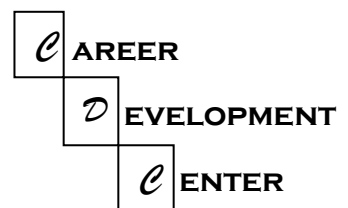


# INTERVIEWING GUIDE

First Interviews  
Second Interviews  
Informational Interviews



DREAM IT. PLAN IT. LIVE IT.

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# The Interview Process

The interview is one of several sales tools you will use in the job search process. Some consider it to be the most important part. In many instances, it is your only chance to make a favorable impression upon an employer and it could very well be the deciding factor as to whether or not you are offered employment.

## PURPOSE

The interview serves four main purposes.

- It gives the employer an opportunity to learn about you, your qualifications and experience, and to decide if you are the best person for the job.
- It gives you, the job seeker, a chance to learn about the company, the position, its duties and expectations, and to convince the employer that you are the right person for their organization.
- It's a screening tool for future interviews.
- It's the point where hiring decisions are made.

## PHASES

The interviewing process can be intimidating if you don't know what to expect. While each interview will differ, all interviews include three phases: Before, During and After.

### *Phase #1: Before*

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Just like other important tasks, preparing for an interview is very essential to getting hired, yet it is often neglected. Here are some suggestions to help you get ready for your interview.

1. *Know yourself* - Think about how your interests, skills, education, experience, and values fit in with the type of organization and position for which you are being interviewed.
2. *Know the employer* – Researching the company, the interviewer, and the position enables you to ask well informed questions. It is important for you to know what type of business the company engages in, the working conditions, duties and salary range of the desired position, the mission, goals and vision of the company, and the full name and title of your interviewer.

There are many resources you can use to aid you in your research. Most employers publish literature, like annual reports, brochures and fact sheets, as well as, a website that describes their organization and list employment opportunities. Either way, it's important for you to secure information on an employer before you interview. Doing so will help you to target your skills and compatibility, as well as, decrease your level of anxiety.

3. *Appearance* – Be sure to get a good nights rest before the interview. When getting dressed, your appearance should be clean and neat. Experts recommend that you dress like you think your interviewer would dress, but cleaner. Make sure your hair is neat, teeth and nails are clean, breath is fresh, clothes are wrinkle free, and shoes are polished. Refrain from wearing loud colors, low cut blouses, short skirts, clanging jewelry, excessive make-up and cologne.

4. *Timing* – Time is always a major factor in getting prepared for an interview; therefore, it is important to know the exact time and location of your interview, the route you plan to take, and how long it will take for you to arrive. If you are unsure about these things, you may want to make a trial run a few days prior to your scheduled interview. The day of the interview, you should arrive 15 minutes early. This allows you time to slip into the

restroom to freshen up, look yourself over, and correct any grooming problems that your travel may have caused.

5. *Other Reminders* – Always go to interviews alone. You should leave children, buddies, significant others and spouses at home. Carry with you at least two ink pens and a notepad. Take money for parking and lunch. Take copies of your resume, military records, reference letters, and any source of identification.

### ***Phase #2: During*** \_\_\_\_\_

The typical interview will last 45 minutes, although some may be longer. A typical structure includes the greeting or opening, small talk, questions and answers, and the closing.

#### *The Opening*

The typical interview starts before you even get into the inner sanctum. It begins in the outer office, so it is important that you are pleasant and courteous to everyone you meet. While waiting for your interviewer to arrive, remember to remain relaxed. Occupy your mind by looking over your resume, notes and any company literature. Refrain from smoking, chewing gum, slouching in your seat, fidgeting with your nails, hair, lipstick, tie or clothes.

#### *Small Talk*

The minute you are identified by the interviewer, you are being evaluated. You are expected to shake the interviewer's hand upon being introduced, so don't be afraid to extend your hand first... this shows assertiveness. Always refer to the interviewer by their name, smile and look them straight in the eyes. For example, "Hello Dr. Charles, I am Patrice Jones." You are now face to face with your interviewer who is in the position to notice your posture, your dress, any annoying mannerisms, and your nervousness. Remain standing until you are directed where to sit and where you may be able to hang your coat. While sitting, keep a good posture, place your feet firmly on the floor and put your notepad in your lap and your belongings on the floor next to your chair.

Many interviewers will begin the interview with some small talk. Topics range from the weather to sports and will rarely focus on anything that brings out your skills. Nonetheless, you are still being evaluated. Interviewers are trained to evaluate candidates on many different points. They may be judging how well you communicate on an informal basis. This means you must do more than just smile and nod.

#### *Questions and Answers*

The main part of the interview starts when the interviewer begins discussing the organization. As the interviewer turns to talk about your qualifications, be prepared to engage in a back and forth conversation for about 15 to 30 minutes. Your interviewer will lead the conversation, so listen carefully and answer all questions in a brief, concise manner. Relate all of your answers directly to the job and your skills and remember to mention examples and results of your past works. Be sure to use standard English and avoid using slang and expressions such as, "uh," "you know," "like," and etc. Speak in a clear, strong tone. Not too fast and not too slow.

When the interviewer asks, "Now do you have any questions?" it's important to have a few ready. Your questions should elicit positive responses from the employer and should bring out your interest in and knowledge of the organization. Don't be afraid to ask questions for this shows responsibility and alertness. Well-thought-out and prepared questions show the employer that you are serious about the organization and that you've done your homework. Most employers find this impressive.

### *The Closing*

The conclusion of the interview usually lasts five minutes and is very important. During this time the interviewer is assessing your overall performance. It is important to remain enthusiastic and courteous. Often the conclusion of the interview is indicated when the interviewer begins to rustle papers, looks at his/her watch, closes or packs up his/her belongings, stands up or simply states that he/she has all the information needed. When any of these things occur, you should briefly reiterate your interest in the position, stand, shake the interviewer's hand and thank them by name for their time and for the opportunity to interview for the job. Smile and say goodbye.

### ***Phase #3: After*** \_\_\_\_\_

You've walked out of the door and the interview is now over, right? WRONG!!! You now need to jot down any important notes about the job and you also need to follow-up on your interview by sending a thank you card, note or e-mail to the person or persons who interviewed you. A phone call is also a good way to follow up on your interview for it shows that you are truly interested in the position. After the interview you may also want to evaluate your interview experience. Ask yourself, what would you do differently? Where can you improve? What were your impressions of the company? What can you expect next? And are you still interested in the position?

