



Guide to Interviewing

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PREPARING FOR THE JOB INTERVIEW

The interview is the single most important factor in landing a job. Good resumes, cover letters, and telephone conversations may get you in the door, but a structured face-to-face interaction may still be required before any hiring decisions can be made.

Don't be alarmed if you find yourself feeling a little bit nervous prior to your interview, after all, it may well be the most important factor in determining whether or not you land the job of your dreams. Remember that you have skills that your prospective employer wants. Keep in mind that the four years that you have spent at Utica College have provided you with the background necessary to present your prospective employer with an excellent package.

Preparation is definitely the key to successful interviewing:

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

- Indicate clear learning goals. Show interest in learning more about the job duties and responsibilities.
- Research the organization. What type of organization is it – for-profit, non-profit, or governmental? What are its products or services? What is the organization's mission?

GROOMING

- Develop a professional image. A suit is the preferred interviewing attire for both men and women. Darker colors tend to convey an air of authority that could offset a youthful appearance. If you do not own a suit at this time, consider purchasing one. In many cases, however, a sports jacket, tie and presentable slacks for a man and a blazer and skirt or a pant suit for a woman are acceptable.
- Fine-tune the details of your appearance. Polish your shoes, groom your nails, but avoid flashy jewelry and strong scented perfumes or colognes.
- Formal dress may not be normal workplace attire for a particular position, nevertheless, you should take special pains to look professional at your interview; this shows you are prepared to take the job seriously. Once hired, your everyday attire should follow the dress code of your job site.

DURING THE INTERVIEW

- Give a firm handshake and smile, portraying a winning attitude.
- Once offered a seat, position yourself so you are erect, but comfortable. Women, cross your legs at the ankle. To avoid fidgeting, fold your hands in your lap, or have a portfolio in your hands. Make eye contact and listen!
- Ask questions about the position: the duties required, the most challenging aspects, new ideas or expansion plans that are being explored by the company or organization.
- Watch for cues from the interviewer to let you know when the interview is over.
- Thank the interviewer for his/her time and don't be afraid to reiterate your qualifications and interest in the position.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

- When you get home, write a note of appreciation to the interviewer for meeting with you, and giving you this opportunity (refer to our Cover Letters and Thank You Letters Kit).
- If you haven't been contacted within two weeks of your interview, make a phone call to give them a gentle reminder of your continued interest. Ask when a decision will be made.
- If you don't get the job, don't get discouraged. Consider the interview a real training session.

~The 30 Minute Interview~

1 minute

Interviewer: *Meets student

Student: *Firm handshake (male or female), smile and make eye contact
*Use interviewer's surname unless asked to use first name
*Stand until interviewer sits down or asks you to sit down

.....

2 minutes

Interviewer: *Establish rapport and create comfort level

Student: *Small talk about common interests – something you are able to talk about with no fear

.....

1 minute

Interviewer: *Position interview and ask a leading question
*Tell what is going to happen during the remaining time

Student: *Agrees – smiles – appears enthusiastic and interested

.....

15 minutes

Interviewer: *Gather information
*Ask questions regarding classroom experience, work experience & activities/personal interests

Student: *Answer questions in conversational manner, use action verbs, offer examples of accomplishments

.....

10 minutes

Interviewer: *Answer questions

Student: *Be prepared to ask questions that demonstrate that you have knowledge of the profession, the company, and your career

.....

1 minute

Interviewer: *Summary and close – what to expect

Student: *Ask for business card

10 TIPS FOR A POSITIVE INTERVIEW



YOU CAN ENHANCE your image with the interviewer if you present yourself in a positive light. Here are some ways to avoid the negatives:

- ☞ Use your interviewer's name – title (ie: Dr., Mr., Professor) and last name – from time to time as you speak. Never use the interviewer's first name unless you have specifically been requested to do so.
- ☞ Phrase your questions so that you sound sure of yourself. Ask, "What would my duties be?" rather than "What are the duties of this job?"
- ☞ Use good grammar. If you are unsure of your grammar, practice before the interview.
- ☞ Use good diction. Say "yes" instead of "yeah."
- ☞ Don't fill pauses in the conversation with "ahs" and "ums."
- ☞ Don't punctuate sentences with such vocal habits as "you know," "like," and "okay."
- ☞ Use active verbs when you talk about your skills and experience. Say "I organized," "I supervised," "I analyzed," to emphasize your strengths.
- ☞ Don't "think," or "guess," about anything. These indecisive words make you appear less than assertive.
- ☞ Avoid such negative terms as "pretty good" or "fairly well." When you talk about your skills and experience, use positive, strong words. "The conference I organized was an overwhelming success."
- ☞ Offer examples of accomplishments. Support your claim to skills with illustrations, descriptions, statistics, and testimonials.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Skilled interviewers look for indications of character, drive and competence that may help them evaluate a person quickly.

