

THE INTERVIEW

North Park University Center for Career Development & Internships

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THE INTERVIEW

The job interview is essential to attaining your goal of getting a job. It's a hoop you will have to jump through every time you seek employment. You'll get better with practice, but no matter how many interviews you've had, remember that first impressions are critical.

I. Procedures (Preliminary & Follow up):

1. Know the company, their products, customers, and competitors. Read up on them on the Internet, in trade publications, libraries, Moody's, Dun & Bradstreet, Standard & Poor's, Annual Reports.
2. Call companies to find out who's in charge of the department in which you would like to work.
3. Manners are critical, especially with people who may not seem important. A receptionist may be your best supporter or worst detractor, depending on how you have treated him/her.
4. **REMINDER:** The resume. Keep it to one page. You have to stand out in a positive way. Don't try to say everything.
5. **REMINDER:** The cover letter is used to introduce you and give your reason for writing. It's a summary of you and why you're right for the organization. All information must be correct (spelling, grammar, names, titles, phones, etc.).
6. **REMINDER:** Networking! The process of making contacts and exchanging information; the process of identifying people who can help you in the process of finding job leads. 80% of jobs available are not listed. Your job is to talk to people who can help you find out where those jobs are.
7. Follow-up on contacts. Send thank-you notes to all people you meet in every interview situation. It shows you are responsible, you are interested, and you care. It also reminds people of your name and that you are available.
8. Keep record of names, addresses, phones, etc., of all contacts. Use an Employer Prospect Worksheet, available in the Center for Career Planning Services (CPS).

II. The Main Event (Prepare Well for the Interview):

1. Expect to be anxious. Review ways you've dealt with anxiety in past situations (sports, concerts, drama, speeches in class, etc.). Can they be adapted to the interview? The best way to deal with this anxiety is to practice...a lot!
2. Bring extra copies of your resume on good quality paper. Carry in folder with note paper.
3. Questions...expect a lot of questions. Prepare your answers. Expect questions about your resume. (Ask at CPS for pages of possible questions.)
 - "Tell me what you did outside of school."
 - "Why did you do what you did?"
 - "What's the most successful situation you ever had?"
 - "Give me a sample of a problem you solved."
 - "Tell me about yourself."
 - Be ready for behavioral questions: "Tell me about a time when you had a conflict with a co-worker. What happened and how was it resolved?" (See "STAR Technique" at back.)
 - Questions about your background, your desire to go into this field, your best/worst boss (CAREFUL HERE!), most embarrassing moment, strengths or weaknesses can be expected. They'll want to know you, and whether you'll fit into the organization.
 - Monosyllabic answers will be the "kiss of death". Tell a story...!
4. The job interview is a two-way street. Both you and the company/interviewer are on display. You should be in charge. Be ready for any opportunity to tell more about who you are, and how you'll fit into the company. (See number 6 below.)
 - Listen closely to questions/statements.
 - Look for openings, so you can give examples. (See "STAR Technique.")
 - Be alert for leading questions.
5. Write down two or three special skills that make you marketable...be sure to interject them into the conversation.
6. You must be prepared with questions, such as:
 - "What will be my responsibilities?" or "Will you describe the duties of the job?"
 - "To whom will I report?"

“What have the previous people who have held this position gone on to?” “Will you describe advancement opportunities?”

“What is the typical time frame for these advancements?”

“How will my performance be judged?”

“How frequently are performance appraisals made?”

“Is there shift work/overtime involved?”

“How much travel is involved in the job?” “How often?”

“Will there be relocation immediately/after a few years?”

“How is the company structured in terms of divisions, departments?”

“How many people are employed by the company?”

“How has the company changed during the past 10/20 years?”

“What growth areas are expected?”

“Will I be expected to attend professional conferences at company expense?”

“Can you tell me about training programs for new employees?”

“Would you give me examples of projects on which I may be working?”

“Will you describe your advancement in the company?”

“How do you feel about the company?”

Wait for them to bring up salary, benefits, vacation, etc. Ask for a tour of the facility.

III. The Actual Interview:

1. Arrive on time (15 minutes early is even better!).
2. **WHAT DO I WEAR?** Know the environment and dress as conservatively (or more so) than what they expect on a daily basis. Men should wear a suit in either navy or gray with a white shirt and conservative tie. Women should wear a skirted suit in a conservative color with low heeled (but not flat) shoes. Men and women should be impeccably groomed; hair out of face, manicured nails, shined shoes, clean-shaven, minimal jewelry and cologne/perfume, and no visible body piercings. Some environments will accept more casual attire, but know that ahead of time.
3. Address interviewer by title (Mr., Ms., Dr., etc.) and last name. Avoid familiarity unless invited to do so.
4. Never smoke or chew gum in the interview.
5. Avoid discussions about politics or religion.
6. Don't bad-mouth past employers.
7. Be prepared for stressful questions; they're often used to see how you will perform later in that type of situation. Sometimes there is no right/wrong answer to a stressful question; they just want to see how you think on your feet . . .to see how you will fit into the firm.
8. Mock interviews will help. Ask family, friends, and roommates to help. Ask to set up a mock interview through the CPS. PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE!!!

IV. Types of Interviews:

1. **Initial interview** - Usually with Personnel, it's for screening. Can you do the job? Are you right for the company? It is designed to confirm the information on the resume.
2. **Free-flowing** - Typically done by a department manager, or an executive of the company. They let you do most of the talking. Your **PERSONALITY** is the key in all interviews!
3. **Hiring interview** - Shows you've passed all the prerequisites. The final decision is made here. Salary may not be brought up until this point.

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING YOU CAN BRING TO THE INTERVIEW IS A POSITIVE ANSWER TO THE QUESTION, "WHY SHOULD I HIRE YOU?"

V. The Follow-Up:

- Thank-you notes should be sent immediately after the interview. Are you still interested? Not interested?
- Critique your own interview style and manner. Write down your comments on the paper you brought. How can you improve?
- Keep records of people met, conversations held, decisions made, and things to do next.

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VI. Behavioral Interviewing Questions:

- Tell me about a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done. What did you do and what was the outcome?
- Tell me about a time when you had to encourage a team to meet its goal. What did you do and what was the result?
- Give me an example of an important goal that you had set in the past, and tell me about your success in reaching it.
- Tell me about a time when you had to adapt to a wide variety of people. What did you do and what was the outcome?
- Describe the most difficult decision you have faced on the job. What were the steps you took to arrive at a solution? What was the outcome? What alternatives did you consider?
- Tell me about an important procedure/idea you have implemented to improve a process. How did you do it? What were the results?
- Tell me about your methods for keeping your manager and team members advised of the progress you've made.
- Give me your best example of working cooperatively as a team member to accomplish an important goal. What was the goal or objective? What was your role in achieving this objective?
- Tell me about a time when you recognized a co-worker for the work they performed. What did you do? What was the outcome?

VII. The “STAR” Technique:

When asked questions such as those above, you need to be ready with an answer in which you will provide concrete examples of what you did in the given situation, and the result of your action. To help you prepare for these questions, and others like them, you will want to develop proficiency with the “STAR” Technique. “STAR” is an acronym for:

Situation

Task

Action

Result

On the basis of the question asked:

Identify the **S**ituation about which you will talk;

Describe the **T**ask which was before you;

Tell about the **A**ction you took to remedy the situation;

And finally describe the **R**esult of your participation.

The situations may come from work, volunteer, class, athletics, or other co-curricular activities. An honest, well-thought out answer should help convince the employer of your character, your experience, and your ability to think through a problem and communicate with ease.