## **In Summary**

Because of its importance, interviewing requires advance preparation. Only you will be able to positively affect the outcome. You must be able to compete successfully with the competition for the job you want. In order to do that, be certain you have considered the kind of job you want, why you want it, and how you qualify for it. You also must face reality: Is the job attainable?

## **Types of Interviews**

The interview is the last segment in the job search process. Employers use interview styles that assist in revealing those attributes of the candidate that are most essential for the job and most beneficial to the organization. Becoming familiar with different types of interviews will give you a chance to be a better prepared candidate.

Here are descriptions of the most common types of interviews:

### ***Exploratory / Informational***

Direct meetings set up with selected people to obtain “insider” information about an industry, occupation, organization, or training program. They are a method of career exploration and a way of discovering jobs that are not publicized. They are considered one of the best avenues for building and maintaining a professional network of contacts.

### ***Panel***

Two or more people interview you simultaneously, usually taking turns asking questions. Used by employers to get different opinions about the candidate.

### ***Group***

Takes place with other candidates seeking the same job. Used by employers to predict how well the candidates interact with others and test for communication skills. It can last from two hours to a day or longer and may include a group problem-solving exercise.

### ***Stress***

This interview intentionally creates and promotes discomfort. The purpose is to test the candidate to see how she/he reacts under pressure and in difficult situations.

### ***Behavioral***

Behavior-based interviews consist of questions that enable the interviewer to know how you previously reacted or behaved in certain types of situations. Candidates are asked to respond to questions that require examples of previous activities and behaviors. This format helps an employer to predict future performance based upon past experiences.

### ***Telephone***

Used as an initial screening method to determine if a full interview is warranted. Days and times are pre-arranged.

### ***Second***

Usually referred to as a “site visit” and is most often conducted by the first interviewer’s boss or someone else in management. The purpose of this interview is to see whether you fit in with the organization’s culture and if you really want to work for this employer.

### ***Meal***

This type of interview takes place over a meal to test the candidate’s ability to make conversation and use proper etiquette. It is more relaxed and it allows for more lengthy answers; however, be mindful that you are still being judged. Follow good restaurant etiquette, select foods that are easy to eat, never drink alcohol, and always keep focused on the conversation.

### ***Testing / Performance***

In this interview, the employer's purpose is to see how you handle yourself, so you will be asked to perform tasks associated with a job in a limited amount of time. Remember to ask for clear directions, follow them exactly, proofread your answers and do your best.

### ***Cyber***

This type of interview takes about 30 minutes to complete. One variation is for the computer to ask you a series of questions about your background, work history, and career goals. A second variation is a toll-free call requiring you to answer up to 25 questions on a push-button phone.

### ***Screening***

The initial interview designed to narrow the pool of acceptable candidates. This style is often conducted by a member of the Human Resources department to determine if the candidate should be referred to the next step in the process.

### ***Job Fair***

This is a brief opportunity to meet with the prospective employer and get information about the company.

### ***Situation***

Several situations are described and the candidate is asked to respond to them. Used by employers to determine decision making skills and judgment.

### ***Fly-In / On-Site***

When seeking employment that would require you to relocate, most employers will pay for you to travel to visit them for what is referred to as the on-site interview. Know in advance who is paying and when the bills will be paid. Ask the company to make the reservations. Pack your interview outfit and all of your interview materials in a carry-on bag. When you arrive, show interest in the city, as well as the position. Just because the employer paid for you to fly in, never arrive over confident, never assume the job is yours, and never carry on like the interview is an expense-paid vacation.

## **Researching Your Potential Employer**

There are many important areas of preparation prior to the interview. One of the most important steps involves researching the company.

It's wise to begin researching weeks before your interview. You may find an overwhelming amount of information and you must be able to sort out the pertinent information and retain key facts. Additionally, it may be difficult to find some information and some digging will be required.

If you are interviewing with a number of different employers, it's smart to keep a file on each one. As you do more research, the file will help you keep facts organized, making the preparation easier.

### ***Facts to Know About the Organization***

Size of organization / Number of employees

Financial status / Growth outlook / Annual sales growth for past five years

Mission statement / Goals / Vision

Products / Services / Clients

Potential new products / Services

Who are the competitors?

Is the company public or private? Is the company local, national and/or international?

Characteristics of top management and their backgrounds

Public image / Reputation in the industry

How does it rank in the industry?

Parent companies / Subsidiaries

Regional lifestyle / Cost of living where the company is located

Geographical location of corporate headquarters / smaller offices

Organizational structure

History of the organization

Recent significant accomplishments / Changes



### ***Facts to Know about the Position***

Details and functional description of the position

Name and correct spelling of the interviewer

Training program outline

Hiring Process (timing, evaluation criteria)

Benefits (health, vacation, sick, retirement, life insurance)

Skills / qualifications needed for the job

Typical career / Promotional paths

Starting salaries / Compensation forms

Travel / Relocation expectations and policies



### ***Information Sources Available***

Researching a company can be done through a variety of sources.

Annual report

Employment brochure

Company website

Chamber of Commerce

Library

College's Career Center

Trade publications

Friends

Faculty

Finance and business section of local newspaper

Business / industry directories

## Questions Asked By Employers

Tell me about yourself.

Why do you want to work for our organization?

Describe your ideal job.

What can you offer us?

What do you consider to be your greatest strengths?

What do you consider to be your greatest weakness?

Define success. Define failure.

Have you ever had any failures? What did you learn from them?

Name three accomplishments you are most proud of?

Who are your role models? Why?

How does your college education or work experience relate to this position?

What motivates you most in a job?

Have you ever had difficulty getting along with a former professor / supervisor / co-worker and how did you handle it?

Why should we hire you?

What do you know about our organization?

Where do you want to be in five years? Ten years?

Why did you choose your major?

Why did you choose to attend your college or university?

In which campus activities did you participate? Why?

What did you enjoy most about your last employment? What did you enjoy the least?

Have you ever quit a job? Why?

Give an example of a situation in which you provided a solution to an employer.

Give an example of a time in which you worked under deadline pressure.



How do you think a former supervisor would describe your work?

