

THE INTERVIEW



www.jcu.edu/careercenter

WHAT'S THE PURPOSE?

An interview explores the possibility of entering into a mutually beneficial employment relationship. Your resume got you the interview, now it's up to you to get the job. Hiring decisions are based upon an interviewer's assessment of: personality, skills, career ambitions, education, experience, time management, and ability to communicate among others. Employers are assessing all of the factors and determining whether or not you are the right fit for their organization. At the same time, you should be considering whether or not you feel the organization is a right fit for you.

Some points to consider during an interview:

- Expand on information contained in your resume.
- Supply additional information to the employer that is not contained in your resume - this includes the reason you want to work in a particular industry, your passion for the job, and any additional experiences that are not listed.
- Demonstrate your interpersonal skills including speaking, listening, and answering questions.
- Interviewers will also be looking at your non-verbal behavior such as posture, handshake and how you carry and conduct yourself overall.
- Gain additional information about the employer and the position you are considering.
- Provide opportunity for both parties to assess the possibility of employment.



TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

- **INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW:** This experience is not intended to get you a job, but rather to gain insight and information from an experienced person in a particular field. Often times, students will bring a list of questions they need answered and their resumes for review. This networking experience can be the beginning of a relationship with a possibility of a job or internship in the future.
- **INITIAL/SCREENING INTERVIEW:** Usually rather general and is relatively short (30-45 minutes). When employers recruit on campus, they use screening interviews to decide which candidates are potentially best qualified to meet their organization's needs. This type of interview is usually followed-up with a second round of interviews.
- **SELECTION INTERVIEW:** This is a usually longer, more thorough interview designed to identify the most qualified candidate for the position. This interview may last one hour or more. It is not uncommon for a candidate to go through a sequence of four or five selection interviews with several different people or a group interview where a number of people meet with a candidate. The interview process varies by organization, so don't be afraid to ask about the selection process.

28 REASONS EMPLOYERS GAVE FOR REJECTING APPLICANTS DURING THE INITIAL INTERVIEW

1. Poor personal appearance
2. Nervous, ill at ease
3. Fails to look interviewer in the eye
4. Limp, fishy handshake.
5. Sloppy application form.
6. Inability to express himself/herself clearly, poor voice, diction, or grammar.
7. Answers only "yes" and "no" to open-ended questions.
8. Indefinite response to specific questions
9. Hostile, overbearing, over-aggressive, conceited, know-it-all.
10. Lack of interest and enthusiasm, passive, indifferent, apathetic.
11. Over-emphasis on money, interested only in best dollar offer.
12. Unwillingness to start at the bottom, expects too much too soon.
13. Makes excuses, evasive, hedges on unfavorable factors in record, lying.
14. Lack of maturity.
15. Lack of courtesy, ill-mannered, failure to express appreciation for interviewer's time.
16. Condemnation of past employers, no tact
17. Lack of vitality, shuffles, slow moving, lazy.
18. Wanting a job for a short time.
19. Lack of knowledge of field of work, no interest in the company.
20. Evidence of cynicism.
21. Low moral standards.
22. Intolerance, strong prejudices.
23. Narrow interest, no interest in community, lack of social awareness.
24. Poor handling of personal finances.
25. Marital troubles, poor personal life.
26. Inability to take criticism; won't accept instruction.
27. Lack of appreciation of the value of experience or education.
28. Arriving late for interview without a good reason.



PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

1. **Do your research:** Familiarize yourself with the organization's products and/or services and their position in the industry. The more you know about the organization and how it relates to your career goals, the more effective you will be in the interview. You can find information about many organizations on their website. Newspapers, magazine articles and financial ratings are helpful as well. Talk with someone who works for the company if possible. At the end of the interview the interviewer will ask you if you have any questions for them, so be sure to arrive prepared with a list of questions. Center for Career Services offers some great resources to gather this information such as VAULT, Career Connection and Going Global. Also, check out the Graselli Library which offers a wide range of databases for reference as well.
2. **Dress appropriately for the interview:**
 - a. **DO-**
 - Dress conservatively: Suit, tie, dark socks, and dress shoes for the men. Women, you can wear a suit with either pants or a skirt, just be sure it is professional.
 - Wear the suit jacket into the interview regardless of how hot it is in the office or outside.
 - b. **DON'T**
 - Wear provocative or suggestive clothing
 - Wear too much makeup, perfume, cologne, aftershave or jewelry
3. **Be prepared.** Create a goals and skills summary prior to the interview. Write a list of your achievements and organize these into a format. Schedule a mock interview with a staff member at the Career Center. You want to make sure you know more about your achievements on your resumes than the employer does.
4. **Don't Be Late.** Make sure you know ahead of time the location and time of the interview, as well as the name of the interviewer.
5. **Arrive early.** Give yourself at least 15 extra minutes to allow for traffic problems, etc. and if you're interviewing at John Carroll University, you know you need to allow extra time for parking. Keep in mind, the Career Center driveway is reserved for recruiters.



THE INTERVIEW

The Greeting

The interview begins when you arrive at the interview location, from the garage attendant, the receptionist to the recruiter who greets you. You never know who will be involved in the hiring decisions, and this is everyone's first impression of you. They are quickly sizing up your voice quality, handshake, appearance, and ability to chat informally, and to give you time to adjust to the interview setting. Be enthusiastic, talkative, smile and maintain eye contact with the interviewer. Let them know you appreciate the opportunity to meet with them.

Presenting Yourself

Your physical presence is everything and can really make or break you in an interview. Smile, sit up straight, make eye contact and have some enthusiasm! Speak clearly and confidently and don't be afraid to talk about yourself. You are your best advocate, so let them know how much you want the job and how perfect you are for it.

Open-Ended Questions

Once the interview gets underway, the interviewer begins to ask questions that will give him/her insight into your personality. Interviewers will ask open-ended questions to determine how organized you are and how clearly you think. The questions might be as general as, "Tell me about yourself," or as specific as, "How has your education prepared you for this job?" Whatever the questions, make sure to stay focused on your goal which is to get the job. Gear your answers to demonstrate how you are a good fit for the position within the organization.

Behavior Based Questions

The interviewer may ask you "What would you do if ...?" These types of questions are often referred to as behavior based questions and can be answered in three parts. 1) Re-describe the situation 2) Explain what you would do 3) What are the results of your action? This is a perfect time to site specific examples in which you have had prior experience in the field or task. If you do not have an immediate answer, let the interviewer know that you had never thought about it before, take a few moments to think about it, and use your judgment to answer appropriately.

Questions Not to Ask

Do not express a geographical preference early in the interview process; this tends to show inflexibility that can be detrimental to a career. You can discuss this later as needed. Do not pursue salary or benefit questions; these are usually introduced by the company later in the process. When it is time to discuss salary, there are a few websites that are great resources one really good one is www.salary.com. The Center for Career Services has some great resources in the library to help you out, too.

The Close

Summarize your skills and abilities for the interviewer and express your interest in the position and the company. Ask about the next steps, and don't forget to say **thank you**. Ask for a business card if you haven't already done so and the best way to get in touch with them. Keep notes of each interview to remind you of what took place.

Thank You

Sending a **thank you** letter or note is a must. Remember that business card you took from the interviewer? Use it to ensure proper spelling and contact information of the person who will be receiving your note. You should send it in the way that the interviewer told you was best within 24 hours of the interview. It can either be through the mail, or email. If you are not sure, you can do both. Either way, the thank you letter leaves a positive impression and reminds the interviewer that you are interested in the position.

Questions You May Be Asked...

