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Interviewing

Getting a good job is a job in itself; it takes planning, preparation and proper execution. There are as many interview styles as there are interviewers but there are a few basic hints that are critical to your success in interviewing.

At the most, you have five minutes to establish a favorable impression. It starts with your appearance (see dress tips), a firm handshake, good eye contact, positive body language (a smile) and your ability to speak clearly- lose the buzzwords, slang and the um's and ah's. It is OK to be nervous, it is OK to correct a mistake or misstatement, it is NOT OK to exaggerate, fabricate or embellish.

You have two ears and one mouth- listen attentively, answer directly and do not ramble on. On average you should spend half the time talking and half the time listening.

Do Your Homework

The internet is an excellent research tool and should be used to research any company that you are going to interview with. A company's website will, at a minimum, include a basic description of the enterprise. Additionally, you can get financial information from the annual report (if the company is public), recent news, information on subsidiary or affiliate businesses as well as available jobs within the company.

The more you know about a prospective employer, the better. You will be asked what you know about the company and you are expected to have an answer that is well thought out.

Dressing for Interviews

Positive first impressions are key to most human interactions and interviewing for a job is no exception. Your physical appearance and dress are critical to making a good first impression; it may not get you the job but it can surely prevent you from making the cut.



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If you are in doubt, it is better to be over dressed than underdressed. Job interviews are no place for fashion statements.

General Tips for Men & Women

- If you need a haircut, get one! Make sure your hair is clean & neat. (For men- shorter is better).
- Trim and clean your fingernails.
- Do not wear strong cologne or perfume.
- Remove all visible body piercing except conservative earrings for women (one pair only).
- Brush your teeth and freshen your breath.
- Do not chew gum or candy (or fingernails!)
- Wear minimal jewelry.
- Make sure there is no body odor.

Dress for Women

- First choice is a conservative dark navy or gray skirted wool blend suit- brown or beige are OK as a second choice.
- If a skirted suit is not in your wardrobe, a blazer with blouse and skirt is the next best choice.
- Skirt length should be below or just above the knee- no short skirts! & dresses should be avoided.
- Blouses should be cotton or silk and should be white or another light color.
- Shoes should be low-heeled, clean and polished.
- Make-up should be minimal, with lipstick and nail polish conservative tones.
- Pantyhose should be conservative in color (at or close to skin color) with no runs.
- Carry a portfolio rather than a purse.

Dress for Men

- Beards and moustaches should be avoided.
- If you wear a beard or mustache, make sure they are neatly trimmed.
- Conservative dark navy or gray two-piece business suit (preferably wool or other natural fibers).



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- If you do not own a suit, then you should wear a conservative sports coat (preferably a dark color) with nicely pressed dress slacks.
- White long-sleeved button-down dress shirt.
- Conservative silk tie.
- Black socks.
- Dark dress shoes- clean and polished.
- Your belt should match your shoes.
- Carry a portfolio.

Planning

Planning is critical to any and all interviews and it is the same for all interviews. Understanding your self is critical to success.

- List your strengths and weaknesses, skills, values and interests.
- List examples of how you have demonstrated your strengths (we'll get to weaknesses later!)
- List examples of how you have employed your skills and knowledge to solve problems and challenges.
- List your accomplishments (& list the things you could have done better-again we'll save this for later).
- List your real world work experiences (don't forget volunteer work).
- List your long-term goals and objectives in terms of your work career as well as your personal life (values) and why they are important to you.

Preparation

Preparation will include specific items required for each different interview but the vast majority of preparation will be utilized in every interview. Proper preparation builds confidence and forces you to articulate who you are and what you offer to a prospective employer. In your planning, you have listed the things that you understand about yourself, in your preparation, you need to practice speaking about yourself, clearly and concisely.

- Research the company, the position and the industry. The web is an excellent source of information.
- Prepare to discuss your strengths and weaknesses*, skills, values and interests. Prepare specific examples- be able to cite decisions and the thought process behind those decisions.

- Prepare to give specific examples of challenges that you have faced and describe how you dealt with them.
- Prepare to speak about your accomplishments, how you got there and why it is important to you. Be specific.
- Practice interviewing with a friend- have them ask the questions and practice your responses until the “em’s” and “you knows” are gone.
- Maintain eye contact when practicing.
- Practice positive body language- smile!
- Articulate why you are interested in this particular field.
- Prepare your questions for the interviewer.

*Weaknesses- prepare to discuss but don’t volunteer. If asked, be prepared to discuss a weakness and what you do to overcome it.

Execution

Practice makes perfect- the more times you interview, the better you will perform. A job interview is not the time to establish your uniqueness; it is a time to conduct yourself in a manner consistent with the expectations of any potential employer. Your GPA speaks for itself; the interviewer wants to assess your personality, behavior, communication skills, drive and determination to decide if you are a good “fit” for the company. Generally speaking, you are being assessed on the basis of your past performance in order to predict your future performance. A comfortable and confident exchange of information makes a successful interview.

- Do not arrive on time- Be early!!! At least 10 minutes early!
- Bring extra copies of your resume in a portfolio.
- Leave the cell phone and pager at home, if not, turn them off.
- Look the person who greets you in the eye and introduce yourself with a firm handshake.
- Assume that the person who greets you is the interviewer!
- Use proper grammar- do not use slang.
- Address your interviewer as Mr. or Ms., do not use their first name unless invited to do so.
- Listen to the questions & ask for clarification if you do not understand.
- Do not be negative- stay away from negative statements.
- Use positive body language- Sit up and be attentive, keep your hands and feet in a relaxed position- don’t cross your arms & most importantly, keep smiling!!
- Keep your answer succinct and on target- do not ramble.



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- “Ask for the order”- When you are finished, thank the interviewer, state your interest in the company/job and ask him/her what the next steps are.
- Follow up with a written thank-you to everyone involved in the process.

Questions asked by Employers:

- Why did you choose this school?
- Why did you choose your major?
What were your favorite subjects? Least favorite? Why?
- Are your grades an accurate indicator of your ability?
- What were your extracurricular activities? What did you learn from those activities?
- What are your interests and hobbies outside of school?
- What are your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
- How would your professors describe you?
- What is your most satisfying/rewarding accomplishment in college? How did you accomplish it?
- What is the greatest challenge you have faced in college? What did you do to overcome it?
- What job have you had that you enjoyed the most?
- What did you learn from the jobs that you have had? (keep it short- no laundry lists!)
- Describe your ideal work environment?
- Why are you interested in this job?
- What do you know about my company?
- What are the most important criteria that you use to evaluate a particular job?
- Where are you willing to work (geographically)?
- Are you willing to travel?
- Where do you see yourself in 5 years?
- What are your long-term goals?
- Tell me about yourself.
- How do you handle pressure?
- How do you measure success?
- Why should I hire you?
- What makes you different?

Questions to ask your Interviewer

- What is the specific job you are interviewing me for?



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- What type of person is most successful in your company?
- How do people distinguish themselves in your company?
- How will you measure my success?
- Why do people like working for your company?
- Can you describe your company culture?
- What major issues are facing the company and/or industry?
- Do you have any concerns or questions about my background?