How did you learn about us?

How many employers have you worked for during the last five years?

You seem to switch jobs a lot. Why?

Why are you looking to leave your current employer?

Do you plan to continue your education?

Give an example of any major problem you faced and how you solved it.

In your lifetime, what has been your greatest accomplishment? What did you learn from it?

What was your greatest failure? What did you learn from it?

Are you at your best when working alone or in a group?

Would you rather be in charge of a project or work as part of the team? Why?

What would you do if one supervisor told you to do something now and another supervisor told you to do it later?

What kind of salary are you looking for today?

What would your current employer say about you?

Are you willing to travel?

Will you relocate?

Have you ever been fired from a job? Why?

Do you have any questions for me?

What two or three things are most important to you in your job?

## What the Interviewer is Seeking

**Interviewer:** Tell me about yourself.

**You:** Remember, this is a job interview, not a psychological or personal interview. The interviewer is interested in the information about you that relates to your qualifications for employment, such as education, work experiences and extracurricular activities.

**Interviewer:** Why do you want to work for our company / organization?

**You:** Not having an answer is a good way to get crossed off the candidate list, and is a common pet peeve on interviewers. Research the employer before your interview. Attempt to find out about the organization's products, locations, clients, philosophy, goals, previous growth record and growth plans, how they value employees and customers, etc.

**Interviewer:** What do you expect to be doing five years from now? Ten years from now?

**You:** The interviewer is looking for evidence of career goals and ambitions rather than specific descriptions. The interviewer wants to see your thought process and the criteria that are important to you. Your answer will tell the interviewer whether you are truly interested in the company and the position or if you are seeking this position for a temporary fix.

**Interviewer:** Why should I hire you?

**You:** Stress what you have to offer the employer, not how nice it would be to work there or what you want from the employer.

## **Questions You Should Ask Employers**

What are you looking for in the person you will hire for the position?

How will I be trained or introduced to the job?

How is this job important to the company – how does it contribute?

What are the department's goals for the year?

How many people work in your department? How many people work for the company?

Who are the people I'd be working with and what do they do?

How would I get feedback on my performance?

If hired, who would I report to?

How does the company promote professional growth?

How often are performance reviews given?

Are salary adjustments geared to the cost of living or job performance?

What type of growth do you see for the organization in the next five years?

What do you look for in people that you promote?

Is this a new position or am I replacing someone?

What are the biggest challenges of the job?

What do you like best about your job / company?

What qualities are you looking for in the candidate who fills this position?

What skills are especially important for someone in this position?

Is there a lot of team / project work?

Where does this position fit into the organizational structure?

How much travel, if any, is involved in this position?

What are the challenges facing this company?

What is the next course of action?

When should I expect to hear from you or should I contact you?

## Questions Not to Ask Employers

Not only should you know what questions to ask during the interview, but it is important to know what questions not to ask. You don't want to alienate the interviewer by putting him or her on the defensive.

Avoid the following areas:



1. Avoid asking questions that are answered in the company's annual report, employment brochure or on their website. Interviewers are familiar enough with their own information to recognize when you haven't done your homework. If some information in the literature is not clear to you, by all means ask for clarification.
2. Don't bring up salary or benefits in the initial interview. Most companies are very competitive and will offer similar salaries and benefits. The interviewer may choose to bring up the information, but you should not initiate the topic.
3. Avoid asking any personal questions or questions that will put the interviewer on the defensive. This includes questions such as the interviewer's educational background, marital status, past work experience and so on.
4. Don't ask questions that have already been answered during the interview. If you have prepared a list of questions and some of them have been addressed during the interview, do not repeat them unless you need clarification.

## **Illegal Interview Questions**

(Source: University of Wisconsin Eau Claire Career Services Website)

### ***What is an Illegal Interview Question?***

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 makes discrimination on the basis of national origin, citizenship, age, marital status, disabilities, arrest record, military discharges, or personal information (such as height and weight) illegal. Any question that asks a candidate to reveal information about his or her national origin, citizenship, age, marital status, disabilities, arrest record, military discharges, or personal information is a violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

### ***Which Questions ARE Still Legal?***

If employers can phrase questions so that they directly relate to specific occupational qualifications, then the questions may be legitimate ones. Employers may also still ask general questions. For example, an interviewer may NOT ask your age in an interview, but the interviewer may ask if you are over the age of 18 (if being over the age of 18 is a requirement of the job).

### ***What Should I do if I am asked an Illegal Question?***

If you are asked an illegal question during an interview, you have three basic alternatives.

#### 1. You can answer the question

By answering the question, you may actually help your chances of getting the job, particularly if you give the “right” answer. Doing so, however, may convey to the interviewer that you are not familiar with illegal questions?

#### 2. You can refuse to answer the question

You do have the right to not answer the illegal question. However, a flat refusal to answer may harm your chances of being hired for a position if the interviewer sees you as an uncooperative or stubborn person.

#### 3. You can examine the intent behind the question

When an interviewer asks an illegal question, they are often trying to find out information about you that is not directly related to the job. It is often easy to infer what the interviewer is really trying to find out from an illegal question. A simple compromise to the problem is to respond to the question as it may apply to the job. For example, if the interviewer asks “are you a US citizen?” you may respond “that question is in violation of the law, but yes, I am authorized to work in the United States.” This third choice shows the interviewer that you are both knowledgeable of the law and able to quickly compromise and solve problems.

#### 4. Other alternatives

You may feel more comfortable with one of these choices (which are just as valid as the first three) for responding to an illegal interview question:

- Ignore the question and move on
- Ask how the question relates to your qualifications or the requirements of the job
- Walk out

#### ***Online Resources about Illegal Interviewing Questions***

<http://www.usatoday.com/careers/resources/interviewillegal.htm>

<http://jobsearch.about.com/od/interviewsnetworking/a/illegalinterv.htm>

Whatever alternative you chose depends on your personal preference. If you are asked an illegal question and you would prefer not to work for a company that asks such questions, then do not be afraid to refuse to answer the question and tell the interviewer why. Pointing out illegal questions may persuade the interviewer not to ask them of other candidates in the future.



## Handling Illegal Questions

### *National Origin / Citizenship*

**Illegal:**

Are you a U.S. citizen?

Where were you / your parents born?

What is your native tongue?

