Even if you are not connecting with one person, chances are you will connect with others. Shake each person’s hand as they are being introduced. Make pleasant eye contact. Don’t stare, but don’t avoid eye contact. Look at each person as you respond to questions. Start your response by looking at the person who asked the question, then look at the other members of the panel. No one likes to feel left out.
The Stress Interview:
The purpose of this interview is...you guessed it—stress! They want to see what you are really made of and how you react in stressful situations. The purpose is to make you feel confused and caught off guard. It is an interrogation to cut through the bull and get to the heart. How will you survive? Recognize it for what it is and don’t be intimidated. Be aware of your body language and voice tones. Take a few seconds to gather your thoughts before you answer a question. Keep your eyes on the interviewer. Don’t cower or avoid eye contact. You can be cool under fire.

Points to Remember

Analyze strengths and weaknesses.
When preparing for your interviews, start by doing some solid, honest self-assessment. Analyze your strengths and weaknesses, your background, your academic performance, your vocational interests, and your personal aspirations and values. In other words, begin to formulate, in your own mind, not only what you would like to do, but also what you feel you are best prepared to do.

Dress appropriately.
Although many employers are becoming more liberal in their standard of dress and appearance, let basic good taste be your guide. If a tattoo, unusual hair-style, or visible piercings is going to jeopardize your chances for a job, not changing it is your decision, but be prepared for the possible consequences of your decision. Research the company so you have an idea of their general personality.

Watch your body language and voice tones.
Crossing your arms in front of you might mean you are feeling defensive. Good eye contact is important. Don’t scratch that itch under your arm, play with your hair, or fidget. Be aware of your posture—sit up straight with your shoulders back—it will make you look and feel more confident.

Research the company.
This enables you to tell them what you know about their organization, respond intelligently to questions and show your motivation. It is imperative that you have some knowledge about their policies, philosophies, products, services, locations, training programs, and similar information.

Be prepared to ask questions.
An interview is a two-way street. You should have questions prepared that will assist you in determining whether the job is right for you and to illustrate your interest in the organization.

Bring copies of your resume.
In case they ask for them, you’re prepared! Buy a nice-looking pen. This will be your interview pen—it will help you look more professional.

Be yourself!
Your attitude is going to influence the interviewer's evaluation. Don't try to be something you are not; just be yourself. Emphasize your strong points and remember that the recruiter is looking for inherent personal energy and enthusiasm. The interview is your opportunity to market yourself and your skills.

Maintain a positive attitude.
While past failures and shortcomings need not be volunteered, don't try to cover them up either. Should recruiters ask about them, try to explain the circumstances rather than give excuses or blame others. Remember, they're human too... and probably have made a few mistakes. You will create a better impression by being honest and candid, and by describing the positive aspects of past mistakes—what you learned from them.

Ask for the job if you want it.
"After hearing about the position and the opportunities, I want you to know I am very interested in working for your organization." Some interviewers won’t give you the job unless you ask for it.
Write a thank you note or send a professionally written email.  
Write it as soon as you get home and mail it the same day.

Use Career Services!

The above comments are, of course, only general suggestions and observations. For more detailed and personalized advice, take advantage of Career Services. Located in Lommasson Center 154, Career Services provides the opportunity for you to visit with a professional counselor, discuss interviewing techniques and participate in a mock interview.

General Questions

Tell me a little about yourself?

Write it down and practice.

• Keep it brief—two or three minutes.
• Focus on the positive aspects of your experiences. Include personal information such as your leadership and interpersonal skills, dependability and what inspired you to get into this field.
• Tie it all in to how these qualities align with what the company is looking for.

What are your major strengths?

Think about what the company needs. Is it an ability to work with a wide range of people? Communication skills? Attention to detail? Persistence?

What is your major weakness?

Have a weakness you can turn into a strength or something you are proactively working to improve.

• “I tend to take work home with me. I’m learning to make my work time more productive and efficient.”
• “I’m learning how to be a better listener. I tend to want to jump in and express my opinion.”
• “I have a tendency to be over-organized. I’m learning how to let some things go and concentrate on the more important aspects of my job by prioritizing my assignments.”

How do you deal with conflict?

“I have confidence in my ability to handle conflict. If I have a problem with a coworker, I’ll do everything I can to work it out with that person. Conflict with customers can usually be easily worked out. I’m an excellent communicator; I listen to what the customer is saying and acknowledge his/her concern. I paraphrase back to the customer what s/he said to make sure I understand the situation. I explain what I can do to help—if I am unable to help, I will find someone who can.”

How do you deal with authority?

“I work well under supervision. I am always interested in improving myself and learning new ways to do things.”

Other Questions:

• How will your personality fit in?
• What have you learned from your mistakes?
• What do you know about us?
Questions Asked by Employers

Personal

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. What are your hobbies?
3. Why did you choose to interview with our organization?
4. Describe your ideal job.
5. What can you offer us?
6. What do you consider to be your greatest strengths?
7. Can you name some weaknesses?
9. Have you ever had any failures? What did you learn from them?
10. Of which three accomplishments are you most proud?
11. Who are your role models? Why?
12. How does your college education or work experience relate to this job?
13. What motivates you most in a job?
14. Have you ever had difficulty getting along with a former professor/supervisor/co-worker and how did you handle it?
15. Have you ever spoken before a group of people? How large?
16. Why should we hire you rather than another candidate?
17. What do you know about our organization (products or services)?
18. Where do you want to be in five years? Ten years?
19. Do you plan to return to school for further education?

