Orientation to Interviewing Skills

A guide to understanding interviews, processes and the preparation necessary to achieve positive results
What is an Interview?

- An Interview allows an employer to find out how your skills, work history and educational background match the requirements for the job.
- The Interview also determines if your personality fits with that of the organization’s culture.
- Enthusiasm, integrity, professionalism, sincerity and communication skills are significant factors.
Types of Interviews

- **One on One** - typically a meeting with the hiring authority for a business or organization
- **Panel** - meeting with a group of pre-selected representatives within an organization who each ask you questions and rate your responses
- **Performance** - you will be asked to demonstrate your mastery of a topic, skill or process and be rated on your effectiveness
- **Competitive Panel** - a modified version of the panel interview whereby a group of interviewers rate and rank a group of potential candidates in one interview with everyone participating together and being rated at the same time
- **Phone** - you may receive a phone based interview as a way to pre-screen or even select a candidate
- **Combination** - your interview may consist of any combination of the above styles
The Interview is Rooted in Examining Your Behaviors

- Research shows that successful candidates genuinely want the job that they seek.
- The hiring decision rests in how the interviewer/s perceive you and how you fit with the culture of the organization.
- The first few seconds are extremely important as this is when interviewers form an impression about you.
- The process, whether you like it or not, is mostly subjective.
- Being confident and asserting your skills is important.
How To Prepare For an Interview

- First step: Research as much as you can about the organization using:
  - Company literature
  - Web sites
  - Reports
  - Chamber of Commerce
  - Employees you may know

- If you can, find out who will conduct the interview

- How old is the organization?

- Any achievements of the organization

- Future plans
2\textsuperscript{nd} Step: Research Yourself!

- Review the job description or job announcement and use note cards or a writing pad to make notes on how your skills relate to the essential job requirements.
- Identify specific jobs and educational experiences that directly relate to the position.
- Understand what your career ladder would look like and be prepared to address your goals for the future.
- Have current references ready if asked.
- Do research on the salary for the position you are seeking so you will know an appropriate range if asked what your salary requirements are—it is generally recommended to state “negotiable” unless a specific range is requested.
Step 3: Dress Properly

- Like it or not, the saying that “You do not get a second chance at a first impression” is true.

- Clothing should be conservative, current and professional regardless of gender.
- Grooming should always be attentive and tasteful.
- Avoid unnecessary colognes, perfumes or jewelry that will distract your audience.
- No Gum, food, smoking or drinking before or during your interview.
Step 4:

• Get Directions

• Make a practice run to the interview site so you will know where to go and reduce your stress finding the location, parking, etc.

• Greet the reception person and sit quietly, turn off your cell phone and do not place or receive calls while at the interview site.

• Try to arrive 5-10 minutes early so you can think through what you are going to say and relax before the interview begins.

• Stop by the restroom and freshen your appearance if necessary.
Step 5: What Should You Bring To the Interview?

- Directions from door to door and phone number of the employer in case you have trouble or get lost
- Company information to review while you wait
- Name of person/s conducting interview, if known
- Extra copies of your résumé in a neat folder or portfolio with a nice pen
- List of references or letters of reference if asked
- Copies of awards, evaluations or recognitions (Consider a Career Portfolio)
- List of job related questions to ask the employer
- Personal ID
STAGES of the Interview

#1 INTRODUCTION
- Firm and proper handshake
- Wait to be offered a seat rather than assume where to sit
- Be poised, formal and professional
- The employer will tell you how the process will unfold

#2 EMPLOYER QUESTIONS
- The employer will ask you general and specific questions about your skills, work history and education
- Questions will usually be open-ended requiring you to explain further
- Avoid yes and no answers and try to explain yourself
TRY NOT TO BE NERVOUS

- Some nervousness is understandable
- Clarity of your statements is very important
- Stay focused on the question
- Provide an example but keep your responses to a few minutes each to avoid meandering
Stages of the Interview

#3 APPLICANT QUESTIONS

- Be prepared with a few questions to ask the employer

- Questions should be ones that make you look interested in working there

- Don’t ask about salary or benefits unless the employer brings it up first
Stages of the Interview

#4 CLOSING REMARKS

- The employer thanks you for your time

- You, in turn, thank the employer and all interviewers for considering you as a candidate
Stages of the Interview

#5 REVIEW AND SELF-EVALUATION

- Self-Evaluation is the best way to improve your interviewing skills by reviewing and modifying your weak responses before your next interview.
- Always take time once you return home to reflect on what went well and how you responded to questions that were asked of you.
- Use a post-interview checklist to guide you.

#6 THE FOLLOW UP

- Prepare a thank you note as a follow up to the interview and send it by email or mail the same day if possible.
What Will I be Asked?

Standard open-ended questions to expect in any interview

- Tell me a little about yourself...(other than what you have stated in your resume) *Most commonly asked*
- Why are seeking to leave your current position?
- What are your strengths?
- What are your weaknesses?
- What are your salary requirements?
- What do you like about your current job/dislike?
- Why should we choose you for this position?
- Where do you see yourself in five years?
- Do you have any questions for us?
Interview Questions Based on Your Behaviors

- Competency based interview questions
- Evidence based answers

Sample Questions
- A crisis you have overcome and how you handled it
- A time in your job where you had to handle stress
- A work accomplishment you are proud of and why
- A failure you have had and how you overcame it
- A time when you had to work with a team and what your contribution was
- A situation where you had an issue with a coworker and how you resolved it
- A time you dealt with a difficult person and how you handled it
How should you respond to behavior based questions?

