



SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEWING



We can help you get there.

SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEWING

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The interview process is often termed a two-way street. It is an opportunity for two parties to provide and evaluate information that will lead to a mutually satisfying conclusion. An interview is “a conversation with a purpose.”

Your role in this conversation is to provide adequate and accurate information that will assist the employer in evaluating your skills, experiences, goals, objectives and personal traits for the position he/she is trying to fill. Your other role is to listen and obtain information from the employer regarding the position, work environment, and the employer that will assist you in determining whether you want to continue pursuing the opportunity. Recognize that you are selling a product – yourself – and that you have very limited time (26 minutes average) in which to convince the potential employer that you are the best person for the job.

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PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

RESEARCH THE POSITION

Attempt to find out as much as possible about the position you are interested in or you are applying for. You may request that a job description be sent to you. Know what is expected in the position for which you are applying. Visit with any contacts you may have in the organization. Employer expectations run very high regarding your readiness for the interview.

RESEARCH THE COMPANY

Look into the organization's purpose and/or products. Read any information that the organization publishes such as annual reports, newsletters, and brochures. You can contact the organization's public relations department to request such literature. Visit with your contacts at the organization and persons who are very familiar with its operations. Researching the organization prior to the interview not only saves an interviewer's time in explaining basic company opportunities and information, but also displays your initiative and interest in pursuing a career with the organization.

KNOW THYSELF

Knowing yourself and being able to determine what you are really looking for can lead you to a successful interview. Based on what you know about the opening and the organization, list whatever traits and skills are needed for the job. Now, consider your experience, skills, and strengths in terms of the qualifications for the job. Identify examples of activities or work experience where you have used skills you have listed as necessary for the position. Think about your career goals and be able to state them clearly.

ANTICIPATE QUESTIONS YOU MAY BE ASKED

Review the section on "answering questions and communicating effectively" in this handout and formulate well developed answers for the sample interview questions. Remember, this is your opportunity to sell yourself and to let the employer know what you can do for the organization.

PREPARE QUESTIONS TO ASK THE EMPLOYER

Review the list of possible questions that are listed in this handout. This is your opportunity to increase your understanding of the employer, the personnel, the job, and future opportunities.

CONCENTRATE ON RELAXING

Before going to the interview, concentrate on relaxing and acting naturally. Focus on your positive skills and strengths. You will not project your qualifications adequately if you are nervous and tense.



FIRST IMPRESSIONS LAST

The most important thing in dressing appropriately for an interview is to wear clothes in which you feel comfortable, yet look neat, professional, and well-groomed. Your appearance is an important factor in the employer's decision, as research shows that the first four to nine minutes of an interview will affect the outcome. Proper attire can create an impression of professionalism and leadership.

Dress to reflect your competence, your function, and your comfort. Be sure to consider the organization's dress code and watch for styles preferred by the organization's leaders. Company literature can often be helpful. Observe the photographs and check for styles, colors, and formality of dress.

JOB SEARCH TIP

Basic Business Dress Hints

- Be aware of industry differences when dressing for the interview and for work.
- Less is more. It is better to dress conservatively and wear a minimal amount of jewelry.
- Avoid faddish clothes and jewelry which will change every season. Stylish clothes tend to carry over from season to season and often are good for many years.
- Select better quality fabrics. It is better to have a few good quality outfits rather than many of lesser quality.
- Students starting out may wish to purchase two suits and several coordinating shirts.
- Choose clothes for durability and dependability and fabrics that travel well.
- Choose among the most recommended suit colors – navy, gray, black and burgundy.
- Wear comfortable shoes – preferably leather. Shoes should always be darker than your outfit. Women should wear pump shoes rather than sandals.
- Maintain a neat hairstyle.
- For women, suits or dresses are preferred. Men should never mix and match suit jackets and suit pants.
- Perfume, cologne, and makeup should be worn conservatively.

WHAT TO BRING TO YOUR INTERVIEW

- At least two copies of your resume (even if the interviewer already has one on file).
- Names, addresses, and phone numbers of at least three references typed on your stationery.
- If appropriate, a portfolio of your work with samples and any supportive materials.
- Your professionalism, enthusiasm and positive mental attitude!

AT THE OPENING OF THE INTERVIEW

- Be sure to arrive early for your interview – at least 15 minutes to accommodate for any unforeseen delays.
- When greeting the interviewer, be pleasant, smile, and shake hands firmly but not aggressively (it is appropriate for the candidate to initiate the gesture). Maintain eye contact and introduce yourself in a confident manner.
- Greet the interviewer by the individual's title and last name in a friendly but businesslike manner. Never address the interviewer by his/her first name.
- Remember to send confident, energetic, nonverbal signals before saying anything (smile, posture, dress, walk, etc.). Body language is a powerful tool: lean forward, make eye contact, and look interested, but don't exaggerate.
- Learn the names of all the people who are interviewing you. Use their correct name(s) in the discussion, if possible, and make sure to pronounce/spell names correctly (try to learn them in advance).
- When you get to the interview room, remain standing until you are offered a seat. Once seated, show a reserved confidence. Let the interviewer start the dialogue and listen until you are prompted to talk.