Date when you, your parents or spouse acquired U.S. citizenship.

Where were you born?



**Legal:**

Are you authorized to work in the United States?

What languages do you read/speak/write fluently?

(This question is okay only if this ability is relevant to the performance of the job)

Statement by employer that if hired, you may be required to submit proof of authorization to work in the U.S.

### *Age*

**Illegal:**

How old are you?

When did you graduate?

What's your birth date?

Require you to submit a birth certificate, naturalization or baptism record.

Other questions that tend to identify applicants 40-64 years of age.

**Legal:**

Are you over 18 years of age?

Can you, after employment, submit a work permit if under age 18?

***Education***

**Illegal:**

Date last attended high school.

**Legal:**

Your academic, vocational or professional education; schools attended



***Marital Status / Family***

**Illegal:**

What's your marital status?

With whom do you live?

Do you plan to have a family? When?

How many kids do you have?

What are your child-care arrangements?

With whom do you reside?

Do you live with your parents?

May I have the name and address of a relative to be notified in case of accident or emergency?

What's your maiden name?

**Legal:**

Would you be willing to relocate if necessary?

Would you be able and willing to travel as needed for the job?  
(This question is okay if it is asked of all applicants for the job)

Would you be able and willing to work overtime as necessary?  
(This question is okay assuming it is asked of all applicants for the job.)

Please provide the names of your relatives already employed by this company.

Please provide the name and address of parent or guardian if you are a minor.

Please provide the name and address of a person to be notified in case of accident or emergency.

To help check prior employment, list any other names you used.



## ***Affiliations***

### **Illegal:**

What clubs or social organizations do you belong to?

Do you attend religious services /or/ a house of worship?

Applicant may not be told “This is a Catholic / Protestant / Jewish / atheist organization.



### **Legal:**

List any professional or trade groups or other organizations that you belong to that you consider relevant to your ability to perform this job.

## ***Military***

### **Illegal:**

If you've been in the military, were you honorably discharged?

### **Legal:**

In what branch of the Armed Forces did you serve?

What type of training or education did you receive in the military?



## ***Personal***

### **Illegal:**

How tall are you?

How much do you weigh?

(Questions about height & weight are not acceptable unless minimum standards are essential for the safe performance of the job.)

Requiring you to affix a photograph to the application form, or provide a photograph after the interview but before hiring. (This is okay for some industries like Acting or Modeling.)

### **Legal:**

Are you able to lift a 50-pound weight and carry it 100 yards, as that is part of the job?

Have you worked for this company under a different name?

Statement that photograph may be required after employment.

## ***Disabilities***

### **Illegal:**

Do you have any disabilities?

Please complete the following medical history...

Have you had any recent or past illnesses or operations? If yes, list them and give dates when these occurred.

What was the date of your last physical exam?

How's your family's health?

When did you lose your eyesight? How?

Do you need an accommodation to perform the job?  
(This question can be asked only after a job offer has been made.)

Questions asking if you have ever received workmen's compensation benefits.



### **Legal:**

Are you able to perform the essential functions of the job?  
(This question is okay if the interviewer has thoroughly described the job.)

Can you demonstrate how you would perform the following job-related functions?

Statement by employer that all job offers are contingent on passing a physical examination.

As part of the hiring process, after a job offer has been made, you will be required to undergo a medical exam. (Exam results must be kept strictly confidential, except medical / safety personnel may be informed if emergency medical treatment is required and supervisors may be informed about necessary job accommodations, based on exam results.)

## ***Arrest Record***

### **Illegal:**

Have you ever been arrested?



### **Legal:**

Have you ever been convicted of any crime? If so, when, where, and disposition of case?  
(The crime named should be reasonably related to the performance of the job in question.)

Have you ever been convicted of a crime under another name?

## Interview Tips

Before stepping into an interview, be sure to practice, practice, practice. To help with the interview process, keep the following rules in mind:

**Keep your answers brief and concise.** Unless asked to give more detail, limit your answers to two to three minutes per question.

**Include concrete, quantifiable data.** Refrain from talking in generalities. Include measurable information and provide details about specific accomplishments when discussing your strengths. Make sure you can back up your claims of previous success. Come to the interview prepared with specific examples, and actual data that clearly demonstrates your greatest accomplishments.

**Repeat your key strengths three times.** It's essential that you comfortably and confidently articulate your strengths. Explain how the strengths relate to the company's or department's goals and how they might benefit the potential employer.

**Prepare five or more success stories.** Make a list of your skills and key assets. Then reflect on past jobs and pick out one or two instances when you used those skills successfully.

**Put yourself on their team.** Ally yourself with the prospective employer by using the employer's name and products or services. For example, "As a member of \_\_\_\_\_, I would carefully analyze the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_." Show that you are thinking like a member of the team and will fit in with the existing environment. Your research will help you in this area.

**Image is often as important as content.** Always dress appropriately. You will be judged the second you walk in the door, so make sure your first impression is a good one. The job interview is not the time to make a fashion statement - your goal should be to look professional. What you look like and how you say something are just as important as what you say.

**Display a great personality.** You need to show your high energy and passion, especially when interviewing for a sales role. Answer questions clearly and concisely, and be confident but not cocky. The person interviewing you will be picturing you in front of their clients and determining if they feel you are the right choice to be the face of their company and represent their brand.

**Ask questions.** The types of questions you ask and the way you ask them can make a tremendous impression on the interviewer. For this part of the interview, you should have a list of questions already prepared. If you don't have any questions prepared and you try to cover your mistake by asking a spur-of-the-moment question, chances are you have damaged your chances for a successful interview. Every question you ask should demonstrate your interest and confirm your knowledge of the organization. Don't ask questions just for the sake of asking questions – make sure it is information that you need.

**Maintain a conversational flow.** Use feedback questions at the end of your answers and use body language and voice intonation to create a conversational interchange between you and the interviewer.

**Research the company, product lines and competitors.** Simply being informed about an employer does not guarantee a successful interview unless you thoroughly research the company. Researching the company helps you to answer questions intelligently and to determine whether your goals will fit the promotional structures defined by that employer.

**Keep an interview journal.** As soon as possible, write a brief summary of what happened. Note any follow-up action you should take and put it in your calendar.