Listening to questions and answering them in a positive manner is an exercise that you can practice and master prior to your formal interview. The following questions and responses will help you to prepare for your interview:

- 1. Why do you want to work here?**
Because you have done your homework researching the company, you **know** exactly why you want to work there. Organize your reasons into several short, hard-hitting sentences. "You make the best product in the market today." "Your management is farsighted enough to reinvest the company's profits so that soon you will be the leader in the industry."
- 2. Why should I hire you?**
The interviewer asking this question does not want a lengthy regurgitation of your resume or a barrage of facts and figures. Give a **short, generalized summary**. "I have the qualifications to do the job that has to be done and my track record proves it." or "I know that this is the job for me and that I will be successful."
- 3. What interests you most about the position?**
Give a truthful, one or two-word answer like, "The future." "The challenge." "The competitiveness." "The environment." This response will force the employer to ask you to explain, giving you yet another opportunity to demonstrate your profound knowledge of the company.
- 4. What is your biggest strength and weakness?**
This is the dreaded question that stumps many. When answering this question, be honest and positive at the same time, and avoid the cliché answers. A good answer might be, "Sometimes I am a bit of a procrastinator, which does have its disadvantages, however I am very efficient and focused when time is short, and I always make a deadline." Make sure you have thought this question through ahead of time and your weakness should actually be a weakness. Cite an example of how you have worked through your weakness in the past which will help you to deal with it in the future.
- 5. What kinds of decisions are most difficult for you?**
Be human and admit that not everything comes easily. Be careful what you do admit. "It is difficult for me to tell a team member that they are holding up the project." "I find it difficult to decide between two qualified players, which one to select to lead the group."
- 6. What would you like to be doing five years from now?**
To answer this question, make sure you know what is realistic for the ideal candidate. Too many job-hunters butcher this question because they have not done their homework and have no idea where the position will lead them. If you see yourself at another company, or in another department of the company you are interviewing, tread lightly. Don't make yourself more successful than the interviewer. Although you want to let the employer know you have thought about it, you also don't want to appear to rigid and not open to new opportunities. So make sure you can strike a balance between a set five year plan and willingness to explore what the future holds.
- 7. What training/qualifications do you have for this job?**
Deliver a short, fact-filled summary of the two or three most important qualifications you have. "I have a background in accounting. I've demonstrated proven selling skills. I'm capable of handling several projects simultaneously." Or, "I am a skilled researcher and have worked with renowned professors in the field of Biology. I am confident in my research skills and will help this company work towards its goal."
- 8. What kind of experience do you have for this job?**
Summarize four or five key areas of experience you can bring to your new job. For example, "My experience in new-product introductions will be very helpful to your entire marketing effort. My public relations account management experience will be quite useful in dealing with large clients."

Suggested Questions For You To Ask:

At the end of every interview, the interviewer will ask if you have any questions. You definitely want to have some questions prepared ahead of time, however when it is time to ask them, be sure not to ask a question that has already been answered at some point during the interview.

1. What are you looking for in a successful candidate?
2. What is the most difficult challenge one would face in this position?
3. What do you enjoy most about working here?
4. What have you liked least about working here?
5. What kinds of people seem to succeed in this company/department?
6. How do you define success and how do you measure your own success?
7. What are your goals for the coming year with this organization and how can I help to achieve them?
8. What are the department's specific objectives for the next three months?
9. How fast is the company growing? Is management happy with that rate or are there plans for expansion?
10. Are there plans for new products or services I should know about to better serve my position?
11. Can you give me a more detailed understanding of what a typical day for me would look like?
12. What are three things that need immediate attention?
13. How will my performance be measured in this position? How is the department's performance measured?
14. How many hours per week do you expect your employees to put in? How much overtime does this position typically involve? How many weekends a year would I be expected to work?
15. What has the turnover been in this department in the last few years?
16. Is there anything you feel I should know about the company?
17. It has been a pleasure to meet you and after our conversation, I am confident that I am a perfect fit for your company. What are the next steps in this interview process and when do you expect to complete it?