DURING THE INTERVIEW

- Be courteous and professional when visiting with everyone at the organization. The secretary is often asked of her opinion of the candidates, so treat all members with respect and professionalism.
- Provide the interviewer with a copy of your resume.
- Listen carefully to understand questions. In answering, pause to give yourself time to compose an answer which is concise but thoughtful. Don't be afraid to ask for clarification for hard to understand questions.
- Welcome all questions with a smile. Give direct, honest answers, and ask relevant questions in return. Do not respond with just "yes" or "no" answers.
- Answer questions in terms of your skills and accomplishments. Give examples of how you have used your skills. Avoid general statements such as "I want to utilize my education and ability" and "I like to work with people." Focus your responses based on previous experiences relating to the employer's needs and how your skills can contribute.
- Avoid writing notes during the interview; however, immediately following the interview, take a few moments to jot down key points.
- NEVER make negative comments about former employers or co-workers.
- Always be honest. Even though you need not volunteer negative information, answer truthfully when questioned.
- Be very aware of your body language – it conveys the way you feel about yourself. Sit comfortably but do not sprawl, slump over, or hold your body rigid.
- Do not smoke, chew gum or fidget. Aim to project enthusiasm, flexibility, ease of communication, and a willingness to take on more than the duties in the job description.
- Be sensitive to the interviewer's body language. When people's eyes stop focusing on you, and they start shuffling papers, they are sending you a message, such as "I'm losing interest" or "I don't follow." Respond to the silent message by altering your course.
- Act natural – be friendly, courteous, and professional.

AT THE CLOSE OF THE INTERVIEW

- Let the interviewer initiate the close and be alert for indications of closure.
- Summarize the skills you have to offer and your interest and enthusiasm about the position.
- If the interviewer has not already requested a list of references, ask if he/she would like a list of your references.
- Do not ask questions about salary and benefits until you have been offered the job. If the employer asks you about salary requirements, postpone discussing it or answer it in terms of a salary range (try to get them to state the range if possible). If it is brought up before you have been offered the position, respond with "open" or "negotiable." Talk opportunity, not security, in the early stages.
- If you are offered a job, you need not respond on the spot. Reaffirm your interest and ask to be given time to think it over.
- Make sure you leave on a positive note. Shake hands, thank the interviewer for his/her time, and indicate your sincere interest in the position. Clarify call-back procedure. Express your interest by asking how long it may be before you are notified of a decision, or if you should initiate the call, and when.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

- Within two days of the interview, follow-up with a letter thanking the interviewer for his/her time and restate your qualifications and interest. A general outline for thank you letters and sample thank you letters are included in this handout.
- After a reasonable period of time, if you have not heard from the employer, you may want to inquire about the status of your application. This may be accomplished either by letter or telephone. Briefly recap the history of your application, indicating dates of correspondence and/or interviews. It is courteous to let the employer know why you need to know your status (perhaps you have another offer). Show your continued interest and express your appreciation for the employer's time and cooperation.
- If you are told that someone else was hired, it is OK to ask how you compared with the other candidates. Even though asking such information can be awkward, such a discussion can be invaluable, even yielding other job opportunities and leads.

JOB SEARCH TIP Be Yourself!

A young college student preparing for his first job interview was advised by friends to exaggerate his work experience. He was also advised to be serious, dour, sophisticated and a lot of other things he was not. When he arrived for the interview, he was escorted to an office by a genial woman he assumed was a secretary. They began chatting and because she seemed so open and friendly, he decided he could find out about what the job involved by asking the secretary questions. The conversation went smoothly and after an hour, fear and trepidation had been replaced by enthusiasm about the position. He was about to ask some questions about the coming interview when the woman informed him that the job was his. The pleasant conversation had been the interview. The young man had learned an important lesson: **BE YOURSELF!**

WRITING THE THANK YOU LETTER

- After your interview, write a brief follow-up letter. Fewer than one percent of people interviewed take the time to send a follow-up letter, so you can be certain that if you do, it will be noticed. It may be brief, but the letter should express your appreciation for the interview, mention a key point that was discussed during the conversation, reiterate your continued interest in the possibility of employment and convey your desire for a favorable response.
- The thank you letter should be written within two days of the interview. This letter displays a common courtesy, professional etiquette and your ability to pay attention to details. It also reinforces your continued interest and brings your name across the employer's desk again.
- The thank you letter should always be typed on 8-1/2" x 11" bond paper, using personal business letter format.

GENERAL OUTLINE FOR A THANK YOU LETTER

Your Mailing Address
City, State Zip Code
Phone Number
Date of Letter

Employer's Name
Employer's Title
Organization Name
Mailing Address
City, State Zip Code

Dear _____:

OPENING PARAGRAPH: Remind the interviewer of the position for which you were interviewed, as well as the date and place of the interview. Be sure to express your appreciation for the interview.

