



Interviewing

MASTERING THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

PURPOSE OF THE INTERVIEW

- For the applicant to learn more about the organization and position.
- For the applicant to determine if the company is a good fit for them.
- For the employer to determine if the applicant has the personality fit, qualifications, and ability to learn or do the job.
- For the employer to find the most qualified candidate for the job and the best fit for the company.

PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

Know Yourself

- Identify your strengths and weaknesses based on the job description.
- Determine how these strengths can help meet the needs of the company. Sell yourself confidently!
- Weaknesses should represent qualities that you have improved or areas of potential growth.
 - *Example: You have found it difficult to speak in front of groups. To become stronger at this you joined the debate club and were able to win one of the debates.*
- Determine how this job would challenge you and help you grow professionally.

Research

- It is critical to research the company and field in preparing for the interview. You will be asked why you are interested in the company and position.
- Research the company on their website, LinkedIn, and google them to find relevant stories.
 - *Information to find out:* Size, locations, organization structure, types of clients, services or products, mission and vision, competitors, industry trends, financial strength, current and potential markets, reputation, divisions and subsidiaries, and look for bios of current staff.

Dress for Success

- Wear a conservative, professional suit or pantsuit. If wearing a skirt, make sure it is at or below the knee.
- If wearing heels, keep them to 2 inches or below. If wearing other shoes, wear matching dress socks.
- Air on the conservative side in the use of jewelry
- Remember basic hygiene: Hair and fingernails clean and neat, clean breath, wear deodorant.
- Avoid wearing perfume or cologne.

Interviewing Tip: Overdressed is always better than underdressed!

DURING THE INTERVIEW

- Arrive 10 minutes early so you have time to freshen up
- Treat everyone in the office with respect. Receptionists and other employees are often asked their impression of you when you came in.
- Get the interviewer's name and if you can, greet them by Mr., Ms., or Mx. _____ and a firm handshake. Be confident!
- Allow the interviewer to lead the interview.
- Maintain appropriate eye contact while speaking and listening to the interviewer (do not interrupt them).
- Structure your answers to questions to be specific, concrete, and show results of actions. Offer examples of your work (i.e. a portfolio) that document your accomplishments.
- Use the Task, Action, Result formula to answer questions. *(See the Behavioral Question below)*
- Be prepared with 4 to 5 questions about the organization or position *(See examples below)*. You will always be asked if you have questions and this is critical to show interest in the position.
- Be prepared to leave copies of your résumé, transcripts, references, or reference letters, and bring your portfolio if you have one.

Closing the interview

- Don't expect an offer at the initial interview.
- Remain positive throughout the entire interview. Often the first and last few minutes can make the difference. If you are truly interested state that at the end.
- At the conclusion of the interview always ask what the next steps are in the process. Thank the interviewer for their time and hospitality.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

- Take a few moments to jot down some notes from the interview.
- Write down names of every person involved in the interview.
- Write a thank you note to everyone involved in your interview within 24 - 48 hours. This may set you apart from your competition as many fail to do this step.
- If you have been asked to send additional information, do so as soon as possible.
- Follow-up within 7-10 days if you haven't heard anything.

ADDITIONAL TIPS

- Be yourself and let them get to know you.
- Think about what an employer wants to know and prepare relevant examples.
- Prepare a strategy for every interview. Each position will have differences for which you need to prepare.
- Keep to the point. Don't bring up extraneous information, unless asked.
- Don't dominate the interview. You can be confident while also being respectful.
- Ask well thought out questions that show interest and knowledge of the company.
- Do not ask about salary and benefits until the employer brings up the subject.
- Practicing out loud is very important. Career Services can do practice interviews with you.

TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

Traditional Interview

A typical interview will last between 30 minutes and an hour. However, sometimes interviews can be half or whole day processes! The typical structure of an interview is:

- *Icebreaking: 2-5 minutes*
- *Questioning: 20-40 minutes*
- *Your opportunity to ask questions: 5-15 minutes*
- *Conclusion: 5 minutes*

Panel Interview

In this type of interview, applicants are questioned by three or more interviewers. Address your responses to all members of the panel to keep them engaged.

Group Interview

In this format, there are several interviewees being interviewed at the same time by one or more interviewers. Sometimes, the interviewers will actually step back and simply observe. The goal of this style is to see how you interact in a team and to observe your communication style.



Virtual Interview

This format for interviewing is becoming increasingly popular due to its accessibility and cost efficiency. Keep these tips in mind when interviewing over video:

- Dress as you would for an in-person interview.
- Make sure your background is clean, neutral, and noise-free.
- Test your internet connection, camera, and microphone well ahead of time. Keep your camera on at all times unless directed otherwise.
- Turn off computer and phone alerts or anything else that will be a distraction.

