

The Interview: Your opportunity to sell yourself to the employer and their opportunity to sell you on their organization.

What to know before the interview...

- Practice, practice, practice!
- What to wear
- What to say
- Do's and Don'ts

Practice, practice, practice!

Practice answering questions you think will be asked. Questions about your qualifications, what you can do for the organization, why you are the best candidate for the position. Think about the experiences you have had, what you have learned from those experiences and from your education. Practice answering these questions out loud. You should consider doing a mock interview before doing a real one. Contact the Career Center to schedule your mock interview.

What to wear

Dress professionally. This demonstrated that you are serious about the position and will be a good representative of their organization. Professional dress is a suit. For some industries, slacks and a button-up shirt or skirt and button-up shirt or sweater set for women is acceptable for interviews. Clothes should be neat, clean, pressed and fit correctly. Shoes should be polished (closed toe shoes), jewelry should be simple, make-up should not be too dramatic, and fragrance should not be too strong. Fingernails should be clean and trimmed, hair should be neat, and men should be clean shaven or at least make sure facial hair is neat and minimal.

An example of what a woman could wear: Gray pinstripe jacket with matching skirt, white button-up collared shirt. Tan color nylons, with closed-toe black polished shoes, pearl necklace and earrings.

An example of what a man could wear: Black suit jacket and matching pants. Light blue button-up shirt. Black socks and black polished shoes. Wrist watch, cleanly shaven face and clean combed hair.

What to say

When preparing for an interview, keep these three things in mind:

1. Know yourself

Be prepared to talk about yourself. What kind of education do you have? What are your strengths? Weaknesses? What kinds of work and volunteer experiences do you have? Include examples. What are your goals? Be prepared to talk about yourself in detail.

Have a response prepared if you are asked, "Tell me about yourself." Your answer should not be too personal. How long your parents have been married, how many siblings you have, where you went to elementary school, etc. Your answer also should not just be a repeat of your resume. It should be interesting, memorable, and it should "sell" you. An example is:

"I've really been interested in finance since I took a personal finance class my junior year in high school. I would stay after class and talk to the teacher to learn more. My parents got me a subscription to the Wall Street Journal the following Christmas. I would spend three hours reading it every week. I knew I wanted to major in Economics. During my time at Whitman College I learned a great deal inside and outside the classroom. I was a part of the Whitman Investment Company, we had a 20% return the year I was President. I had the opportunity to intern with Goldman Sachs last summer where I was really able to apply what I had learned in the classroom to a real world setting."

The strengths and weaknesses questions are sometimes difficult. The main thing to remember is not to just list them; it's all about how you explain it.

For each strength give an example of a skill they would be interested in:

"One of my greatest strengths is organization. When I became responsible for the archives for my sorority they were a mess! I bought accordion folders and boxes and separated everything by year and event within each accordion folder then by decade within each box. I labeled everything so that in the future someone would be able to easily access exactly what they needed."

For each weakness mention:

- How you realized it was a weakness
- Why it's important to change
- And what you're doing to remedy that weakness

"One of my weaknesses is procrastination. I realized this when I came to college and was constantly staying up all night before each paper was due. I knew this was important for me to fix because I was not doing my best work, and my grades were suffering, not to mention that I was tired and sick all the time! Each time a paper was assigned I began developing a timeline, which included when I will have decided my topic, finished my outline, and completed each section of my paper. This system has worked great for me; I can't say that I met my timeline exactly for each paper; I'm still working on that procrastination! But, it sure has been nice just doing final edits and going to bed by midnight before papers are due, rather than just getting started at that time."

2. Know the company

Be educated about what they do. Visit their website. Be current on the issues they are facing. Who the company president is and who their clients are. Some things to know about the company:

- Mission
- General start-up details
- Growth story
- Ownership/legal structure (public, private, corporation, non-profit)
- Names of the top executives
- Current trend of the organization
- Number of employees

Have questions prepared to ask them. What are the company's strengths and weaknesses compared to its competitors? What percentage of routine, detailed work will I encounter? What are the day-to-day responsibilities of this job?

3. Know the interview process

You should be aware of what to expect, how many people will you be meeting? Is it a panel interview? Will it include a meal? If so, brush up on your dining etiquette!

One very important part of the interview process is Behavioral Interviewing. This type of interviewing will give the employer an idea of how you've acted in the past, which is a good indication of how you will act in the future. The questions are situational, which involves 3 specific steps when answering:

Problem- Set the stage, what was the situation?

Action- What did you do to resolve the problem? What steps did you take?

Results- How did it turn out?

Examples:

Tell me about a time when you had to think outside the box?

Tell me about a time when you were on a team and one of the members wasn't carrying his or her weight?

Ways to prepare for a behavioral interview:

- Think about situations that demonstrate your strengths, favorable behaviors or actions. This can be from classes, work experience, internships, student clubs and organizations, as well as volunteer experience.
- What skills and situations will be important to this organization and the position for which you are applying?
- Be specific. You want to be clear and definite about your role. Do not give vague answers.
- Be honest. Do not exaggerate, embellish, or lie.

Interview Do's and Don'ts

- DO know the exact time and location of the interview.
- DO give yourself plenty of time to get there (grab coffee or read while you wait); arrive 10 minutes early.
- DO know the name and title (Mr., Ms., and Dr.) of your interviewer.
- DO offer a firm handshake at the beginning and end of the interview.
- DO maintain good eye contact with the interviewer (all interviewers in a panel interview situation).
- DO sit up straight; avoid slouching, twisting, and fidgeting.
- DON'T make negative comments about previous employers or professors.
- DON'T falsify your application or answers to any interview questions.
- DON'T be too casual; demonstrate your professionalism.