- Follow three easy steps:
  - Set the stage, describe the situation clearly
  - Explain the process you employed to solve the situation
  - Explain the resolution

- Your story should be genuine, relevant and interesting.
How Can I Practice Interviewing?

- The best practice is with someone else face to face who can offer you immediate constructive feedback.

- If you can not find someone in person, you may stop by the Career Center and practice using our computer based interviewing tool called Interview Pro TM.

- We also have several quick guides to interviewing, lists of interview questions and various books to help guide you.
Considering that nearly three fourths of employers surveyed indicated that a potential employee who exhibits improper or questionable grooming during an interview would not be hired emphasizes the importance of a first impression.

* Based on 2007 NACE research
Learning to WORK Your Image

• Creating a professional appearance to get and keep a job requires knowledge of proper grooming, workplace etiquette and good personal health practices

  • 73% of employers surveyed state that potential employees with grooming issues are likely to be ruled out of the hiring process

  • Nearly 50% of employers surveyed stated that non-traditional forms of clothing would likely rule out a potential employee

  • 33% of employers found potential employees with weak handshakes would likely be ruled out during the interview process

  • Body piercings, unusual hair coloring and/or visible tattoos pose the risk of likely being ruled out during an interview for 30% of employers

(based on 2007 NACE research of US employers)
The Rules, #1-Good Grooming

- You make a first impression within seconds of meeting your potential employer
  - Grooming should be conservative
  - Always bathe before an interview so you will look and feel your best
  - Females: Makeup must be tasteful and conservative, choose subtle colors for eyes and lips
  - Men should groom facial hair or be clean shaven-if you have an earring remove it
  - Hair style and color should be conservative and age appropriate for men and women; long hair should be pulled back or up to avoid being a distraction
  - Nails should be manicured and clean for men and women with no unusual colors
  - Dry skin or dandruff won’t do! Use moisturizers and hair products to correct dry skin before the interview
  - Deodorant with antiperspirant is a must to control perspiration and odor
  - Clean eyeglasses of smudges before your interview
  - Cover up any visible tattoos with proper clothing or concealer if necessary-30% of employers surveyed would consider not hiring a person with visible tattoos*
The Rules, #2 Dental Hygiene

- Dental Hygiene
  - Your smile says it all!
  - Teeth should be clean and your breath should be fresh
  - Scrape your tongue using dental floss and rinse with mouthwash before an interview
  - Floss between your teeth and avoid eating before an interview
The Rules, #3 Common Scents

- Avoid heavy Scents
- You want your presentation to be memorable, not the smell you leave behind!
- Do not smoke before or after an interview until you are off site-you carry the smell in your clothing and on paperwork which may turn off an employer!
- Perfume or cologne can be overpowering when interviewing in a small confined space
- Use perfume or cologne sparingly only to give yourself a fresh unique scent
- Avoid using perfume or cologne to mask cigarette odors-use a product for eliminating odors such as Febreeze or Lysol instead
- Do not eat food right before your interview-it may linger on your breath or on your clothing and leave a negative impression, not to mention the possibility of a food stain or drip on your clothes!
The Rules, #4 Clothing

- Dress the part
- Conservative not trendy
- Clothing should be neatly pressed with an iron the night before and hung up
- Clothing should be clean, free of stains, wear, pet hair, or household odors
- Shoes should be clean, polished and professional

**FASHION NO-Nos!**

- For men-no white socks, socks should match your pant color or your shoe color
- No sagging or baggy pants, no denim, no bell bottoms, and belts are expected
- Ties are the general rule for men or a sport coat and pressed shirt with a collar
- No exposed undergarments such as underwear or t-shirts/bra straps
- No tennis shoes, avoid open toed shoes and shoes that are too casual
- Women should not wear colored or fishnet stockings, neutrals are best
- Women should avoid wearing high heels beyond 2”
- Avoid tight fitting clothing or low cut shirts/blouses as well as clothing too loose or too short/long
- No exposed midriffs or short skirts for women
- Avoid excessive jewelry such as rings, bracelets, neck chains or multiple earrings (rule of thumb is no more than one of each)
The Rules, #5  Be Conservative

- When selecting clothing for an interview, choose outfits that are neutral in color such as beige, blue or black.

- Avoid outlandish patterns, colors or designs.

- Your skills should stand out, not your outfit.

- Avoid wearing clothing that is out of style, too trendy or can call attention to your personality in a negative way (Generally avoid symbolic attire, patches, words or athletic-oriented clothing).

- You will be sized up in the first few seconds so think like an employer...how would you want a potential employee to dress?

- Run your choices for your interview clothing by a few other people before you make a choice to be sure you are going to make the right impression.
The Final Piece of Advice...

- A handshake is both a greeting and finale
- Looking the part is as important as conveying confidence
- Greet your interviewer/s with a firm, dry handshake whether you are male or female when you start and end the interview
- A weak handshake leaves nothing to be desired for an employer
- Speak clearly and make good eye contact