

PREPARING FOR YOUR INTERVIEW

It is YOUR responsibility to give the recruiter as much information as possible regarding your education, previous work experience and skills. As you are answering questions, consider this an opportunity to “market” yourself. Talk about the transferable skills from your past work experience and education, and don’t sell yourself short! If your previous job was a clerk at a retail store and you are applying for a receptionist position, talk about the customer service skills you developed as a clerk and the responsibility you had with counting a cash drawer or perhaps open and close responsibilities.



You may want to role-play with someone you feel comfortable with prior to your interview and have them ask some of the following questions. Be prepared to answer problem-solving, conflict-resolution questions. Can you answer questions regarding your critical thinking skills, and are you prepared to answer behavioral questions?

What Recruiters are Saying...

“First impressions are very important in our business and very hard to overcome. Tell your students to come prepared to the interview.”

“As a recruiter, I’ve heard some ridiculous and unbelievable stories over the years. It’s so important to just be yourself during the interview.”

Keep ALL of your answers **positive** and turn even the negative situations into “learning” situations. If you are asked to talk about something you would change from your last job, you could consider saying, “My current supervisor has a tendency to not keep our group informed of current changes. This has made a difference in our team’s performance, and I’ve learned how important it is to communicate effectively to your staff.”

Never talk negatively of former employers or businesses or in any way!

“When a prospective employee speaks negatively about prior co-workers or employers, it’s a red flag that this person is not a team player.”

Be prepared to explain gaps of time out of work or school. If you have had a less than positive work experience, been fired from a job, or been faced with difficult circumstances while pursuing an education; simply be **direct, honest and truthful** about the situation. Do not be negative; indicate what you learned from the situation.

Make certain you are giving accurate statements about your abilities, interests, skills, and talents. Surveys have shown that more than 50 percent of job seekers embellish on their past experience and/or education. Employers can tell if you are adding “fluff” to what you actually did or know. Many employers verify information from your interview and will not consider a candidate who has not been honest. Again, be **direct, honest and truthful**.

Did you know that 55 percent of feelings and emotions are shown nonverbally? Let your body language send positive signals! Posture is important. Lean slightly forward in your chair, speak clearly and have eye contact with the recruiter.



Absolutely NO chewing gum, drinking pop or coffee or smoking during your interview!

Avoid discussing politics and religion.

Pay attention to nervous gestures such as tapping feet, clicking pens, excessive hand gestures, playing with hair, etc.

Realize that everyone gets nervous; try to turn that anxiousness into a positive, motivating factor.

"Tell your students to lighten up, smile and remember how their education has prepared them for the job. It is important to be able to have some 'small talk' prior to beginning the interview."

Use proper English; avoid slang words or expressions (i.e. ya know, huh, etc.)

Honor silence if you have answered a recruiter's question. It is NOT necessary to fill up the void of silence. Don't volunteer unnecessary information regarding age, marital status, children, etc.

Your role in the interview is primarily to answer questions, and to market yourself. An experienced interviewer can quickly sense stalling tactics such as fidgeting, repeating the question and answering the question with a question. These indicate a lack of preparation. If you do not have an answer, simply be honest and indicate that you don't have an answer; but ask if you can come back to that question later in the interview.

Seven recruiters were asked to rank the importance of the following when making a hiring decision: a) presentation of the applicant in the job interview; b) attitude or c) hands-on skills and training of the applicant. SIX recruiters indicated that attitude was the most important!
"While skills are important, a positive attitude and ability to get along with others are much more important."

Make A Good First Impression

According to Ollie Stevenson, author of 101 Great Answer to the Toughest Job Search Problems, *"The first 30 seconds of a job interview are crucial. The interviewer makes an immediate overall judgment about you within the first 5 seconds and the next 25 seconds are spent checking the chemistry and verifying the initial impression."*

The impression you make as you step through the door for your interview is a
LASTING impression.

The initial call. Pay attention to the greeting on your answering machine or cell phone. The messages may be fun when you are living with friends but totally inappropriate for a job search. Omit the snippet of music from your favorite group and watch the language and tone of voice! Leave at least one identifier in your message so the recruiters can be assured they have the right number. *"You've reached Amy. Please leave a message."* or *"You've reached 666-777-8888. Please leave a message."*

WHAT RECRUITERS ARE SAYING...

"I was excited as I read the credentials of an applicant and called to schedule an interview. I was so offended by the message on the answering machine that I decided to move on to another candidate and never pursued contacting them again."