MIDDLE PARAGRAPH(S): Confirm your interest in the position and in the organization. Highlight your qualifications and relate them toward the various points the interviewer considered as important for the job. Mention a key point that was discussed during the conversation. If you have done anything since the interview which demonstrates your interest in the position, such as talks with alumni, faculty, other persons, or research in the library, etc., be sure to mention it.

Include any information not previously presented to supplement your resume, application letter, and the interview. If travel, location, or a similar subject was stressed during the interview, be sure to confirm your willingness to comply with these conditions.

CLOSING PARAGRAPH: Indicate that you look forward to hearing from the employer regarding possible employment.

Sincerely,

(Handwritten Signature)

Your Name Typed

SAMPLE THANK YOU LETTER

1818 Shadow Lane
Hays, KS 67601
(785) 625-0000
Date of Letter

Ms. Helen Hastings
Human Resources Manager
ABC Corporation
P.O. Box 2000
Denver, CO 80203

Dear Ms. Hastings:

Thank you for meeting with me on Thursday to discuss entry-level positions with ABC Corporation. The Customer Service Representative position you described sounds both interesting and challenging.

ABC Corporation appears to be a dynamic and exhilarating place to work. As I mentioned during the interview, my internship experience with IBM Corporation has given me insight into the operations of a large corporation and the interdependence of the various departments. I am eager to apply the knowledge I gained through my internship and education and begin a career with ABC Corporation.

I look forward to hearing from you regarding possible employment. It was a pleasure visiting with you. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

(Handwritten Signature)

Your Name Typed

SAMPLE THANK YOU LETTER

359 West First
Victoria, KS 67671
(785) 735-0000
Date of Letter

Mr. Daniel Jaimes, Principal
Lawrence Central Junior High School
1400 Massachusetts
Lawrence, KS 66046-3498

Dear Mr. Jaimes:

Thank you for the time you spent visiting with me last week about the English opening at Lawrence Central Junior High School. I thoroughly enjoyed our meeting and appreciate being given the opportunity to become acquainted with the school, its programs, and staff.

I was very impressed with your description of the English Department and am excited about the opportunity to bring my experience and qualifications to the position. I am also very interested in the tennis coaching duties you mentioned.

I would enjoy teaching and coaching at Lawrence Central Junior High School and feel that I could make a positive contribution to the school and professional staff. Thank you again for your time and courtesy. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

(Handwritten Signature)

Your Name Typed

ANSWERING QUESTIONS AND COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY

Every interviewer has a different style of interviewing. For this reason, you shouldn't try to memorize the questions or your answers. Preparing for common questions, however, will help to ensure that you are not caught off guard when a particular question is asked. Having a general idea of the points you are trying to convey will not only help you to give a complete, structured answer, but will also allow you to appear spontaneous in your response. **Your goal is to leave the interviewer with the impression that you were prepared but natural.**

Because the interviewer's purpose is to find out more about you, **open-ended questions** are commonly used in interviews. An open-ended question is one that invites a broad, detailed response. An example might be "Tell me a little about your experience as a youth counselor."

A **closed question** asks for specific data (usually a short answer). As the interviewee, you might want to turn a closed question into an open one, so that more information can be shared. For example, in response to the question "Did you hold positions of leadership in any organization?"

You might reply: "I was President of Alpha Gamma Delta Sorority during my senior year. During that time, I initiated and organized five successful fund drives to benefit local community assistance centers."

It may be helpful to think of the interview questions as following a continuum, which serves as an excellent frame when preparing for your interview:

PAST

In past-oriented questions, the interviewer is looking for examples of prior accomplishments that could prove that you would be a good employee in the future. A popular (and sometimes dreaded) past-oriented question is "Tell me a little about yourself." Quite often, the interviewee takes this as a cue to recite his or her entire resume. While this tactic does permit you to elaborate on your accomplishments, it also repeats everything the interviewer has already read about you. To attract the interest of the interviewer, divert the conversation away from your resume by relating anecdotes about specific situations or accomplishments. For example, you could explain your motivation for attending your university or college, or how you happened to choose your major. These items are certainly not listed on your resume, but they do help the interviewer learn a bit about how you think.

When describing your past accomplishments or experience, it is important to emphasize the ways in which you are different from other candidates. You should try to show how you have gone beyond the call of duty or used opportunity to your advantage.

Sometimes you will be given a negatively framed question. For example, "What was the most difficult problem you dealt with during your student teaching?" Simply listing an unsolved problem is sure to leave the interviewer unimpressed. Instead, give a positive response, thereby creating an opportunity to showcase your problem-solving skills.

We recommend using the **STAR** technique interviewing approach to allow the interviewer to "walk through" the situation with you:

- 1) state the **Situation or Task**,

- 2) explain the **Actions** you took to resolve the problem, and
- 3) describe the **Results** of your actions.

Remember: Always emphasize what makes you stand out from all the other candidates. You want the recruiter to remember **you**.

