

# Interviewing

## The Interview

### Appearance

What to wear? What to wear? “Dress for success” has changed as the fashions have changed but that does not mean that anything goes! Fashion choices are not simply about chasing the trends and “looking good”. Fashion choices are a reflection of how you see yourself, your self-esteem and your own confidence but these choices are also a reflection of what you know about your chosen industry. Consider these examples:

**Banking and Finance**  
Conservative

**Insurance, Sales, Real Estate**  
Flexible

**Art, Advertising, Nonprofits**  
Business Casual

If possible, you should evaluate the dress code in a workplace comparable to the organization you are considering. Dress slightly above that level for the interview. Follow these guidelines:

- avoid too much of anything like jewelry and perfume/cologne
- be moderate in your attire but wear clothing that compliments your style
- prepare your wardrobe a few days before to ensure it is clean and pressed
- hair should be neat and not cover your facial expressions
- groom your hands and nails
- carry breath mints with you
- never chew gum, twist your hair, play with your jewelry or tap your pen repeatedly

### Logistics

Solving interview logistics ahead of time will ensure that you will be calm and focused on the day you interview. Make sure you have the time and date of the interview on your calendar, the name and title of the person you are interviewing with and directions to the site.

- Arrive 15 minutes early for your interview and review your resume.
- Bring an extra copy or copies of your resume.
- Identify the main points you want to make during the interview.
- Develop an action vocabulary.
- Relax before going into the interview.

## Tell Us About Yourself

What should you do if this is the first question in your interview? Employers intentionally begin with an open-ended question like this to gauge the integrity and depth of your response. Employers want to know if you know yourself! The answers to this question vary of course but consider:

- How your education and work history relate to this job and organization.
- How your interests, values, skills, personality and goals match or compliment the job.
- Why you are attracted to this field and this organization.
- What you can offer to this organization and what you want from your chosen field.

## **Show What You Know**

The way you answer questions indicates how well you understand the relationship between the job you are interviewing for and your experience. It can also be an indication to a potential employer of how well you have researched the position and the organization. Consider this example:

Q: Why do you want to work as a literary editor and how would your minor in environmental studies be helpful to this position?

A: I can use my degree in English directly. My minor in environmental studies will help me review contemporary writing like some of the books Graywolf Publishing highlights.

In this answer, you have told the interviewer that:

1. Your degree relates directly to the position as a literary editor.
2. Your additional education is a complement to your major and potentially distinguishes you from others.
3. You have researched the organization and its priorities.

## **In and Out of the Box**

Most interviewers ask specific questions that are directly related to the job requirements and your ability to fill the necessary shoes. Often s/he will ask questions that are meant to prompt clarification or exposition on your part. These interviews are the median but others can be on either end of the spectrum too.

In a **Structured Interview**, the interviewer:

- Follows a previously prepared format or script.
- Prepares a list of questions to ask every candidate.
- Records the answers and compares the candidates' responses later.

In an **Unstructured Interview**, the interviewer:

- Opts for open-ended questions like, "why do you believe you are the best candidate for this job"?
- Places considerably more burden on you by demanding more mental organization of the points you seek to make.

In a **Behavioral Based Interview (STAR: Situation, Task, Action, Result)**, the interviewer:

- Looks for examples and proof of a particular skill. "Tell me about a time when" is an example of this interview technique.
- Probes further and asks you to provide details about previous situations in which you used desired behaviors.

Preparing for a **STAR Behavioral Interview**

To prepare for a behavioral interview, prepare short descriptions of situations that demonstrate positive behaviors or actions. The following is a list of potential questions an interviewer may ask that require a STAR response:

- Describe a time when something you were involved with didn't turn out how you planned and how you handled it.
- Describe an experience you had with someone whom was hard to get along with and how you handled it.
- Describe a time when you exhibited creativity.
- Describe a time when you did more than expected.
- Describe the most important event in your life and why it is so important to you.
- Define leadership and describe a time when you feel you were a leader.
- You are trying to sell a new idea to a group of individuals who prefer to keep things as they are. How do you convince them to adopt your idea?
- Describe an experience, personal or work related, where you had to make a decision regarding ethics.
- Describe a situation where you made a mistake that had a negative effect on others.

Technique to answer Behavioral Interview Questions	
<b>S- Situation</b>	Detail the background. Provide a context. Where? When?
<b>T- Task</b>	Describe the challenge and expectations. What needs to be done? Why?
<b>A- Action</b>	Elaborate on your specific action. What did you do? How? What tools did you use?
<b>R- Result</b>	Explain the results and outcomes: Accomplishments, recognitions, savings, etc. Quantify!

The following is an example response to a behavioral question using the STAR technique:

<i>“Tell me about a project that required you to track small details while still managing the big picture.”</i>	
<b>S- Situation</b>	I worked as a Peer Advisor for my school’s career services office; I was responsible for helping to train new Peer Advisors. These advisors help students explore academic majors, write resumes, apply to graduate schools, and learn how to conduct a job search.
<b>T- Task</b>	Last year I was asked by my supervisor to develop a new training program for 5 new Peer Advisors.
<b>A- Action</b>	To do this, I worked with a fellow Peer Advisor to create new materials, and also to schedule training topics, and presentations. My goal was to be sure the new advisors received all the information they’d need to effectively advise students, while also making the training enjoyable and interactive. I identified and worked on materials needed for the training binder, created a schedule for the daily training activities, identified and contacted appropriate speakers, and created a fun and interactive training.
<b>R- Result</b>	In the end, the training was a success. It was well organized and stayed on schedule. My supervisor gathered feedback, and all 5 trainees reported that it was an informative and fun training.

## Interview Do’s and Don’ts

### Do

- Demonstrate confidence, poise, openness, motivation, humor, and willingness to grow and problem-solve
- Use a firm handshake and maintain eye contact
- Understand the questions being asked and request clarification if necessary
- Know the points you want to make and convey interest in the position and the organization
- Be positive and energetic
- Restate your interest in the position at the end of the interview and say thank you

### Don’t

- Demonstrate a lack of interest, initiative, indecisiveness, conceit, cynicism or a narrow point of view
- Offer a limp handshake and avoid eye contact
- Ramble, be phony, lie or evade questions
- Create answers you think the interviewer wants to hear, use non-words like um, or interrupt the interviewer
- Be cynical or talk about former employers in a disparaging way
- Leave without saying thank you

## **After the Interview**

Breathe a sigh of relief. You have made it through your job interview but your work is not complete. After the interview you have an opportunity to make another good impression by writing a thank you note. You may be invited back for a second interview and will need to prepare for it. If you are offered a position, you will have to make a decision.

## **Thank You Letters**

Saying thank you is arguably the most important part of the interview process. You may have scored high on your qualifications and your interview demeanor, so don't stumble by forgetting to write a thank you note.

A thank you letter should be written to everyone who helps you in anyway during your job search.

After an employment interview, your thank you letter should be sent to every person who interviewed you. Make sure you get a business card after each interview for writing thank you letters.

What should you write in the note? A thank you note should include:

- A thank you for the interviewer's time and your opportunity to interview.
- An acknowledgement of issues discussed during your time together.
- A restatement of your interest in the position and your strongest qualifications.
- Any credentials, references, or information requested by the employer.

Sample thank you letters are available in the Correspondence handout.