

Interviewing

After you send your cover letter and resume to a number of companies, hopefully some of these companies will invite you to interview with them. Before the interview, it is important to prepare yourself. The Starr Career Development Center offers a number of workshops on interviewing. Be sure to check the calendar in **Starr Search** to find out the dates, times and location of these workshops. In addition, you may sign up for a videotaped mock interview to practice your interviewing skills after you have attended an interviewing workshop.

Structure/Format of an Interview

The typical structure of an interview is as follows:

Prior to the Interview

Return employer emails and calls promptly. Schedule an interview time, and don't reschedule unless an emergency arises. Write down the name and phone number of the person who will interview you, as well as the address of the interview location and directions on how to get there. If you are unfamiliar with the location, consider a "dry run" to find out how long it takes to get there and exactly where you have to go.

Be sure to research the company and the position by visiting the company's website and reading recent news stories on the company. This is an essential part of your preparation. Most interviewers are disappointed by candidates who don't know anything about their organization.

Arrive 10-15 minutes before your scheduled appointment. Do not arrive late. Be sure to smile and be pleasant with all employees you meet at the company, such as the receptionist, people you meet in the elevator, etc. Everyone you meet is forming an impression of you.

First five minutes

Introductions:

Greet the interviewer by his or her last name ("Hello, Mr. Smith, thanks so much for meeting with me today"), offer a firm handshake, and smile. You may engage in "small talk" which could include chatting about current events, weather, how your travel to the company location was, etc. Be sure not to complain about anything.



Next 15-20 minutes or more

Employer asks about your background and credentials as they relate to the position. Be specific, concrete, and detailed in your answers. Avoid "yes" or "no" responses. Your goal is to let the interviewer get to know you so that they may make a better hiring decision. Be aware of the non-verbal messages you convey. Speak in a

confident voice and make good eye contact. Lean forward slightly in your chair to show you are paying attention. Do not slouch, fidget, or chew gum, and try to avoid distracting behavior such as playing with your hair or a pen. Your nonverbal communication tells the employer as much about you as your verbal communication. Show interest and enthusiasm!

Next Five minutes

Your turn to ask questions: Ask 3-4 articulate, intelligent questions. Your questions should demonstrate that you have done your "homework" on the company. Your questions should convey enthusiasm and sincere interest in the position. Do not mention salary in an interview unless the employer does.

Last Five minutes

Conclusion: Be sure to ask for the interviewer's business card, e-mail address and phone number so you can send a thank you note via email within 24 hours. You may ask when they will be making their decision. Be sure to thank them for their time before leaving, and take this chance to re-emphasize your interest in the position.



Interviewing Tips

- **Pre-Interview: Alert family members or roommates that you are job hunting.** Make sure they take accurate and detailed phone messages from employers for you. If you use an answering machine or voice mail, your message must be simple, polite, and professional (no silly messages or music in the background. Keep your message simple, for example, "You have reached Jane Doe. Please leave a message."). Be sure your email address is professional, generally just your first and last name; be sure to check your email daily. Remember this is your chance to make a first impression!
- If you are selected to interview for a position, employers will contact you by phone or email. Be sure to

return all phone calls and emails within 24 hours.

- Be punctual for all interviews with employers. Immediately cancel or reschedule any appointments you are unable to make. Plan to be at your interview 10-15 minutes early.
- Remember to **bring some extra copies of your resume**. You may also be asked to bring references.
- **Analyze your background** so you know what you have to offer - be prepared to express your qualifications for the position in a clear and organized manner.
- **Dress professionally** - even if company policy dictates that you can wear jeans on a daily basis, your interview attire should be professional.
- **Pay attention and show enthusiasm** - Turn off your cell phone.
- **Use examples**. Keep the conversation lively and interesting by using examples to illustrate your points.
- **Think of the interview as a two-way conversation**: they are trying to gather information about you, but you are also trying to gather information about the company.
- If you have **work samples or a portfolio**, you may want to consider taking it to the interview to show what you can do. However, play it by ear, and assess if the time is right for you to share your work with them.
- **The Weakness Question**- interviewers do not want to hear why they should not hire you. They might ask negative questions -- for example, "What is your greatest weakness?" -- to see how you can turn it into a positive. Example: "My greatest weakness is that I sometimes get over-involved in many activities. Obviously, I have some time conflicts, but by using my planner to keep track of all my activities, I am able to juggle them." Offer a weakness not directly related to your field and describe what you are doing to correct it. Try to focus on a skill or technical ability. Avoid talking about personality characteristics.
- **Don't be afraid of silence** - those pauses in the interview can seem to be extremely long, typically longer to you than to the interviewer. Don't be afraid to take a second and formulate your answers. It's much better to take an extra few seconds and present a well-thought-out answer, than to just say the very first thing that comes to mind
- **Ask intelligent questions** - you'll be given an opportunity to ask the employer questions about the organization. Make sure you have a mental list ready.
- **You do not have to accept or reject a job on the spot**. You can say, "I'm delighted you made me this offer. I really appreciate it. Would it be possible for me to have a little time to think it over? When can I get back to you with my decision?"
- If the employer asks when you can start, this is not necessarily a job offer. It is frequently just one of the many questions asked in a routine interview to learn more about you and your availability.