PRESENT

Present-oriented questions help the recruiter to determine why you might (or might not) be an excellent candidate for the position. Common present-oriented questions include "What can you offer this organization?" and "Why should we hire you?" In this situation it is tempting to simply list a number of adjectives that describe yourself (e.g., "I'm a motivated, energetic, organized, strategic-thinking kind of person who communicates ideas well ...").

At this point, the recruiter is most likely thinking, prove it. And that is exactly what you must do.

It is a good idea to group three to five of your strengths with examples that illustrate each strength. If, for example, you feel that one of your strengths is organization, you might "prove it" to an interviewer by using an example such as:

"I am a very organized person. As you can see from my resume, I stay very busy. I'm a full-time student and a staff writer for the university paper, and I also work 30 hours each week as a waitress. In order to accomplish everything that must get done, I write all my tasks in a daily organizer, prioritize them, and plan my days accordingly. I have found that much more can be accomplished this way."

Interviewers also use present-oriented questions to gauge your real interest in the organization. They may ask, "What do you know about our organization?"

If you've really done your homework, this question is a great opportunity for you to show that you have in-depth knowledge of the organization. If you haven't done any research, however, this question can be devastating! Blowing this question is a sure sign to the interviewer that you're unprepared, unknowledgeable, and downright uninterested – none of which is likely to impress. Do your homework; there's no reason to drop the ball on this play.

FUTURE

Not surprisingly, interviewers use future-oriented questions to find out what your goals are. Perhaps the most common question is "What do you want to be doing in five years?"

It is essential to have your homework done before these questions arise. Otherwise, you run the risk of naming goals that are incompatible with the organization's structure. For instance, mentioning a desire to move to the human resources department after working in marketing for a couple of years wouldn't make sense if the company does not hire human resources personnel from any other department. Such an answer not only makes you look unprepared, but also signals to the interviewer that their organization cannot satisfy your career goals. You can avoid this situation by researching a company **before you apply**.

BEHAVIOR- BASED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Employers are continually searching for new ways to identify candidates who possess specific skills best suited for the organization's work environment. The following interview questions are typical examples of behavioral based questions now being asked by many employers in their search to identify exceptional candidates.

- Give me an example of a time when you demonstrated initiative.
- Thinking back over your college experience, describe a situation in which you were challenged in using your communication skills. Tell me all about it in detail.
- Tell me about a time when you were able to successfully resolve a conflict with a co-worker.
- Tell me about your experience in dealing with routine work. What problems did you overcome in order to focus on the details the job required.
- Give me an example of a time when you set long-range goals. Tell me what your goal was, how you decided on the goal, and the outcome.
- What is the most difficult decision you have had to make that involved other people who did not agree with your decision. Tell me about the process of making that decision and the results.
- What was one of the most difficult technical problems you have solved. Tell me all about it in detail.
- Accuracy is often critical in producing quality results. Select a job that required you to complete paperwork and tell me what specific things you did to ensure accuracy in your results.

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR NON-TEACHING APPLICANTS

- What are your long-range and short-range goals and objectives, when and why did you establish these goals, and how are you preparing yourself to achieve them?
- What specific goals, other than those related to your occupation, have you established for yourself for the next ten years?
- What do you see yourself doing five years from now?
- What do you really want to do in life?
- What do you know about our organization?
- What relevant experience have you had?
- What are the most important rewards you expect in your business career?
- What do you expect to be earning in five years?
- Why did you choose the career for which you are preparing?
- Which is more important to you--the money or the type of job?
- What do you consider to be your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
- How would you describe yourself?
- How do you think a friend or professor who knows you well would describe you?
- What motivates you to put forth your greatest effort?
- How has your college experience prepared you for this career?
- Why should I hire you?
- What qualifications do you have that make you think that you will be successful in business?
- How do you determine or evaluate success?

- What do you think it takes to be successful in a company like ours?
- In what ways do you think you can make a contribution to our company?
- What qualities should a successful manager possess?
- Describe the relationship that should exist between a supervisor and those reporting to him or her.
- What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction? Why?
- Describe your most rewarding college experience.
- If you were hiring a graduate for this position, what qualities would you look for?
- Why did you select your college or university?
- What led you to choose your field or major study?
- What college subjects did you like best? Why?
- What college subjects did you like least? Why?
- If you could do so, how would you plan your academic study differently? Why?
- What changes would you make in your college or university? Why?
- Do you have plans for continued study? An advanced degree?
- Do you think that your grades are a good indication of your academic achievement?
- What have you learned from participation in extracurricular activities?
- In what kind of a work environment are you most comfortable?
- How do you respond to pressure on the job? In class?
- In what part-time or summer jobs have you been most interested? Why?
- How would you describe the ideal job for you following graduation?
- Why did you decide to seek a position with this company?
- Define cooperation.
- What two or three things are most important to you in your job?
- Are you seeking employment in a company of a certain size? Why?
- What criteria are you using to evaluate the company for which you hope to work?
- Do you have a geographical preference? Why?
- Will you relocate?
- Are you willing to travel?
- Are you willing to spend at least six months as a trainee?
- Why do you think you might like to live in the community in which our company is located?
- What major problem have you encountered and how did you deal with it?
- What have you learned from your mistakes?