## How to Ace Your Job Interview Checklist

### Before

Done	Task
	Do you know exactly what you have to offer? Skills, qualifications, and abilities.
	Do you know the key points you want to emphasize? Accomplishments and goals.
	Do you know why you want the job? Can you say why you want it clearly?
	Have you researched the company? History, products, services, size, structure, etc.
	Have you researched the position? Qualifications, career paths, duties, and salary.
	Have you rehearsed answers to possible questions?
	Have you identified reasons why the company should hire you; skills and experiences you bring to the position; your strengths; and your weaknesses?
	Have you created a list of intelligent questions you want to ask the interviewer?
	Do you have extra copies of your resume and references?
	Do you have a pen and paper?
	Is your outfit appropriate and pressed?
	Are your shoes polished?
	Is your hair trimmed and styled in a professional manner?
	Do you have directions to the interview?
	Do you know where to park?
	Do you have money for tolls, parking, lunch, etc?

### After

Done	Task
	Did you send a thank you card to everyone who participated in your interview?
	Did you jot down notes about the position, company, people you'd work with, etc?
	Have you considered what you would do differently for your next interview?
	Are you still interested in this position? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

## Dressing for an Interview

The first impression you make on a potential employer is the most important one. The first judgment a recruiter makes is going to be based on how you look and what you are wearing. The candidate dressed in a suit and tie or a suit and stockings is going to make a much better impression than the candidate dressed in jeans and a t-shirt. That's why it's always important to dress professionally for an interview. You'll want that first impression to be not just a good one...but, a GREAT one.

### **MEN'S INTERVIEW ATTIRE**

#### **SUIT**

- Suit (solid color / pinstripe -navy, black, or dark grey)
- Jacket sleeves should end at your wrists
- Pants should be the appropriate length (not too long or too short)

#### **SHIRT & TIE**

- White, long-sleeved, button-down dress shirt
- Shirt sleeves should touch your wrists
- Do not roll up your sleeves
- Make sure it fits comfortably around your neck
- Be sure to wear an undershirt to control perspiration

#### **SHOES, SOCKS & ACCESSORIES**

- Belt to match color of shoes
- Silk tie that matches the suit color
- Do not wear ties with pictures of animal characters
- Dark, plain socks
- Socks should cover calves
- Conservative, polished dress leather shoes
- No sneakers, flip flops or boots
- No visible body piercing
- Remove all jewelry, including earrings
- Portfolio or briefcase

#### **HAIR, PIERCINGS & TATTOOS**

- Neatly trimmed beard or mustache
- Professional, well-groomed hairstyle
- Pull back long hair and long dreads
- Limit the aftershave or cologne
- Neatly trimmed nails
- Cover tattoos
- Well brushed teeth and fresh breath
- No gum or candy

### **WOMEN'S INTERVIEW ATTIRE**

#### **SUIT**

- Suit (navy, black, or dark grey) OR
- Blazer with a blouse and skirt. Always wear a jacket
- The suit skirt length should be below the knee
- No night club attire
- No dress unless accented with a jacket
- Avoid "loud" patterns
- Pockets, darts, pleats, etc must lay flat

#### **BLOUSE**

- Coordinated cotton or silk blouse
- White or light colored
- No sleeveless, sheer or low cut blouses

#### **SHOES, STOCKINGS & ACCESSORIES**

- Conservative, neutral colored pantyhose
- Low-heeled, comfortable dress shoes
- No sneakers, flip flops or open-toed sandals
- Limited jewelry
- No dangling earrings or arms full of bracelets
- No visible body piercing beyond ear piercings
- Portfolio or briefcase rather than a purse

#### **HAIR, PIERCINGS & TATTOOS**

- Professional, well-groomed hairstyle
- Pull back very long hair and long dreads
- Light make-up and perfume
- Neatly manicured and clean nails
- Use neutral nail polish
- Cover tattoos
- Well brushed teeth and fresh breath
- No gum or candy

# **INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS**

Informational interviewing is a formal way to gather first hand information about a specific major, job or career field. It is an interview that YOU initiate and YOU ask the questions.

Informational Interviews can help you to:

- Narrow your options
- Discover occupations you never knew existed
- Prepare for a particular career
- Gain experience and self confidence in interviewing with professionals
- Discover personality types that tend to enjoy and succeed in certain career fields
- Give you a more accurate view of the job market
- Develop realistic expectations about employment in certain fields
- Expand your professional network with others in your field of interest.

## **GETTING STARTED**

### ***Identify an Occupation***

Identify one or more occupations you would like to investigate and read all about them before the interview. Decide what information you would like to obtain about the occupation/industry and prepare a list of questions that you would like to have answered. It is also a good idea to find out as much information as you can about each company / organization before setting up an interview.

### ***Identify People to Interview***

There's no one in the world who you can't try contacting. Start with lists of people you already know: friends, fellow students, present or former co-workers, supervisors, neighbors, etc. To find a working professional, go to your college career center or alumni office and ask for a list of people who are working in the field that interest you. Locate alumni, people you've read about, or people your parents know. Professional organizations, the yellow pages, organizational directories, and public speakers are also good resources. You may also call an organization and ask for the name of the person by job title.

### ***Do Some Research Before the Interview***

For an informational interview to be truly effective, you can't just go into it blindly. You should be prepared. Research the organization, person you'll be speaking with, product produced by the organization, etc. The more you know, the better you'll be able to formulate questions pertaining to the organization and job. The more knowledge you have, the more confident you will feel about your ability to communicate effectively. And if



you are informed about the company, you'll be able to ask more intelligent and relevant questions. You'll respond thoughtfully to information and any questions the interviewee might put to you. You won't ask questions that could easily have been answered by doing your homework.

Ask yourself what it is you want to know and then figure out who has an investment in knowing that sort of information. If you have to, write to organizations for brochures and pamphlets for additional information and use the college's library and career center.

## **SCHEDULING THE INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW**

There are three ways to contact the interviewee: by telephone, letter / email or in person. You can also try to have someone who knows the interviewee make the appointment for you.

### ***By Letter/Email***

An introductory letter, written much like a cover letter without the job pitch, is a great way to get your name out there. Although an introductory letter should be typed, neat printing is acceptable. Your letter should include:

- A brief introduction about yourself;
- Why you are writing to this individual;
- A brief statement of your interests or experiences in the person's field, organization or location;
- Why you would like to converse. Be straightforward; tell him/her you are asking for information and advice.
- The last paragraph of the letter should always include a sentence about how and when you will contact this person again.

