

THE JOB INTERVIEW

Questions to ask yourself before the interview...

- Do I really want this job? Explain why.
- List three reasons why you are the best candidate for the position.

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

- Know the name and title of your interviewer
- Ask where to park and get specific directions
- Take several copies of your resume and reference list to the interview

AT THE INTERVIEW

- Arrive at least 15 minutes early
- Greet your first contact person politely
- Smile and greet the interviewer(s) with a firm handshake and look him/her in the eye
- Sit up straight and lean slightly forward
- Maintain conversational eye contact

AT THE CLOSING OF INTERVIEW

- Ask for a business card if one is not offered
- State your sincere interest in the position
- Ask how the selection process will continue
- Thank the interviewer(s)

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

- Write out the questions you were asked and how you responded to them; note any areas for improvement
- Be sure to send a thank you letter within 24-48 hours after the interview

RESEARCH, RESEARCH, RESEARCH!



1 Step one: Research the organization

It is important to know as much as possible about the organization with which you are interviewing. Candidates who ask, "Uh, what do you guys do here?" annoy and turn off employers. Advanced preparation increases your chances of receiving a job offer.

- What are the organization's major products and services? Any new products or services?
- Who are the organization's clients or target populations?
- Who are the organization's competitors?
- What is the organization's relative position in the marketplace (e.g. leader, #2, #5, etc.)?
- What are some of the organization's recent projects, successes, new accounts, etc.?
- What is the culture of the work environment?
- What size is the organization? Annual sales? Areas of growth or decline?
- Is the company privately or publicly owned? Is it an independent organization or a part of a larger conglomerate?

Sources of information:

- Review the organization's web site if applicable.
- Use any search engine to access links to information about the organization.
- Review the organization's social media postings and links.

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2 Step two: Research the position

- Try to locate a friend, neighbor, or networking contact who is familiar with the position and ask specific questions about the job.
- Visit the organization's web site for a detailed description of the job. Notice each element of the description and consider how your experience relates to each.
- Try to determine what the salary is for the position (if it isn't provided in the job description).

Sources of salary information available at Career Services include:

- Occupational Outlook Handbook
- National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) Salary Survey
- Web sites - Contact Career Services for salary websites

3 Step three: Research yourself

What skills and qualifications do you possess that correspond with the needs of the employer? What sets you apart from other candidates? Create an inventory of your skills and refer to it when preparing for interviews.

First, create a written inventory of your major skills. Write down your accomplishments as they relate to your skills. You must do more than simply claim you have certain skills and abilities. Successful interviewing requires being able to demonstrate that you, in fact, have the skills that you say you have. One way to demonstrate that you possess a particular skill is to give the interviewer specific examples of when, how, and where you applied that ability. Most importantly, describe the positive result of your contribution.



TYPICAL QUESTIONS TO EXPECT

It is difficult to anticipate what an employer will ask at an interview. The best way to ensure your success is to prepare answers for common questions. The list below is not comprehensive, but it should give you an idea of what to expect. Also, meet with a career counselor or your faculty advisor for hints on effective answers to these questions as well as questions that pertain specifically to your field.

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Tell me something about yourself that is not on your resume.
3. What are your greatest strengths?
4. Describe your weaknesses.
5. Why should I hire you?
6. What are your short and long term career goals?
7. Why did you select Lewis University?
8. What led you to choose your major?
9. How do you handle rejection?
10. Do you prefer to work alone or with others? Why?
11. With what kinds of people do you most enjoy working?
12. What motivates you to put forth your greatest effort?
13. What kinds of decisions are most difficult for you to make?

14. What two or three things are most important to you in a job?
15. What do you know about our company?
16. Why do you want to work here?
17. What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction? Why?
18. How has your college experience prepared you for your career?
19. In what kind of work environment are you most comfortable?
20. What have you learned from participating in extracurricular activities?
21. Do you have any questions?

BEHAVIOR-BASED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

A popular trend in job interviewing is behavioral interviews. Behavioral-based questions ask for specific examples of how you handled a situation in the past in order to predict future performance.