Phone Interview

Telephone interviews have become more common for first-round interviews. Keep these tips in mind:

- Make sure you will have good cell service at the time of your interview.
- Make sure you have a quiet area to talk.
- Practice with someone to get the feel of answering questions over the phone.
- Stand up during the interview. This opens up the diaphragm and allows you to speak more clearly.
- Dress up! This may help you feel more confident.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Common Interview Questions

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why are you interested in our company?
- What are your career objectives?
- What are 2 strengths and 2 weaknesses of yours?
- Describe your ideal work environment.
- Where do you see yourself in 5 years?
- Behavioral questions (see below)

Behavioral Questions

This is becoming the most popular type of interview question. The purpose is to find out how you have handled relevant previous situations. Examples:

- Describe a time when you had to work under extreme pressure and how you handled it.
- Describe a time you had to work with a team to achieve something.

How to answer these questions:

1. Describe the situation and problem
2. Explain the actions that you took to resolve the problem
3. Detail the positive outcomes that came from your initiative

Fictional Case Questions

This is a common approach in the consulting and financial industries. In this method, employers pose a problem and ask the candidate to propose logical steps to solve the problem. The goal in answering these types of questions is not to get a right answer, but to show logical steps to the answer you develop.

- *Example: How many golf balls are used in the United States on a yearly basis?*

Questions You Can Ask

Always have 3-4 questions prepared to ask and show that you have done your homework. Not asking questions shows lack of preparation. Here are some examples:

- Can you give me an example of a typical day?
- What are the opportunities for advancement?
- What is the company culture like?
- Can you show me examples of projects someone would be working on in this role?
- What are the biggest challenges someone in this position would face?
- What is your company doing to ensure that diversity, equity, and inclusion is a top priority?

ILLEGAL QUESTIONS

Questions that are asked to obtain information regarding your race, gender, religion, marital status, age, physical/mental status, ethnic background, country of origin, vital statistics, sexual orientation, or any other discriminatory factor cannot be asked by the interviewer and are generally illegal as grounds for making employment decisions.

Examples of illegal questions:

- What is your country of citizenship?
- What is your native language?
- Are you married?
- Do you plan to have children?
- How much do you weigh?
- What are your childcare arrangements?
- Do you have any disabilities?
- How old are you?
- Have you had any recent illnesses or operations?

How to Respond to Illegal Questions

You are under no obligation to answer these questions. You can briefly address the question by stating that the answer will not affect your work, or you can choose to be more direct. It may be beneficial to notify Human Resources representatives that these types of questions were asked and they will deal with it internally.

EVALUATING JOB OFFERS

Questions to keep in mind:

- How does the position fit with your long and short-term goals?
- Do the most common activities of the job appeal to you?
- Look at the benefits carefully and you can sometimes negotiate better benefits if the salary is not where you want it.
- Is the salary satisfactory for the position?
- What are the advancement opportunities?
- Will you expand your skills in the position?
- Are the demands of the job compatible with the lifestyle you want?
- Are the values and culture of the organization in line with yours?

Negotiating an Offer

Negotiating an offer should be based on research that you have done about common salary levels and benefit levels. Most commonly, benefits are where you can negotiate (i.e., better vacation, moving expenses, signing bonus, bonus structure, traveling expenses, etc.). If you negotiate on salary you must have data behind your negotiation.

Accepting and Rejecting Offers

This should be done in writing even if you accept the offer over the phone. You will most likely receive a letter confirming salary, start date, and benefits from the HR office. You should request at least a few days to respond to the offer, so you can consider all aspects of the offer and position. See examples below of accepting/rejecting letters.

Thank You Letter Sample

65 Husson Ave., Apt. 6B
Bangor, ME 04401

June 2, 2021

Ms. Jane Whitfield
Vice President
Fidelity Investments
3 Canal Plaza
Portland, ME 04101

Dear Ms. Whitfield

Thank you for taking the time to interview me today at your office. I enjoyed talking with you and learning more about the junior accounting position.

As you may recall from our interview, I have had experience as an intern with Fidelity Investments in Bangor. In addition, I have excelled in my accounting classes at Husson University. I am very interested in the position and believe my strong accounting skills would enable me to hit the ground running.

Again, thank you for the interview opportunity. I look forward to speaking with you soon and will follow-up with you in two weeks.

Sincerely,

June Davies

Declining a Job Offer Sample

2800 Pleasant Street
Bangor, ME 04401

May 17, 2020

Mr. Michael Scott
Regional Manager
Dunder Mifflin
1725 Slough Avenue
Scranton, PA 18503

Dear Mr. Scott:

Thank you for your employment offer for the position of Sales Associate with Dunder Mifflin. Unfortunately, after serious consideration I am unable to accept the offer since I have accepted a similar position with another company.

I appreciate your time throughout the interview process and learning about the career possibilities at Dunder Mifflin. Your organization remains high on my list as a top company to work for and I hope our paths cross in the future. Good luck in your hiring process.

Best regards,

Annette Cole