Make sure to follow up the letter as you said! Usually this follow-up involves a phone call to set up a phone or face to face appointment. Never expect the person to phone you. If you have difficulties contacting the person, ask the receptionist for a convenient time to phone again. Finally, proofread all correspondence and save copies!

### ***In Person or By Phone***

People who grant informational interviews are generally willing to share 20-30 minutes of their time to explain their expertise in their field. Please remember to be flexible in your scheduling, as these volunteer interviewees may have prior commitments. If your prospective interviewee seems too busy to talk to you, ask a convenient time when you could call back to discuss scheduling an appointment. Although there are many techniques to requesting the informational interview, the following are good approaches:

1. "Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_. I'm conducting career research in your field. I would like to meet and talk with you for about 30 minutes so that I can find out more about your field of expertise."
2. "Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm a student at \_\_\_\_\_ College. I got your name from \_\_\_\_\_. You're in a line of work that I'm interested in, and I was hoping that you could help me gain insights into the profession. I'm sure that my questions could be answered in a 20-30-minute informational interview."

If you prefer to arrange an appointment in person and cannot get past the front desk, treat receptionists as resources. They hold the key to getting inside the unit or section of that organization if you do not already have an inside contact or referral. Ask them some of your questions. You will usually get good information. Receptionists and other support staff know much more about their company than we often realize. They know

how it works, the names of key people, job requirements, etc. It is important that they understand what you want. If you ask them something that they feel could be more fully answered by someone else, they will usually give you a referral. You can use your own creativity, but the most important thing is to emphasize that you are simply trying to get first-hand information, and whatever they share with you will be appreciated.

Most of the time, your prospective interviewee will be more than willing to take 20-30 minutes to answer your questions. Sometimes the person will want to talk over the phone, but often he or she will invite you to his or her workplace. When you can, choose that the interview be at their workplace because you'll learn more and make a stronger connection with the person.

## **PHASES OF THE INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW**

### ***BEFORE***

The day before the interview, call to confirm your appointment with the contact person. If you have questions regarding the location of the contact's office, this is the time to ask. Plan to arrive 10 minutes early for your interview.

Because 90 percent of all jobs are never advertised, you will uncover job openings that never make it to the newspaper or employment office. Thus, be prepared to make a good impression and to be remembered by the employer. Dress as you would for a regular job interview.

### ***DURING***

**Carry a small notebook and pen.** Pretend you are a reporter. You don't need to write down everything, but there may be names, phone numbers or other information that you may want to remember.

**Bring a copy of your resume along with you.** Try to find out about specific characteristics or qualifications that employers seek when hiring. If you feel comfortable doing so, you may ask the person you are interviewing to critique your resume.

You have arrived and are greeted by the individual at the front desk. When the interviewee comes out to meet you, **introduce yourself.** Thank your contact for his or her willingness to meet with you, and re-emphasize that you are there to learn and gather information about his or her career field. Use an informal dialogue during the interview.

**Be polite and professional.** Have good eye contact and posture. Be positive in your remarks, and reflect a good sense of humor.

**Be enthusiastic and show interest.** Employ an informal dialogue during the interview. Be direct and concise with your questions and answers and do not ramble. Refer to your list of prepared questions; stay on track, but allow for spontaneous discussion.

**Share something about yourself,** but do not dominate the interview by talking about yourself. You are there to get the information that will help you learn the most about the occupational field so that you can be prepared to compete for a job. Be aware, however, that many informational interviews have turned into actual employment interviews. Don't count on it, but it does sometimes happen. If it seems that you are being interviewed for a

specific job, clarify with the employer so you can make sure you emphasize your functional/ transferable skills and why you feel they relate to this job.

**Never Ask for a Job.** Don't mix informational interviewing with job seeking. Employers will grant informational interviews when they firmly trust that you will not hit them up for a job. The minute you begin trying to get a job, the employer will feel misled. If you discover a job that you do want to apply for during the interview, wait until the informational interview is over. The next day, call the employer and tell your contact that the informational interview not only confirmed your interest in the field, but also made you aware of a position that you would like to formally apply for.

Sometimes the interviewee may offer you an internship or job. Many people have conducted informational interviews and have done nothing but ask questions and yet have been offered employment. What do you do if they offer you an internship or job? If it sounds good, take it! Suddenly your life changes in an instant

The fact that you are seeking only information will help set you apart from the hundreds of others who are walking in asking for jobs and being told no. Approach the employer with the attitude that you are seeking career advice.

**Listening is half of the communication.** Besides being able to ask questions and convey a message to employers, you need to develop the skill of really listening to what they tell you. Be receptive and show that the information is important to you.

**Stay on track.** Ask only those questions that are appropriate and important to you. You will convey your motivation and interest to the employer by acknowledging that the information the interviewee is giving you is important.

**Build your network at the informational interview.** You have spent 20-30 minutes with this person, asking questions, getting advice and sharing a little about yourself. Thus begins your contact network. The person has taken time to share with you; in other words, he or she has invested time in you. Most people like their investments to pay off. Most people will feel good about your staying in contact with them. You do not have to call or write every week. Just keep your interviewee posted on your research.

The interviewee may not have a job for you but may know of other employers or people to which you may be referred. If possible, keep these people informed about your progress. If you have done your job well, they will be interested in your final choices. Ask for your contact's business card and exchange one of your own, if you have one.

**Ask for referrals.** People who are in the same kind of business usually know their competition. Before leaving, ask your contact to suggest names of others who might be helpful to you and ask permission to use your contact's name when contacting these new contacts.

## ***AFTER***

Be sure to send a thank-you card or letter within one to three days after the interview. This communication is an effective way to keep in touch and to be remembered by people. Let them know they were helpful and thank them for the time spent. As a nice touch, quote something that the resource person said back to them, word for word. Ask the person to keep you in mind if they come across any other information that may be helpful to you in your career research. Include your address and phone number under your signature.

**Record, Analyze, and Evaluate.** Immediately following the interview, record the information you gathered. For possible future reference, keep a list of all the people you have interviewed or plan to interview. Include the main things that you gained from each interview. This file will be a rich source of information as you conduct your occupational exploration. This activity alone can lead to your dream job or connect you to a mentor, because employers are very impressed by students who have the savvy to analyze the experience.