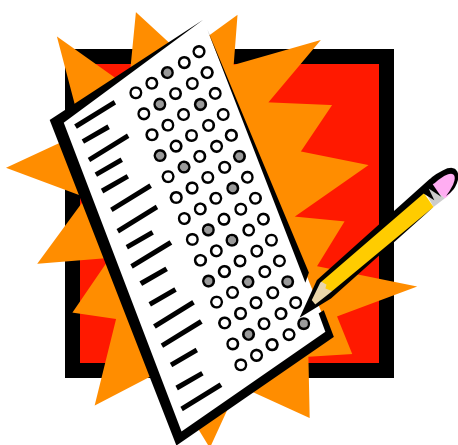
Be prepared to write down times and dates of interviews and confirm the information prior to ending your call. Keep a log of calls by your phone.



It is your responsibility to find out who you will be interviewing with. Know the full names and job titles of each person who will be participating in your interview. If you are interviewing with a team versus one-on-one, you will prepare yourself differently. It is very disconcerting to walk into an interview and be faced with a panel of 4-5 persons when you anticipated a one-on-one interview.

Make certain you arrive a few minutes prior to the interview! (15 minutes early is best) If you have been asked to come early to complete paperwork, arrive 15-20 minutes prior to the interview. Come prepared with your own pens, a copy of your resume, and other information that may be necessary to complete applications. If you are not familiar with the location, make a practice run and determine where you can park.

If you are going to an interview out-of-town, get specific instructions complete with an address, directions on how to get there and where to park.



PRE-EMPLOYMENT TESTING

Many companies are asking prospective employees to complete online or telephone pre-employment testing prior to the company inviting an applicant to a facility. This survey differs from a telephone interview and is solely an opportunity for the company to determine if your personality is a match for the needs of the job. These surveys also generate results about you for the employer in other areas such as job safety, acceptance of diversity and frustration levels. Policies vary with each company. Some base their hiring strictly on the results of this pre-employment testing, while others use it only as a portion of their interview process.

It is important to treat this pre-employment testing with as much consideration as you would a first interview. Employers give this advice:

- Do not try to analyze the questions! Simply answer the question in a straightforward and honest manner.
- Many surveys are timed so be prepared to read and answer the questions directly.
- When you plan to do the survey, set aside an hour without any interruptions in a quiet room.

WHAT RECRUITERS ARE SAYING...

"We were looking for ways to be more cost efficient and to stem the flow of turnover. When an employee leaves, the loss to a company is more than just monetary. It includes losses on productivity, time and manpower. Making an initial match for the prospective employee and for our company is extremely important. We want the new employee to accept a position that matches their personality, and we want to find the right personality for the department hiring."

Types of interviews

Understanding the type of interview you will be having prevents surprises and allows you to demonstrate your skills and talents more effectively.

Directed interviews. These follow a definite set of questions and only those questions are allowed to be asked. Each applicant for the position will be asked the exact same questions and in the same order. Many times directed interviews are timed, and the recruiters rate the applicants' response on a sliding scale.

Non-directed interviews. This interview is less structured and formal. The questions and responses tend to be open-ended and are very spontaneous. It allows the recruiter and applicant room for expression and their own questions.

Group and/or team interviews. Several individuals representing different areas of a business are selected to be a part of the interview team. Format varies; but, most generally, each team member has specific questions for the applicant. Team/group interviews can range in size from two to 10 members. This is often a formal interview with less opportunity for the applicant to converse with the group.



Business luncheon/dinner interviews. Meal interviews are mostly utilized to get to know potential employees before the job offer is extended. It gives the employer an opportunity to see the candidate in a social setting and evaluate your social savvy, which may be a part of dealing with their clients. This may be one of the most challenging types of interviews and can be especially intimidating for students who do not have much formal dining experience. The following tips may be helpful as you prepare for an interview around a dining table:

- Pay attention to what the host orders, and do likewise.
- Avoid exotic or hard-to-eat menu choices.
- Skip the alcoholic beverages.
- Don't eat like it's your last supper, have a snack beforehand.
- Order moderately priced items, NOT the most expensive dinner on the menu.
- Use utensils from the outside in for each course.
- Never slurp soup and don't gulp food.
- If there is a problem (missing utensil, etc.), quietly tell your server or ignore it. Don't make a scene.
- Break your roll and butter each piece as you go. Don't butter it all at once.