Typical behavior-based questions may look like the following:

1. Describe a time when you had multiple tasks to accomplish and deadlines were approaching. How did you prioritize what needed to be accomplished first?
2. We all deal with difficult situations. Tell me about a time when you had to deal with conflict. How did you handle it?
3. Have you ever faced an ethical or values conflict in your job? Explain.
4. In what skill areas are you most proficient? Give an example of a project you have worked on that shows your expertise. What skill area do you need to improve?
5. Give me a recent example that best shows your ability to communicate effectively.
6. Give me an example of a time when you had to work with someone who was difficult to get along with. Why was this person difficult? How did you handle the situation?
7. Give an example of a time when you did more than what was required in your job.
8. How do you define leadership? Describe the most recent time when you displayed leadership on the job.
9. Listening is a valuable tool. Describe a time when good listening skills helped you overcome a communication problem.

TOUGH QUESTIONS

Be prepared for a few tough questions or what some job seekers consider “trick” questions. They can be somewhat stressful, but if answered thoughtfully, they can be very informative. They might look like this:

1. Describe your ideal job.
2. Why didn't you get better grades in college?
3. Why have you been out of work for so long?
4. See this pen (marker, mug, etc.)? Sell it to me.
5. What area of your skills/professional development do you want to improve at this time?
6. Are you willing to take calculated risks when necessary?
7. How do you handle rejection?
8. Why have you changed jobs so frequently?
9. With what kinds of people do you find it difficult to work? How have you successfully worked with this difficult type of person?
10. Tell me about a time when you had to overcome an obstacle at work.

ILLEGAL QUESTIONS

Occasionally interviewers ask an illegal question. This is a question that does not pertain to the nature of the job or your ability to do that job. It is illegal for an employer to ask you about your race, ethnicity, religion, marital status, family plans, sexual orientation, disability, or veteran status. You do not have to answer an illegal question.

QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT WANT TO ASK

You should always have two or three questions in mind to ask the interviewer. This will show him/her that you are enthusiastic about the position. It will also give you a clearer picture of what the company is all about.

1. How would you describe your ideal employee?
2. How are new ideas sought? Acted upon? Rewarded?
3. What is the next step in the selection process?
4. What are the company's long-term growth plans?
5. What would be my initial duties and responsibilities?
6. What are the most important responsibilities of the position?
7. What is your management style (if talking with your manager-to-be)?
8. How does this position fit in with the company's long-term plans?
9. What would a typical working day be like in this position?
10. What is the biggest challenge I'll face in this position?
11. What would you ideally like to see me accomplish in the next year?
12. How would you describe the culture in this office?
13. What makes you enjoy coming here to work?

CLOSING AN INTERVIEW

Close an interview on a positive note. Reiterate your interest by saying, "Thank you for your time. I am very interested in the position and I think I am a good match for the job."

TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS

This is a screening process used before bringing you into the office. It is usually used to verify your basic qualifications and to find out whether you can communicate in a professional, friendly manner. Without having visual cues from the interviewer, it is hard to assess how your answers are being received. Listen for changes in tone and inflection. Smile as you speak so that your voice projects enthusiasm and interest. Your goal during the interview is to convince the interviewer that you're worth bringing into the office for a face-to-face interview.

Important advice!

1. Bring several copies of your resume and your references in a plain folder or portfolio.
2. Watch your non-verbal communication. Pay attention to your posture and eye contact (don't stare).
3. Don't exaggerate or lie.
4. Expect to spend some time building rapport because personal chemistry is a main ingredient in the hiring process. Try to get comfortable with the interviewer. Being comfortable will help the rest of the interview go well.
5. Don't interrupt the employer.
6. Pay attention to the timing of your answers. Time is occasionally needed to think and reflect.
7. NEVER speak negatively about a former employer, colleague, teacher, or institution. The employer may assume that you will someday do the same to him/her.
8. If you catch yourself making an error or contradiction, correct yourself.
9. Show enthusiasm; it usually will make up for less than perfect qualifications. Tell the employer that you want the job. Let him/her know that you mean it.
10. BE YOURSELF! You don't want to get hired on the basis of something you are not. You want to be hired for who you are.

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