In evaluating the interview and making the best use of the acquired information, ask yourself the following questions:

- What did I learn from this interview (both positive and negative impressions)?
- Does the information I learned fit with my own interests, abilities, goals, values, etc.?
- What do I still need to know?
- What plan of action can I make?

## **In Summary**

Talking with people doesn't have to be a formal process or one you practice only when job hunting. Chat with people casually -- on a plane or bus, while waiting in lines, at social gatherings, etc. Since most people enjoy talking about their work, curiosity can open many doors.

## **Informational Interview Questions**

Here are some questions you can ask while conducting informational interviews.

How did you become interested in this field?

How did you obtain your current job?

Can you describe a typical day for you on the job?

How are you using the skills and knowledge that you acquired in your college major?

What are some important future trends that you see for your career field?

What are some things that employers look for in job applicants in your career field?

What do you like least/most about your job?

What can I do now to make myself more prepared for this field when I graduate?

What advice do you have for college students who are considering your career field?

What are some things that you have learned about the workplace that you didn't realize when you graduated from college?

What are some job search strategies that you would recommend for new college graduates?

What are some things that you look for in a potential employer that I should also consider?

Can you tell me about your most satisfying accomplishment?

What is a "typical" path in your career field?

How do employers in your field generally feel about liberal arts majors as candidates?

What professional associations, trade journals, and/or training experiences would be helpful for a new professional in your career field?

Does your company participate in internship programs? If yes, what can you tell me about them?

Would you be willing to be a contact for when I begin my internship or job search?

## **SECOND INTERVIEWS**

You've done it! You made it through the first interview with flying colors and you just got called to schedule a second interview. It's important to be aware that the company is seriously interested in you, or they would not have called. You are definitely in contention for the job! What happens next? How can you use a second interview as a means to get a job offer?

### **PURPOSE**

The second interview is usually the final step in obtaining a job offer. At this point, you probably have a 50% chance of receiving an offer. For an employer, the goal of a second interview is to determine if you have specific qualities they want, if you are a good fit in their organization, and to see how others in the organization respond to you. For you, the job seeker, a second interview allows you to view the facilities, meet employees of the organization, possibly see the community, and determine whether or not this is the organization where you want to work.

### **TYPES OF SECOND INTERVIEWS**

The majority of second interviews will fall into two categories – structured and unstructured.

#### ***Structured***

In this interview, the interviewers have specific criteria they use to assess you. For example: One person may ask questions to determine your work ethic, technical skills, or your sales ability. Another person may only ask you about your educational background and your work experience. The key to doing well in this type of interview is to identify the specific quality or skill that is being assessed and direct all your answers to information about that area.

#### ***Unstructured***

In this interview, the interviewer has to make a broad evaluation. You may get similar questions from all the interviewers. Treat each interviewer with equal importance. Answering the same question over and over again can become boring, but try not to let it show. For example: Why should I hire you? This question would be answered differently to different people. To your immediate supervisor, you would express your confidence that you have the skills to get the job done, as this person's goals would be focused on how efficiently you can do the job. However, the president of the organization may be looking at your potential for retention and advancement. The key to doing well in this type of interview is to identify the interviewer's goals and to answer their questions accordingly.

### **PHASES: BEFORE, DURING, AFTER**

#### ***Before***

**Obtain an Itinerary in Advance.** It's important to know the schedule of the day's activities, including names and titles of the interviewers. If possible, obtain biographical information about the person (s) who will be interviewing you. Some organizations post staff profiles on their website. This will give you the opportunity to think about the goals of the interviewers in relationship to their responsibilities.

**Review Your First Interview.** Review the notes from your first interview. What were the most important candidate qualifications? What goals did the employer want to meet? Did you have trouble answering any questions? Prepare your responses to address these issues / questions.

**Research the Employer for Relevant Information.** Ask the first round interviewer to send you any additional information that you should know about the job, the organization, the department you would work for, or anything else they think is important to review before your visit. Check the web for timely articles about the organization or industry.

**Prepare Questions.** Remember you are interviewing to see if this is the position you want, so this is the time to learn more about the organization. Here are some topics you may want to cover:

- Request a complete job description
- Find out who will supervise you
- Ask what you will be expected to accomplish in the first six months
- Ask about support for professional development
- Inquire about the performance appraisal system
- Find out how economic conditions have affected the organization
- Discuss salary and benefits

### *During*

Arrive 10-15 minutes early, dress professionally and be enthusiastic. Remember to take notes and always write down the names and titles of people with whom you speak and record important points.

Meals and informal social events are often part of a second interview. Remember, the meal is part of the interview and you are being evaluated so be sure to demonstrate good dining etiquette and conversational skills. Refer to the *Interviewing Over a Meal* tutorial for more information and tips.

Take time to observe the work environment and the kinds of people who work in the organization. Good observation will help you to get a feel for the corporate culture and be able to decide whether it is the type of environment where you would feel comfortable working.

Clarify the next step in the employer's decision making process and be sure to ask when you can expect to hear a decision. If you receive a verbal offer, ask for a written offer as well. Never accept a verbal offer on the spot. Instead, be prepared to give them a date by which you will inform them about your decision. For tips on decision-making refer to our *Salary Negotiation and Job Offers* tutorial.

### *After*

After the interview, send letters to every person whom you spoke with. Reiterate your interest in the job and stress positive qualities that you have to offer the organization. If you do not hear from the employer within the specified amount of time, call them. Be sure to talk with the person who arranged the interview and ask about the status of your candidacy.

## **OUT OF TOWN SECOND INTERVIEWS**

**Travel Arrangements.** Your travel plans can be handled in a number of ways. You may be asked to make your own arrangements or the organization may coordinate your travel arrangements. If you are arriving the day before your interview and staying at a hotel, ask the company what expenses are prepaid and what will be reimbursed. Make sure you have clear travel directions from your place of lodging to the organization and check on parking options if you are driving to the interview. If you rent a car, you will need your driver's license and major credit card. Some agencies have age restrictions, so call in advance to obtain this information.