JOB SEARCH TIP

Practice! Practice! Practice!

We recommend that in order to practice for an interview, you participate in mock interviews at Career Services as well as with friends or relatives. In a mock interview, you have the opportunity to refine your answers to frequently asked questions. By reviewing your past accomplishments and successes in this manner, you can best decide how to work them into the conversation during an actual interview. You can never practice too much!

BEHAVIOR-BASED INTERVIEWING FOR EDUCATION MAJORS

HOW BEHAVIOR-BASED INTERVIEWING (BBI) HELPS CANDIDATES AND EMPLOYERS

Even if an employer isn't using questions structured in a BBI manner, candidates can build their answers to indicate positive past performances. When asked, "Tell me about yourself," a candidate prepared for BBI will answer, "I just finished 14 weeks of student teaching (situation), where I was required to teach five history classes a day to a total of 129 students (task). I used the active learning lesson plans I was taught by my professors, and at the end of the semester, 87 percent of our history students passed the pre-graduation sample test (action and result)." That answer will wow an employer.

From the employer's point of view, if the interviewer can't actually watch the candidate teach a group of students, BBI can be a reliable way to assess a candidate's ability to articulate teaching skills and describe past performance.

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

Content knowledge and curriculum

- What are some math skills that students in your class room have learned?
- Describe a two-week unit that you have taught.
- Tell me about a lesson on _____ that went well.
- How have you integrated writing skills into your curriculum?

Methods and planning

- Describe a lesson plan that exceeded your expectations when you taught it.
- Describe a lesson that did not succeed and how you would change it for a future class.
- How have you ensured coverage of state-mandated standards in your planning?

Classroom organization and management

- Describe an experience you have had becoming established with a new group of students.
- What rules and rewards have worked in your classroom in the past?
- Describe a conflict you encountered with a student and how you dealt with it.

Homework and grading

- Describe a grading policy that has worked well in the past.
- How have you assessed student achievement informally without grading?
- Tell me about a typical homework assignment in your class.

Meeting student needs

- How have you modified assignments for gifted or special education students?
- What are some strategies for teaching your subject to students who may not be good listeners?
- Describe an experience where you identified a student's special need and modified a lesson for that individual.

Student diversity

- How have you modified or adapted lessons to meet the needs of special education students or English Language Learners (ELLs)?
- Today's students often have emotional issues and concerns. How have you been able to help or get help for a student with such a problem?

Technology

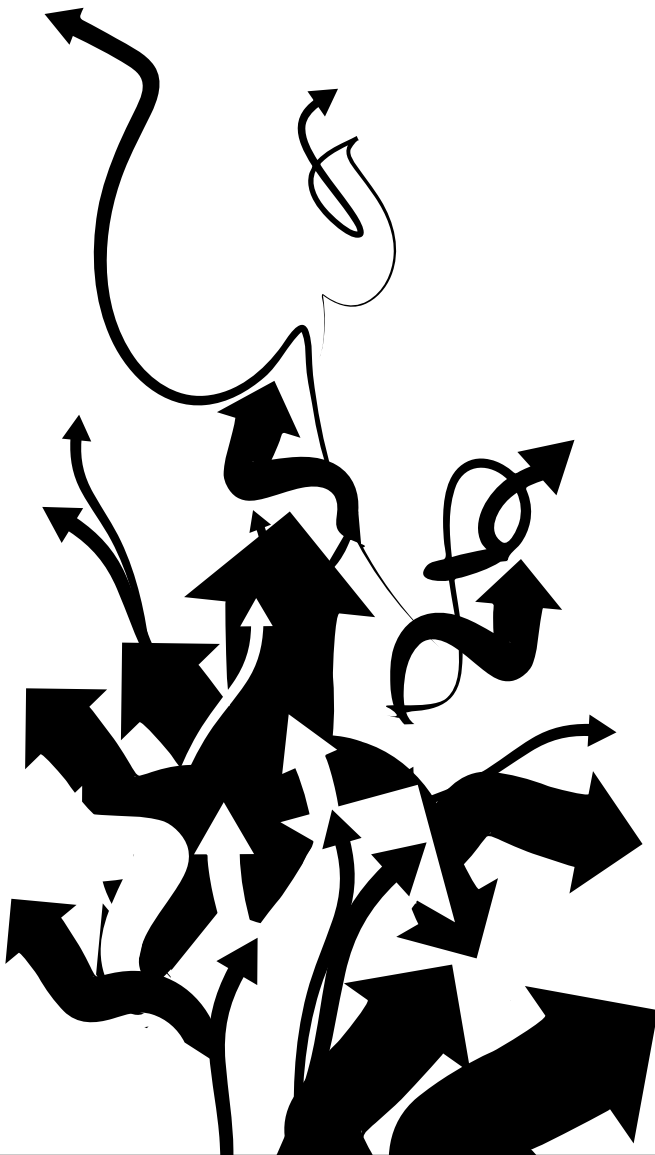
- Describe how you have used multimedia or other technology in teaching a lesson.
- How have you been able to get students to use computers and/or internet resources.