Education

20. Why did you choose your major?
21. Why did you choose to attend your college or university?
22. Do you think you received a good education? In what ways?
23. In which campus activities did you participate?
24. Which classes in your major did you like the best? Least? Why?
25. Which elective classes did you like best? Least? Why?
26. If you were to start over, what would you change about your education?
27. Do your grades accurately reflect your ability? Why or why not?

28. Were you financially responsible for any portion of your college education?
29. What job-related skills have you developed?

Experience

30. Did you work while going to school?
31. What did you learn from these work experiences?
32. What did you enjoy most about your last employment? Least?
33. Have you ever quit a job? Why?
34. Give an example of a situation in which you provided a solution to an employer.
35. Give an example of a time in which you worked under deadline pressure.
36. Have you ever done any volunteer work? What kind?
37. How do you think a former supervisor would describe your work?

Career Goals

38. Do you prefer to work under supervision or on your own?
39. What kind of boss do you prefer?
40. Would you be successful working with a team?
41. Do you prefer large or small organizations? Why?
42. What other types of positions are you considering?
43. How do you feel about working in a structured environment?
44. Are you able to work on several assignments at once?
45. How do you feel about working overtime?
46. How do you feel about travel?
47. How do you feel about the possibility of relocating?
48. Are you willing to work flextime?

Before you begin interviewing, think about these questions and possible responses and discuss them with a career counselor. Conduct mock interviews and be sure you are able to communicate clear, unrehearsed answers to interviewers!
Here are some questions you may want to ask:

1. What are the opportunities for personal growth?
2. Tell me about your initial and future training programs.
3. What are the most challenging facets of the job?
4. Describe the typical first year assignments.
5. What is the overall structure of the department where the position is located?
6. Identify typical career paths based on past records. What is the realistic time frame for advancement?
7. How is an employee evaluated and promoted?
8. What is the retention rate of people in the position for which I am interviewing?
9. What are the company's plans for future growth?
10. What industry trends will occur in this company?
11. How has this company fared during the recent recession?
12. What makes your firm different from its competitors?
13. What are the company's strengths and weaknesses?
14. How would you describe your corporation's personality and management style?
15. Is it company policy to promote from within?
16. What kinds of career opportunities are currently available for my degree and skills?
17. What are your expectations for new hires?
18. Describe the work environment.
19. Why do you enjoy working for your firm?
20. What qualities are you looking for in new hires?
21. Why should I want to work for your organization?
Illegal Questions…

What's the right answer?

Various federal, state, and local laws regulate the questions a prospective employer can ask you. An employer's questions—the job application, in the interview, or during the testing process—must be related to the job you are applying for. For the employer, the focus must be: "What do I need to know to decide whether or not this person can perform the functions of this job?"

Options for answering

If you are asked an illegal question, you have three options.

1. You are free to answer the question, but if you choose to do so, realize that you are giving information that is not job related. You could potentially harm your candidacy by giving the "wrong" answer.

2. You can refuse to answer the question. By selecting this option, you'll be within your legal rights, but you are also running the risk of coming off as uncooperative or confrontational.

3. Your third option is to examine the intent behind the question and respond with an answer as it might apply to the job. For instance, if the interviewer asks, "Are you a U.S. citizen?" or "What country are you from?" You've just been asked an illegal question. You could say, however, "I am authorized to work in the United States." Or if your interviewer asks, "Who is going to take care of your children when you have to travel?" You might answer, "I can meet the travel and work schedule that this job requires."

On the next pages are some examples of illegal questions—and their legal counterparts.
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<tr>
<th>Inquiry Area</th>
<th>Illegal Questions</th>
<th>Legal Questions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Origin/Citizenship</td>
<td>Area you a U.S. citizen? &lt;br&gt;Where were you born? &lt;br&gt;What is your “native tongue?”</td>
<td>Are you authorized to work in the United States? &lt;br&gt;What languages do you read, speak, or write fluently? (As long as it pertains to the job in question)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>How old are you? &lt;br&gt;When did you graduate from State University? &lt;br&gt;What is your date of birth?</td>
<td>Are you over the age of 18?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marital Status/Family</td>
<td>What’s your marital status? &lt;br&gt;Who do you live with? &lt;br&gt;Do you plan to have a family? &lt;br&gt;When? &lt;br&gt;How many kids do you have? &lt;br&gt;What are your childcare arrangements?</td>
<td>Would you be willing to relocate if necessary? &lt;br&gt;Travel is an important part of the job. Would you be able and willing to travel as needed by the job? (As long as all applicants for the job are asked it.) &lt;br&gt;Are you able to work overtime as the job requires it? (Again, only as long as all applicants for the job are asked it.)</td>
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<td>Affiliations</td>
<td>What clubs or social organizations do you belong to?</td>
<td>List any professional, trade groups or other organizations that you belong to that you consider relevant to your ability to perform this job.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inquiry Area</td>
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| Personal     | How tall are you?  
How much do you weigh?                                                             | Are you able to lift a 50-pound weight and carry it 100 yards, as part of your job?  
Are you able to perform the essential duties of this job with or without reasonable accommodation?  
Can you demonstrate how you perform the following job related function?  
As part of the hiring process, after you have been offered a contract, you will be required to undergo a medical exam. |
| Disabilities | Do you have any disabilities?  
Please complete the following medical history.  
Have you had any recent of past illnesses or operations?  
If yes, please give dates.  
What was the date of your last physical exam?  
How’s your family’s health?  
When did you lose your eyesight?  
How?                                                     | Are you able to perform the essential duties of this job with or without reasonable accommodation?  
Can you demonstrate how you perform the following job related function?  
As part of the hiring process, after you have been offered a contract, you will be required to undergo a medical exam. |
| Arrest Record | Have you ever been arrested?                                                       | Have you ever been convicted of_____? (The crime name should be reasonably 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? |