**Expenses.** Take a major credit card to handle unexpected expenses and cash for incidentals (tips, cab, tolls, etc.). Large employers will reimburse you by mailing you a check. Smaller employers and government agencies often do not pay travel expenses. If the organization had not stated whether or not they will be paying your expenses, ask them in advance so you know what to expect. On your trip, keep an accurate record and receipts for all expenses (hotel, car rental, tolls, gas, tips, meals, taxis) to turn in to the employer for reimbursement and/or save as tax deductions.

### **SAMPLE ITINERARY**

#### ***Wednesday, March 10***

Arrive and Check in to Sheraton Hotel (Check in Confirmation #67819)	6:45pm
Dinner with Jr. & Sr. Team Associates	8:00pm-9:00pm

#### ***Thursday, March 11***

Breakfast with Junior Team Associates	8:00am-9:00am
Testing, HR Director	9:00am-10:30am
Vice President Marketing	10:30am-11:15am
Lunch (various departmental reps)	11:30am-12:30pm
Search Committee	12:30pm-1:30pm
Senior Team Associates	1:30pm-2:30pm
Marketing Director	2:30pm-3:30pm
Wrap Up with VP Marketing	3:30pm



## **SECOND INTERVIEW TIPS AND SUGGESTIONS**

*Adapted from Quintessential Careers: Do's and Don'ts for Second (and Subsequent) Job Interviews*

**Do** take a practice run to the location where you are having the interview -- or be sure you know exactly where it is and how long it takes to get there.

**Do** remember these three words: More, More, More. Compared to the first interview, a second interview will likely involve more preparation, more people, more questions, more intensity, and more pressure -- in addition to more likelihood that you will land the job.

**Don't** neglect to review your performance from your first interview. Note any questions or situations that caused you difficulty and plan how you will handle those aspects better in the second interview. Derive confidence from knowing that if you hadn't performed well in the first interview, you wouldn't have landed the second. Think about what made you shine in the first interview, and plan to do more of the same. Further, brainstorm new information you can bring into the second interview -- new accomplishments, new examples, new evidence of how much you know about the employer.

**Do** prepare -- even more than you did for the first interview. Presumably you researched the company before the first interview. Now it's time to delve even deeper into that research. If you are a college student, particularly seek out alumni from your school or sorority/fraternity who work for the employer. Also be sure you're up to date on developments in your field or industry by reviewing trade publications.

**Don't** be surprised if the second interview is actually a series of interviews -- in both individual and group/panel formats -- making for a long day. You may interview with managers, senior executives, department heads, and prospective team members. You may also get a tour of the workplace and be taken out to eat. For college students, this second-interview day may represent the first time the student has been interviewed in the employer's workplace. Plan to bring ample copies of your resume for all the people you may be meeting with.

**Do** try to find out in advance exactly what the agenda will be and whom you can expect to interview with. If you aren't given this information when the interview is set up, contact the assistant of the main person with whom you'll be meeting to see what you can find out. If you see that a workplace tour is not included on the agenda, ask if someone can show you around as time permits.

**Don't** forget the cardinal rule of panel interviews: As you respond to a question, maintain eye contact with everyone on the panel -- not just the panelist who asked the question.

**Do** get a good night's sleep the night before this potentially grueling day. Also look for opportunities to refresh yourself during the interview day. If there's a break in the action, splash some water on your face or take a brisk walk to rejuvenate. You might want to take along a pocket- or purse-sized snack in case there is no lunch break. Breath spray or a mini-bottle of mouthwash is also not a bad idea. Be careful not to run out of steam toward the end of the day. Maintain your energy, confidence, and enthusiasm.

**Do** be aware that you might be asked to complete psychometric tests dealing with such things as skills, intelligence, and personality. There's not a lot you can do to prepare for them -- but that good night's sleep will help.

**Don't** slack off with your interview attire. A second interview generally doesn't denote a more casual interview. Even if the workplace is casual, until you get the job, you will want to dress in your best interview attire unless you are told otherwise.

**Do** remember these three more words: Fit, Fit, and Fit. A major reason for the second interview is so the employer can see how well you fit in with the company culture. Put yourself inside the employer's head and realize that the interviewers at your second interview want to learn how well you will get along with other team members with whom you'll be interacting with every day. Deploy your very best interpersonal communication skills. Keep in mind the idea of showing your fit -- but remember that it's OK not to fit. If you aren't a good fit with the employer, you probably wouldn't be happy working there anyway. And remember, that this interview is also your opportunity to determine whether the company is a good fit for *you*. Think about whether you would accept if the employer extended an offer.

**Don't** neglect to talk to other people beyond those you are interviewing with. Chatting up -- not too excessively -- the receptionist and prospective co-workers serves the dual purpose of giving you a better feel for how much you'd like to be part of this workplace culture, as well as making a positive impression on as many people as possible.

**Do** expect to be asked some of the same questions you were asked in the first interview, but some new ones as well. Second-interview questions may delve more into your personality, or they may be more targeted toward specific technical skills -- or both. Plan to keep your responses fresh yet consistent for each person you meet with during the second-interview, and don't worry about repeating yourself since you will likely have a different audience every time you give roughly the same response. A good way to keep your answers fresh is to try to find out something about each interviewer and tailor your response specifically to that person. You can also vary your delivery to freshen your responses

**Do** expect behavioral questions, which are commonly asked in second interviews, even if they haven't been in asked in the first interview. Refer to our *Behavioral Interviewing* tutorial.

**Do** listen for clues that get at the heart of what the employer seeks in the person hired for this position and key into the needs, concerns, issues, and problems that you would be expected to handle.

**Do** be prepared with lots of questions to *ask*. You will likely have more opportunity to ask questions in the second interview and will be expected to make more sophisticated inquiries than you did in the first interview.

**Don't** be caught off guard if an interviewer raises the subject of salary and benefits. Be prepared to negotiate. You may also be asked about your willingness to travel and relocate, so be ready with your responses.

**Don't** necessarily give an answer immediately if the employer makes an offer. Ask for a few days to think about it.

**Do** try to collect the business card of everyone you meet with. Keep a small notepad handy to write down names in case there's someone from whom you can't get a card.

**Don't** forget to send a thank-you note or e-mail to everyone you meet with. That's right -- every single person. Aren't you glad you collected those business cards? You can write the same basic message to all, but vary it a bit in case they compare notes.