Communication

- Share an example of a communication with a parent that helped you to understand a student in your class.
- Describe a time when you team-taught or co-planned with a colleague.
- Tell about a time when you asked an administrator or teacher for help.

Professionalism

- What parts of your teacher education training do you use on a regular basis?
- How have memberships in professional organizations or attendance at conferences and workshops improved your teaching?
- What have you read recently that led to an improvement in your classroom?



MORE SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TEACHING APPLICANTS

- Why did you choose to go into the teaching field?
- Tell me about your student teaching experiences?
- What are your extracurricular interests?
- How do you plan to remain educationally current?
- How long would you plan to teach at this school? (or this district?)
- What would you like to ask of us?
- What responsibilities will your students have for their learning?
- What do you want your students to accomplish?
- Tell us something about your grading system preferences?
- What professional journals do you read regularly?
- Would you rather teach the slow learner or the advanced student?
- How would you challenge the slow learner and the advanced student within the same classroom?
- How would you handle a parent-teacher conference where the parent blamed you for his or her child's lack of progress?
- What teaching techniques have you found to be effective for you within the classroom?
- What do you feel are your three greatest teaching strengths?
- What seem to be your three greatest teaching weaknesses?
- What are the most recent books or novels that you have read?
- What do you believe to be the three greatest strengths of the teaching profession today?
- What do you believe to be the three greatest weaknesses of the teaching profession today?
- Discuss the basic philosophy of Bloom's taxonomy.
- Discuss the philosophy of Krathwohl's taxonomy.
- What do you consider an "ideal" class size?
- Do you believe in homogeneous groupings; heterogeneous groupings?
- How do you feel about team teaching? The self-contained classroom?
- Will individualized instruction be a part of your teaching day?
- What are your convictions regarding discipline?
- Students need teacher feedback regarding their efforts. Name several ways that you provide students with such information.
- Do you believe in detailed lesson plans?
- Do you feel that teachers are becoming more militant? Why?
- How do you intend to motivate your students?
- How will you appraise your teaching performance?
- Comment on some leaders in education. Do you agree with their ideas? Disagree?
- Cite several authorities in your major subject of preparation and comment on them.
- Would you feel comfortable when teaching the educationally and culturally deprived child?
- What is your greatest concern when in a classroom?
- Please share with us how you would implement the Effective Schools research in your classroom.
- Please share with us your degree of concern regarding Quality Performance Accreditation as it applies to Kansas schools.
- Do you believe that all children can learn?
- Are you familiar with the concepts of mastery learning and cooperative learning? If so, share with us your background in these areas and whether we would find you implementing them in your classroom.
- Does humor have a place in your classroom? If so, when would it be appropriate?
- Describe the role of the teacher in the learning process.
- What is the role of the teacher in the community?
- How would you individualize instruction in your classroom?
- What special abilities do you have that would benefit your students?
- Do you grade on ability or effort? Why?
- If you found the slower learners in your class could not read the grade-level book, what would you do?
- How do you feel about being observed by your principal?
- Would you be willing to sponsor extracurricular activities? If so, what specifically?
- How are you able to make students feel at ease around you while still respecting you?
- How are you able to stimulate creative expression by your students?
- What is the school's average class size?
- Are there mentoring programs for new teachers?
- What is a typical school day like?



QUESTIONS TO ASK EMPLOYERS DURING AN INTERVIEW

Keep your questions about the organization itself short and general and do not ask for information that is easily obtained from material readily available to the public. Your questions should reveal all the research you have already done and should be directed to the types of information you are not likely to get elsewhere. They should also include issues you are sincerely curious about.

Useful sample questions are listed below. Use only those pertinent to your situation or develop ones which will increase your understanding of the employer, the personnel, the job and future opportunities.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

- What would be a typical first assignment?
- Which of your locations have the type of job I am looking for?
- What type of orientation would I have?
- What type of training programs do you have? How long is the training period?
- What can I expect in terms of job progression in your organization?
- How often would my performance be reviewed?
- Do you have any recent graduates from (University Name) working for you?
- What percentage of supervisory positions are filled from within the company?
- How much travel is normally expected?
- How frequently do you relocate professional employees?
- How much input does the new person have on geographical location?
- Are there any immediate plans for expansion in your organization, either in new offices, new market areas, or new fields? In what directions are you moving?
- How would you describe the atmosphere of the organization? What is unique about it?
- In your opinion, why is your organization a good place to work?
- How is the present economic situation affecting your organization?
- What characteristics are you most likely to find in people in this position?
- What is the most challenging aspect of the work?
- Is this position's scope limited to one department, or does it interact with others?