- **Follow up on the interview** - write down the name, address, and title of the interviewer(s) (or get their business cards if they have them), and within 24 hours send them a thank you note by email. It's a great way to ensure that they remember you!



Sample Interview Questions

Personal

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. How would you describe yourself?
3. Why do you want to work for our company?
4. Describe your ideal job.
5. What can you offer us?
6. What do you consider to be your greatest strength?
7. Can you name some weaknesses?
8. Define success. Failure.
9. Of which three accomplishments are you most proud?

10. Who are your role models? Why?
11. How does your college education or work experience relate to this job?
12. What motivates you most in a job?
13. Have you ever had difficulty getting along with a former professor/supervisor/co-worker and how did you handle it?
14. Describe your leadership skills. Give an example of a time in which you held a leadership position.
15. Why should we hire you, rather than another candidate?
16. What do you know about our organization?
17. Where do you plan to be in five years? Ten years?
18. Do you plan to return to school for further education?
19. What are your hobbies? What do you do in your spare time?
20. What does it take to be successful in a company like ours?
21. If you were hiring someone for this position, what would you look for?

Education

22. Why did you choose your major?
23. Why did you choose to attend your college?
24. In which campus activities do you participate?
25. Which classes in your major did you like best? Least? Why?
26. Which elective classes did you like best? Least? Why?
27. If you were to start over, what would you change about your education?
28. Do your grades accurately reflect your ability? Why or why not?
29. Were you financially responsible for any portion of your college education?
30. What changes would you make in your college or university?

Experience

31. What job-related skills have you developed?
32. Did you work while going to school? In which positions? Describe what you did at each position and what you accomplished. What did you learn from these work experiences?
33. What did you enjoy most about your last employment? Least?
34. Have you ever quit a job? Why?
35. Give an example of a situation in which you provided a solution to an employer.
36. Give an example of a time in which you worked under deadline pressure.
37. Have you ever done any volunteer work? What kind?
38. How do you think a former supervisor would describe your work?

Career Goals

39. Do you prefer to work under supervision, or on your own? What kind of boss do you prefer?
40. Would you be successful working with a team? Can you give an example of a time in which you worked with a team?
41. What other types of positions are you considering?
42. Are you able to work on several assignments at once?
43. How do you feel about working overtime?
44. How do you plan to achieve your career goals?
45. What do you think is an important recent trend in our industry?



Sample Interview Questions You Can Ask Employers

Prepare Questions In Advance

You should have a list of questions prepared for this crucial part of the interview. Every question you ask should demonstrate your interest and confirm your knowledge of the organization. It is perfectly permissible to ask for clarification of information provided in recruiting literature, annual reports, and the like, but do not give the interviewer the impression you have not done your homework prior to the interview. Likewise, if the interviewer appears pressed for time, do not prolong the interview by trying to fit in all of your questions. There will probably be time to ask further questions during subsequent interviews and before you will need to respond to an offer of employment. Do NOT ask a question which has already been answered during the course of the interview.

Questions Worth Asking:

1. What kinds of assignments might I expect the first six months on the job?
2. What characteristics do the achievers in this company seem to share?
3. Could you tell me more about your training program for new employees?
4. What are the next steps from here? (This question is used at the end of an interview if the interviewer has not indicated what will happen next).
5. What qualities are you looking for in your new hires?
6. How often and by whom are performance reviews given?
7. In what ways is a career with your company better than one with your competitors?

