

The Interview Process

Introduction: An interview is a formal meeting between an applicant and a prospective employer. The employer wants to know if the applicant is the right person for the job. The applicant wants to know if this job is the job he/she wants. It is the last step between you and a job! This unit will help you prepare for that final step.

Before the Interview:

- A. Record the date, time and place (address, building floor, room number) of the interview in your day timer. Find out in advance the name and title of the person(s) who will interview you (including pronunciation and spelling). Get a phone number to call in case of an emergency or if you have additional questions.
- B. Learn as much as you can about the company beforehand--know its products and/or services. Find out about the industry. Is the company a local, regional, state, national or international company? Is it a small, medium or large firm? What are the future aspirations and goals of the company? What is the correct company name? Who is the chief executive officer (CEO)?

Where can you get this information? The company's annual reports, newsletters, Internet site, press kit, or its employees, the library, city and business directories, telephone yellow pages, the business section of the local newspaper.

- C. Do practice interviews with a friend. Video tape your mock interviews and critique them.
- D. Find out what clothing is appropriate for the selected industry. Although some industries, such as fashion and advertising, are more stylish, acceptable attire for most industries is conservative. Make sure your clothes are clean, well pressed, and your shoes polished. Your hair should be neat, your nails and teeth clean, and you should generally be well-groomed.
- E. Find out if you will be required to take any tests or answer supplemental questions and be prepared to do so.
- F. Take your Job/Career Portfolio with you--and make sure it is up-to-date. Your portfolio will reduce stress--it should contain any information you may need for the interview or to complete a job application (if required). Your resume should be up to date and directed to the job for which you are interviewing. Take an extra copy of your resume and a list of references with you to the interview. (Ask your references to call you if they get an inquiry--it helps keep you on top of your job search.)

- G. Review your skills and the skills requirements of the job so you can provide information or answer questions to show how your skills match the job requirements. Be mentally prepared. Convince yourself that you are the best candidate for the job. Think about how your experiences at work, school and other activities (including community service) can relate to the job you're seeking.
- H. Go to the interview alone; arrive 10-15 minutes early. This will give you time to relax and get composed. Visit the site in advance so you know the route and time how long it takes to get there. Check in with the receptionist (state your name, who you are there to see and why).

During the Interview:

- A. When meeting the interviewer, greet him/her by name. Introduce yourself and let the interviewer know the position for which you are applying. Shake hands with a firm grip.
- B. Sit down where the interviewer indicates. Sit properly, smile. Lean forward slightly to express your interest. Be positive, alert and confident. Make eye contact with the interviewer. If you have trouble looking someone directly in the eyes, look at his/her forehead. Rest your hands in your lap and relax. Avoid nervous mannerisms such as playing with your hair, tapping a finger or a pen, etc.
- C. Speak slowly and clearly; don't be afraid to pause for a moment to collect your thoughts. Be honest. Use proper English; don't ramble. Keep your personal life and problems out of the interview.
- D. The introductory phase will probably cover small talk (to make you more comfortable) and provide an overview of what will be discussed. The middle phase will be mostly questions (by the interviewer) and answers (by you). But you will be given an opportunity to ask questions as well. The closing phase gives you an opportunity to ask final questions covering any important points that haven't been covered and get information about the next step in the process. Find out when the hiring decision will be made.
- E. Closing. Stand, shake hands, thank the interviewer and restate your interest in the position.

After the Interview:

- A. Assess your performance; what went well? What didn't? Record your thoughts and make notes on how you can improve in future interviews.
- B. Within 24 hours send a thank you note (personal size stationery is fine). You want it to arrive the very next day. Be brief. Express appreciation for his/her time. Get across that you want the job and can do it. Hint--ask for a business card during the interview so you have the proper information to send the thank you letter.
Your promptness in sending a thank you note shows initiation, organization and interest.