FOR TEACHING APPLICANTS

- What is your district's philosophy?
- How does the administration work with teachers to improve instruction?
- Are there school psychologists, counselors, or public agencies who help students and teachers?
- What types of media resources are available?
- What textbooks do you use in this subject area?
- How would you describe the typical professional staff member in this district?
- How involved are parents in school activities?
- To what degree does the community support the schools and the teachers?
- What are the principal's building goals for the upcoming year? Are these goals formalized and shared with staff members?
- Who is responsible for instruction in the use of resource materials in your library or learning center?
- Tell me about the students who attend this school.
- Does the district offer incentives for professional development days during the school year?
- Are there opportunities for team teaching or team planning?
- What is the retention rate for secondary students?
- Has your district adopted particular systems or techniques for classroom management strategies?
- If involved in extracurricular activities, ask questions regarding budget, fundraising requirements, community expectations, additional faculty sponsors, and the activity calendar.
- If the principal has not covered questions regarding curriculum, school discipline, and teacher evaluations, ask pertinent questions regarding those areas.



THE SECOND INTERVIEW

GETTING PREPARED

The Invitation – Candidates who are being seriously considered are frequently invited for a second interview in the home office or plant. If a company representative considers you to be a qualified candidate for employment, an invitation to continue with the process will be extended. You should acknowledge this invitation with a minimum delay. In many cases, the invitation letter will include a number of alternative dates for your visit, with the selection left up to you. You should choose a date that least conflicts with your schedule. You may also receive a telephone call inviting you to a second interview.

WHAT TO EXPECT

The Opportunity – You should accept an invitation for an office visit only if you are seriously interested in the employer. Some students/alumni have commented on the difficulty of “staying fresh” for a series of interviews comprised of the same questions. There is no magic formula or special technique to suggest other than to keep telling yourself that to each member of the organization the information you provide is new and you should try not to get exasperated by repeat questions. In order to make the interview more dynamic and interesting, we recommend that you ask questions that are specific to the department or individual with whom you are speaking. This not only gives you a broader range of topics to discuss, but provides you with valuable information about the organization which you will need in order to make a wise employment decision. Since the call-back interview is used to measure mutual fit, you should prepare yourself to become more integrally involved in the interview process.

Expenses – If the invitation does not mention expenses, contact the employer for clarification. Most employers pay all reasonable expenses incurred on visits, yet the company will expect you to use discretion in reporting your expenses. Keep records for transportation, food and lodging. If you are planning to visit more than one employer on the same trip, inform each of them and they will assist you in prorating your expenses. The following items are not considered to be normal expenses: entertainment, tours, cigarettes, alcoholic beverages, magazines, personal calls, valet expenses, flight insurance, and excessive tips.

The Interview – The office or plant visit will be conducted in much the same way as your initial interview. Second interviews can vary in length from half an hour to a full day of interviews, tours, and meals with a variety of company employees. For most of us, talking to all of these people can be draining. Therefore, strategies such as taking notes when appropriate and timing your responses – delaying your questions and reaction – may help you to remember names as well as intelligent questions to ask later. During the interview, candidates may expect to discuss job responsibilities, personal qualifications, observe company operations, visit facilities where they might work, meet other personnel, and perhaps tour the community.

Business Etiquette – It is not unusual to be taken out to lunch or dinner as part of your second interview. At such events it is essential to remember and practice everything you ever learned about table manners. Here are some basic guidelines:

- Don't smoke or drink alcoholic beverages (even if invited)
- Order something that is easy to eat (avoid spaghetti, juicy hamburgers, etc.) and which is moderately priced.
- If wine is ordered by your host, have only one glass (if you drink).
- Remember, even though your luncheon host may not be your potential supervisor, you are still being scrutinized and sized up for a correct “fit.”



ILLEGAL QUESTIONS

WHAT'S THE RIGHT ANSWER?

Various federal, state, and local laws regulate the questions a prospective employer can ask you. An employer's questions--on the job application, in the interview, or during the testing process--must be related to the job for which you are applying. For the employer, the focus must be: "What do I need to know to decide whether or not this person can perform the functions of this job?"

OPTIONS FOR ANSWERING

If you are asked an illegal question, you have three options.

- You are free to answer the question – but if you choose to do so, realize you are giving information that is not job-related. And, you could harm your candidacy by giving the “wrong” answer.
- You can refuse to answer the question. By selecting this option, you'll be within your rights but also run the risk of coming off as uncooperative or confrontational – hardly the words an employer would use to describe the “ideal” candidate.
- Your third option is to examine the intent behind the question and respond with an answer as it might apply to the job. For instance, if the interviewer asks, “Are you a U.S. citizen?” or “What country are you from?” you've been asked an illegal question. You could say, however, “I am authorized to work in the United States.” Or, if your interviewer asks, “Who is going to take care of your children when you have to travel?” You might answer, “I can meet the travel and work schedule that this job requires.”