By asking a few simple questions, a good interviewer can gain a clear sense of whether or not you are a suitable candidate for the organization.

Some questions you can expect (in no particular order):

- Tell me about yourself.
- What did you like most about your major? What did you dislike?
- When did you choose your college major?
- What courses did you like best? Least? Why?
- Why did you decide to go to this particular school?
- In what school activities did you participate?
- What is your greatest strength? Your greatest weakness?
- What do you know about us?
- Do you think that grades should be considered by employers?
- Tell me about your work experience.
- What motivates you to do your best work?
- Why should we hire you?
- What contributions do you see yourself making to our company?
- What are the two most important things you look for in a job?

Remember: The purpose of the interview is to see if you are a good fit within their organization.

Questions Worth Asking...

The people who interview you for a job will typically ask if you have any questions about the position or the company itself. Don't pass up this opportunity to gather additional information. This indicates that you are interested in the job and may, in the end, help you decide if you actually want it.

HERE ARE SOME QUESTIONS YOU MAY WANT TO ASK

Ask the HR manager (only if not already covered):

- ❖ Are employees encouraged and given the opportunity to express their ideas and concerns?
- ❖ How large is the department where the opening exists?
- ❖ Does the job require travel?
- ❖ What are the chances of being relocated after starting the job?
- ❖ What type of orientation or training do new employees receive?
- ❖ How often are performance reviews given?
- ❖ Who determines promotions and how?
- ❖ What employee benefits does the company offer?

Ask your prospective supervisor (only if not already covered):

- ❖ What would be my primary responsibilities?
- ❖ What would I be expected to accomplish in the first six months on the job? In the first year?
- ❖ What are some of the department's ongoing and anticipated special projects?
- ❖ How much contact or exposure does the department and the staff have with the management?
- ❖ How much client or customer service interaction will I have.

Ask a prospective co-worker:

- ❖ Can you describe a typical workday in the department?
- ❖ Do you feel free to express your ideas and concerns here?
- ❖ What are the possibilities for professional growth and promotion?
- ❖ How much interaction do you have with superiors, colleagues, and customers?
- ❖ Do you have much of an opportunity to work independently?
- ❖ How long have you been with the company? Does the future here seem secure?

JOB OFFERS AND SALARY



At any stage in the interview process, you may be asked to discuss your expected salary. While this is a necessary and critical piece in the process, try to avoid a specific response. Once you have disclosed a figure, you can be vulnerable. You may seem too high or too low; too expensive or under qualified.

If salary is raised **before** you know what position is being discussed, you can ask to postpone salary issues until you have a clearer and more complete picture of the position and its responsibilities.

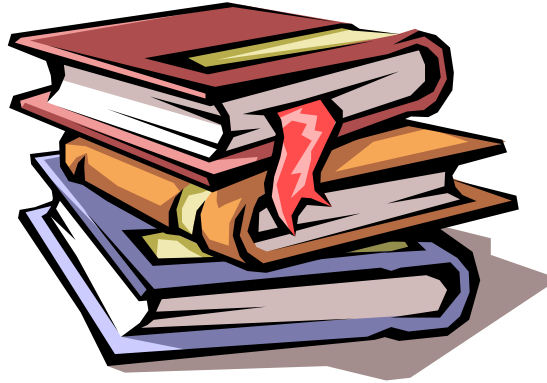
Here are some thoughts regarding salary questions:

- If the interviewer asks: “How much are you making now?”
You could respond: “I would prefer to discuss all aspects of a possible position before looking at salary issues.”
or “May we come back to that when you have a better picture of what I have to offer?”
- If the interviewer asks: “How much do you think you are worth?”
You could respond: “I am looking for something comparable to my level of education and experience.”

If salary is raised **after** you know the nature of the position, ask the interviewer what range he or she has in mind. Indicate that you are flexible and that you believe that the organization is going to treat you fairly. Research the geographical area and have a salary range in mind.

