

Interview Tips

The primary purpose of an interview is to determine the match between the prospective employee and the organization. The process focuses on 3 areas:

- Is the person qualified for the job?
- Are they motivated to perform their duties?
- Are they suited to the organization?

“I got the interview! Now what!?”

Dress professionally. This means appropriate for the site and site placement. When in doubt, it's better to overdress. If you're not sure whether a suit is necessary, dress to impress! Wear the suit.

Be sure of the details. Confirm you have the date, time, location and anything you are asked to bring with you.

- Date and time – be sure you have the accurate date and time. Plan to arrive early.
- Contact information – bring the name and contact phone number of the person you will be meeting.
- Location – be sure you know the exact address and any additional access information. Consider: is it on a specific floor, will you need to sign in, and who will you need to ask for upon arrival. Be sure you have accurate directions. Better yet, if possible, make a dry run to be sure you know the route. If you're using public transportation, make sure you have a current schedule and allow for additional walking time so you're not out of breath when you arrive!
- What to bring – even if you submitted a resume to secure an interview, it is always appreciated to have a few current copies of your resume on hand. Also, bring a copy of your references to leave with the interviewer, in addition to a portfolio (if applicable). Also, consider if there is any documentation that you should bring with you.

Do your homework and prepare. Make sure you know the basics about the organization you are interviewing with. Peruse their website (again) to familiarize and refresh your memory.

Follow up within 24-48 hours.

- It's not quite over when the interview is complete. Follow up with a thank you e-mail or letter for the opportunity to interview and for time/attention the interviewer has given you.
- In some cases, you may be asked to provide additional information or get an answer to a specific question. Be sure you do, and in a timely manner.
- Be patient and await a response, but keep an eye on the calendar. If you have not received a response when it was indicated, give it a day and place a call or send an e-mail to check in. A brief message acknowledging when you last spoke, your interest in the internship/job, and a request for an update, if available.

Sample Interview Questions

Below are some sample questions you may be asked in an interview.

Questions frequently asked by employers when interviewing college seniors

- Tell me a little bit about yourself.
- How would you describe yourself? What unique qualities or skills do you have?
- How do you think a professor/co-worker/supervisor would describe you?
- How has your college experience prepared you to enter the job market? Or: How has your graduate program prepared you for this next professional move?
- Why should I hire you? (think about what might set you apart from other candidates)
- In what ways do you think you can contribute to our school/organization?
- What have you learned from participating in extracurricular activities?
- What are some of your strengths and weaknesses?
- Talk about your experience working with diverse populations.
- What is the most recent book that you have read?
- What is something that we have not asked you that you would like to share with us?

Typical Behavioral Questions

- Tell me about a time you handled when a team member did not carry their weight.
- Describe a major problem you faced and how you handled it.
- Tell me about a time when you failed at something and how you handled the situation.
- Tell me about a time you disagreed with a colleague or your supervisor.

In order to effectively answer Behavioral Questions, you will want to become familiar with the **STAR** method:

Situation or Task: Describe the **situation** that you were in or the **task** that you needed to accomplish. You should describe a specific event or situation, not a generalized description of what you have done in the past. Be sure to give enough detail for the interviewer to understand. This situation can be from a previous job, from a volunteer experience, or any relevant event.

Action: Describe the **action** you took and be sure to keep the focus on you. Even if you are discussing a group project or effort, describe what you did — not the efforts of the team. Don't tell what you might do, tell what you did. Avoid speaking negatively about any one you reference in your description.

Results: What happened? What was the **result or outcome**? How did the event end? What did you accomplish? What did you learn?

Questions to ask the interviewer:

- What is the next step in the process? (find out about the employer's timetable)
- Can you tell me more about ... (something you have learned in your research)?
- What upcoming projects/initiatives do you anticipate?
- What key skills or qualities would enable the selected candidate to be most effective in this role? (this may help you to identify the priorities of the hiring manager)
- How would you describe the school/organization culture?