Here are some examples of illegal questions – and their legal counterparts:

INQUIRY AREA

National Origin/Citizenship

ILLEGAL QUESTIONS

- Are you a U.S. citizen?
- Where were you/your parents born?
- What is your “native tongue”?

LEGAL QUESTIONS

- Are you authorized to work in the United States?
- What languages do you read, speak, or write fluently?

Age

- How old are you?
- When did you graduate from college?
- What's your birth date?

- Are you over the age of 18?

Marital/Family Status

- What's your marital status?
- Who do you live with?
- Do you plan to have a family? When?
- How many kids do you have?
- What are your child care arrangements?

- Would you be willing to relocate if necessary?
- Travel is an important part of the job. Would you be able and willing to travel as needed?
- This job requires overtime occasionally. Would you be willing to work overtime as necessary?

Affiliations

- What clubs or social organizations do you belong to?

- List any professional organizations or trade groups or other organizations you belong to that you consider relevant to your ability to perform this job.

Personal

- How tall are you?
- How much do you weigh?

- Are you able to lift a 50-pound weight and carry it 100 yards, as that is part of the job?

Disability/Medical

- Do you have any disabilities?
- Please complete the following medical history.
- Have you had any recent or past illnesses or operations?
If yes, list and give dates.
- When was your last physical exam?
- How's your family's health?
- When did you lose your eyesight? How?

- Based on the job description, are you able to perform the essential functions of this job?
- Would you require accommodations to perform the essential functions of the job?
- Are you willing to undergo a medical exam after we've made you a job offer?
- Do you understand that any offer of employment is conditional based on the results of a medical exam?

Arrest Record

- Have you ever been arrested?

- Have you ever been convicted of ____?

Military

- If you've been in the military, were you honorably discharged?

- In what branch of the Armed Forces did you serve?
- What type of training or education did you receive in the military?

Adapted from “Pre-employment Inquiries: What... And What Not... To Ask” by Rochelle Kaplan, College Placement Council, Inc., 1993

WHAT DO RECRUITERS SEEK?

The College Placement Council, in a booklet entitled “So You’re Looking For A Job?” describes the following sixteen traits employers frequently seek in candidates:

Ability To Communicate. Do you have the ability to organize your thoughts and ideas effectively? Can you express them clearly when speaking or writing? Can you present your ideas to others in a persuasive way?

Intelligence. Do you have the ability to understand the job assignment? Learn the details of the operation? Contribute original ideas to your work?

Self-Confidence. Do you demonstrate a sense of maturity that enables you to deal positively and effectively with situations and people?

Willingness To Accept Responsibility. Are you someone who recognizes what needs to be done and is willing to do it?

Initiative. Do you have the ability to identify the purpose for work and to take action?

Leadership. Can you guide and direct others to obtain the recognized objectives?

Energy Level. Do you demonstrate a forcefulness and capacity to make things move ahead? Can you maintain your work effort at an above-average rate?

Imagination. Can you confront and deal with problems that may not have standard solutions?

Flexibility. Are you capable of changing and being receptive to new situations and ideas?

Interpersonal Skills. Can you bring out the best efforts of individuals so they become effective, enthusiastic members of a team?

Self-Knowledge. Can you realistically assess your own capabilities? See yourself as others see you? Clearly recognize your strengths and weaknesses?

Ability To Handle Conflict. Can you successfully contend with stressful situations and antagonism?

Competitiveness. Do you have the capacity to compete with others and the willingness to be measured by your performance in relation to that of others?

Goal Achievement. Do you have the ability to identify and work toward specific goals? Do such goals challenge your abilities?

Vocational Skills. Do you possess the positive combination of education and skills required for the position you are seeking?

Direction. Have you defined your basic personal needs? Have you determined what type of position will satisfy your knowledge, skills and goals?

INTERVIEW KNOCKOUT FACTORS

REASONS WHY JOB APPLICANTS ARE REJECTED

- Job goals and objectives not well defined; lack of career planning.
- Achievement motivation not evident; no record of achievement experiences.
- Not prepared for the interview; failure to research the organization.
- No real interest in the job vacancy or in the organization.
- Interested only in the money and benefits; unrealistic salary demands.
- Inadequate knowledge of the job position or the occupation.
- Little or no social poise; inability to communicate clearly.
- Disrespectful, rude, coarse; lack of tact, courtesy, and civility.
- Poor personal appearance; poor posture; lack of eye contact.
- No sense of humor; lack of enthusiasm; indifference; passive attitude.
- Not able to take constructive or well-meant criticism.
- No evidence of handling responsibility, leadership, or initiative.
- Belittling and disparaging previous employers and supervisors.
- Expects too much too soon; job expectations are unrealistic.
- Makes excuses for unfavorable comments on records, such as poor work habits.
- Education or previous work experience has no relevance to job being sought.
- Asks no questions or poor questions about the job or the organization.
- Late to interview without plausible reason.
- Attitude of “What can you do for me?”



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