

## **Before the Interview**

### **Know Yourself**

**Reflect on answers to questions like these:**

- Why am I qualified to do this job? Be specific.
- What are my strengths? What are my weaknesses? What am I doing to resolve those weaknesses?
- What are my short-term and long-term goals?
- Which of my experiences will enhance my chance of success in this position?
- How do I relate to other people?
- What kind of relationship would I like to have with my supervisor?

In addition, consider how you would answer typical interview questions like [these](#).

### **Research the Employer**

**Review their website, especially their mission statement and history.** Take note of the staff structure and if necessary, learn the names and positions of key players. Look up the organization on sites like [LinkedIn](#), [Vault](#), and [Glassdoor](#) and brush up on industry news. If possible, talk with a current employee. Lastly, know your interviewer's name and role.

### **Prepare Thoughtful Questions**

Almost every interviewer will ask what you're curious about toward the end of the session. To avoid asking for information that's readily available online, do your research (see above) and ask about the organization's future instead. **Good questions address topics like industry changes, current challenges, procedures/operations, or the interviewer's history with the organization** ("Why do you like working here? Why do you think you're the person who has your job?" etc.)

### **Dress Appropriately**

**Consider the everyday dress code of the organization, then dress up one level.** For example, if the dress code is business casual (slacks/skirts and button shirts or blouses), then go for business formal (a suit). When in doubt, darker colors and more skin coverage are more professional. Make sure your clothes are spotless and wrinkle-free. Your hair should be neat, clean, and away from your face. Avoid wearing strong fragrances, as they may irritate your interviewer.

### **Punctuality**

Aim to arrive at least 10 minutes before your interview time. **It is preferable to seem "too early" than to dash in late.**

## During the Interview

### Behavior

**Be respectful to everyone you meet.** The interviewer may ask the receptionist or administrative assistant to observe you before or after the interview. Do not text, call or check email before your interview. **If you need to do something while waiting, review materials relevant to the position**, such as the job description or your resume.

### Body Language

Start with a firm handshake, then remember to make eye contact, smile, sit up straight and avoid fidgeting.

### Questions: Answering & Asking

When answering questions, **show what you mean rather than telling** by giving specific examples.

#### *STAR Method:*

**Situation:** Describe the specific situation from a past volunteer experience, job, leadership position, etc.

**Task:** What did you need to accomplish?

**Action:** Describe what you did to address the situation in relative detail. Focus on what you individually contributed even if it was a team effort.

**Result:** Describe the outcome of your actions, ideally in quantifiable terms. How did the project turn out? How did the process evolve? How many people attended or participated in the event? Etc.

#### *Other Tips*

**Focus your responses on career-relevant experiences.** If an interviewer says, "Tell me about yourself," you can include a sentence about your hometown and hobbies, but stick mainly to your professional narrative.

Choose your words carefully. **Even when asked about negative former jobs or unpalatable supervisors, refrain from complaining.** You may acknowledge challenges if necessary, but frame your answers in terms of what you learned.

**In addition to preparing questions about the organization, feel free ask follow-up questions throughout the interview.** Curiosity can indicate your genuine interest in the position. **At your first interview, it is not a good idea to ask about salary or benefits, but you can ask about the hiring process timeline.**

### Before You Leave

Finish with another solid handshake, say thank you and ask for business cards so you know how to address thank-you notes.

## **After the Interview**

### **Thank-You Notes**

**Whenever possible, mail a handwritten thank-you note.** You can often find company addresses online; write "% Name Here" on the first line to ensure your contact receives your card. If e-mail is your only option, write thoughtfully and consider including extra materials, such as another piece from your portfolio or a link to an article relevant to your discussion.

### **Updates**

If you find another job or your circumstances change, email or call the organization immediately. If you don't hear from the employer when the indicated notification timeline has passed, call and ask for an update.