When you decide to accept a job verbally, you should ask for a letter confirming the terms. This is particularly advisable if your negotiated situation is an exception to normal corporate or company procedures. In response, write a letter of acceptance, filling in any additional understandings you believe were reached. Your letter confirms a starting date and, if all is satisfactory to the employer, closes the transaction.

GOOD LUCK!



PHRASES/WORDS TO AVOID

Just
Only/I've only
Well...
Sorta
Its ok
Quit
Fired
Last but not least
I try
Most of the time
I guess
Hardly
'Cause
Gimme
I wanna

Kinda
I don't
Fine
I think
A little
I hope
Maybe
Slang
Ya know
ax
Um-hum
Yep
Nope
Ain't

THE PANEL INTERVIEW

The panel interview—a job interview with more than one interviewer—poses special challenges. You the applicant, must prepare for the dynamics of the panel as a constituency, as well as the individual issues of each panel member.

- Immediately, when you sit down get the first or last name of each interviewer down on paper, ergonomically—in a way that shows exactly who is where. They all have ONE name to remember—yours. You have two, three, four or five names to deal with—theirs. Knowing the first name of each interviewer is a great advantage. Knowing their titles within an organization is an enormous one. Use the name of each person once, when you shake hands at the end of the interview:

“Thanks for your time, Bill”

“Nice meeting you, Betty”

“Talk with you again, Joe”

- Use the sprinkler technique when answering questions. Start the answer to each question through eye contact and response with the person that asks the question. Like a sprinkler, rotate in a progressive way to “meet eyes” with each interviewer consecutively, before ‘rotating” to the next person. Start and finish your answer with the person that asked the question.
- **S.E.L.L.** Yourself. This goes for almost any first meeting, right?

Smile a lot.

Show **E**nthusiasm.

Use the **L**ingo.

And most importantly – **L**and the job.

Ask questions that involve positive answers by all parties. Ask questions that create positive consensus. Ask questions that challenge the imagination of each person.

Why do employers choose this format? Obviously, it’s an expedient way to have everyone meet the candidate at once. **THE PANEL INTERVIEW WILL TEST YOUR INTERVIEWING FINESSE!**

CONGRATULATIONS!

YOU ARE INVITED FOR A SECOND INTERVIEW.

A second interview is sometimes referred to as the hiring interview because the information gathered by the employer could lead to a job offer. What most candidates don't remember is that they are also gathering information that could lead to an acceptance of the job offer. **Do you really want to work for this organization after what you have learned about them?** By observing the environment and asking questions you'll be able to assess the corporate culture. This assessment will lead to a more confident employment decision.

What to Observe

How are people dressed? Formal? Casual?

How much conformity/diversity exists? Men/Women? Age groups?

What does the building look like? Old/New? State of the art/Outdated? Where is it?

What about parking?

What do the work areas look like? Open spaces? Cubicles? Who gets the offices, how are they furnished?

Do the work spaces look personalized with photos, mementos, plants?

Do people's desks look neat or piled high and disorganized?

When you overhear conversations, are they formal or informal? How much laughing or smiling is going on?

How do managers and secretaries talk to each other?

Tips for the Second Interview

Make sure you understand all of the arrangements in advance. How is travel being handled? Will you have to pay and then be reimbursed or will expenses be prepaid? Who will you be meeting with and how long will you be there? What is the exact location, floor/room, of the interview? If you are unsure of the interview location, give yourself ample time for prompt arrival.

Get enough rest. You may have managed to look good for a 30-minute interview, but a second interview might be 3 hours long. This will put a lot of stress on your body.

Answer each question with the same enthusiasm as the first time you were asked it. Sometimes it's difficult to maintain enthusiasm when you are asked the same questions by each interviewer.

Treat each of the interviews as a unique experience. If one doesn't go particularly well, don't bring yourself down for the rest of the day. You are not always the best judge of your own performance in an interview.

If a meal is included in the interview schedule, the employer will pick up the check. Order something medium priced and *easy to eat*. Make sure you order something you enjoy and will eat. You need to keep up your strength throughout the day. Do not order an alcoholic beverage even if the interviewer does. It is considered very inappropriate.

When you are asking your questions, make sure they are appropriate for the person you are asking. Save your lifestyle questions for the people closer to your age and experience level, while you ask the senior-level people questions about new products or future directions of the company.

You don't need to send a thank-you to every single person you met during the day. It is usually sufficient to send one to the person who coordinated the visit. If you wish to send additional ones to individuals that you were particularly impressed with, it is appropriate but not necessary to do so (see our Cover Letters and Thank You Letters Kit for ideas and examples).