

EFFECTIVE INTERVIEWING

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GETTING STARTED

The best way to **prepare** for an interview is to assess the requirements of the job and determine how your qualifications meet the employer's needs. To make sure the presentation of your skills is clear, concise and well articulated, **practice** interviewing prior to the actual event. In essence, you will be asked three basic questions in any interview:

- Why are you interested in this field?
- Why are you interested in this position and organization?
- What relevant skill and experience do you have that will make you successful?

Review the sample interviewing questions found on the reverse side of this handout and **rehearse** your answers with a friend or make an appointment for a mock interview with a career advisor on RhodyNet. In addition, be sure to prepare thoughtful questions to ask during the interview that demonstrate your interest in the position as well as the research you have conducted about the organization.

An essential part of interview preparation involves doing **research** about the position, the organization, and the field. You may obtain this information from company literature and web sites, trade journals, business magazines and directories, career libraries, and informational interviewing. Keep in mind that employers expect you to have done your "homework" and be able to clearly state the reasons you are considering employment with their company. Be prepared to articulate your interest in a particular organization based on specific information obtained during your research.

COMMUNICATING IN THE INTERVIEW

Successful interviewing involves making a positive first impression and **building rapport** with the interviewer, **answering and asking questions** confidently and thoughtfully, **closing the interview** positively, and learning how to **follow up** after the interview. Keep in mind that your nonverbal communication of confidence, enthusiasm, and sincerity remains highly important. In addition, what you say must be impressive. While there is no "right" answer to any question, there are some guidelines that can help you formulate strong responses.

- Be concise. Give answers that are clear and direct. Avoid rambling.
- Be specific and provide examples that demonstrate your skills and qualifications.
- Remember the **STAR formula**: 1) describe a **Situation** or **Task** in which you were involved, 2) explain your role and what **Action** you took, and 3) illustrate the **Results** you achieved.
- Be positive and highlight your strengths. Help the employer understand your qualifications in order to conclude that you are the "best fit" for the job.

As the interview closes, be sure to express interest in the position and briefly summarize why you are well qualified. Ask what the next step will be or when you can expect to hear from the interviewer. This inquiry demonstrates your confidence and enthusiasm and gives you important information.

FOLLOWING UP

Use each interview as a learning experience. Think about what went well and areas that need improvement. Make note of the questions you found challenging and practice them. In addition, consider again all aspects of the job so that you are ready to make a decision if you receive an offer.

Send an email or a word-processed follow-up letter right away to thank the interviewer and to briefly summarize your strongest qualifications for the position. If you are not contacted within the specified amount of time, call to restate your interest and inquire about the status of the hiring process.

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Questions about School/Education

1. How did your college experience prepare you for this position?
2. What led you to choose your major?
3. Do you think your grades are a good indication of your academic achievement? Of your potential?
4. What have you learned from participation in extracurricular activities?
5. Which course did you find the most beneficial? Least beneficial? Why?
6. I see that you worked while in school. Tell me about a typical day for you.
7. Tell me about some of the elective courses you took. How did you choose them?

Questions about the Specific Job/Company

1. What interests you about this particular position?
2. Why should we hire you?
3. In what ways do you think you can make a contribution to our company?
4. If you were hired for this job, in what areas could you contribute immediately?
5. Tell me what you know about this company/organization.
6. What interests you about our products or services? How would you improve them?
7. What do you believe would be most helpful to your continued growth in our company?

Questions about Previous Experience

1. Describe your most rewarding professional experience.
2. What were your highest priorities in your last job?
3. Tell me about a project or procedure you initiated and implemented.
4. Give me an example of a time when your supervisor complimented you. Criticized you?
5. What did you like most/least about your last job?
6. Tell me about a time when you set out to do something that you didn't accomplish. What did you learn from that experience?

Questions about Your Expectations

1. What are the most important rewards you expect in your career?
2. How do you define success? What personal characteristics do you have that will contribute to your success?
3. Describe a time when you reached a goal and discovered that it wasn't what you wanted.
4. What are your career goals, both short and long term?
5. How will employment with us contribute to your career plans?

Questions about Your Personal Characteristics

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. What motivates you to put forth your greatest effort?
3. What factors in your past employment, education, or activities will contribute to your success?
4. Describe your most significant work and non-work accomplishment in the past two years.
5. What are your strengths/weaknesses?
6. How would you describe your own work style?
7. How would a co-worker/friend/supervisor describe you?

Questions about Decision Making

1. Describe the steps you used in making a significant decision or recommendation in the past year.
2. What kinds of decisions are easiest for you? Why? Which are more difficult? Why?
3. In what respects have you improved in your decision-making ability in the past year?

Questions about Interpersonal Relations

1. Tell me about your relationships with customers/co-workers/supervisors. What problems did you face and how did you handle them?
2. Of the supervisors you've had, describe the one whom you most admired.
3. Describe your method of influencing people. Give a specific example.
4. Tell me about your experience working alone and as part of a team? Which do you prefer and why?