Telephone interviews. This interview is utilized to screen potential employees and determine how you communicate. Individuals who successfully complete a telephone interview are then invited to a face-to-face interview with the company. Phone interview tips:

- Even though you are not meeting face-to-face, remember to smile! Believe it or not, smiling as you talk makes your voice sound much more friendly and enthusiastic!
- Focusing on your appearance, just as you would for a normal interview, will put you in the right frame of mind from a psychological standpoint. You won't do as well in a phone interview if you're lying on the couch in your pajamas.
- Have a copy of your resume, company information, job description, pencil/pen, and notepaper available.

TIP:

You have the advantage in a phone interview of making notes for yourself, so prepare a list of your strengths and qualifications as it applies to the job or any other tips that may be helpful as you move through the interview.

- Above all, make certain there will be **no** interruptions, such as disruptions by family and/or children, TV, or music in the background. Find a quiet place where you can concentrate only on the interview.
- Listen carefully to each question asked and stay focused. Envision the recruiter sitting across from you and answer as if she/he were present. It may be helpful to make notes as the questions are being asked.
- Do not use slang language, avoid word fillers (um, ah, etc.).
- Speak slowly and clearly with good diction.
- Be honest about your abilities!
- Make sure you are available at the time specified for the interview.
- If you are using a cell phone, make certain the battery is charged and that you receive a good connection so it is not difficult for you and your interviewer to understand each other.
- What do I do if an interviewer calls at an inconvenient time? *Politely ask if you can call them back and make sure you call back when you say you will!*

Behavioral Interview. Behavioral-based interviewing is interviewing based on discovering how the interviewee acted in specific employment-related situations. The logic is that how you behaved in the past will predict how you will behave in the future, i.e., past performance predicts future performance.

Answer the questions as specifically and with as much detail as possible. Organize your response in three steps:

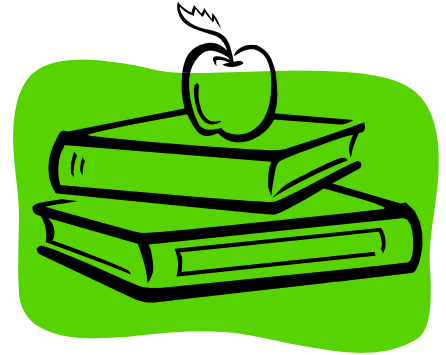
- **Problem** – *briefly describe the specific problem situation*
- **Action** – *emphasize steps that you took to solve the problem*
- **Result/Outcome** – *describe the **positive** result or outcome*

Examples of behavioral interview questions:

- ➔ Have you ever had to get a point across to different types of people? Give me an example and tell me what approach you took? *Finding out about your communication skills.*
- ➔ Describe a work-related problem you had to face recently. What did you do to deal with it? *Decision-making skills tested.*
- ➔ Put yourself in this situation. You have a demanding customer, but a very faithful one, who brings lots of business to our business. You've had two people call in and not show. Your customer is insisting on "extras" for her party, and you just don't have time. How would you handle this situation?
- ➔ Give me an example of any time management skill you have learned and applied at work. What results did you see?
- ➔ Sometimes it is necessary to work in unsettled or rapidly changing circumstances. When have you found yourself in this position? Tell me exactly what you did.
- ➔ Describe a situation where you were required to use critical thinking skills. What did you do that was successful, and what would you change today?
- ➔ Give me an example of a time when you used facts and reason to persuade another person to take action.
- ➔ Describe steps you have taken to stay familiar with problem areas in your current job.
- ➔ Time management has become a necessary factor in personal productivity. Give me an example of any time management skill you have learned and applied at work. What resulted from the use of this skill?
- ➔ Identify the analytical tools with which you feel competent. Give me an example from any time in your working history which shows your ability to use analytical techniques to define problems or design solutions.

- ➔ Tell me about a time in which you had to use written communication skills in order to get an important point across.
- ➔ Describe a major work problem which you have faced and explain your method of dealing with it.
- ➔ Give an example of any specific time in which you found it necessary to work long hours, take work home, work on weekends, or maintain unusually long hours? Be specific. *Seeking feedback regarding your initiative.*
- ➔ We cannot do everything ourselves. Give me an example of a time when you dealt with this reality by creating a special team effort at work. Highlight the special aspects of the situation which best demonstrate your skill in this area.
- ➔ When have you found it necessary to use detailed checklists or procedures to reduce the potential for error on the job? Be specific.
- ➔ Tell me about a time you had to gain the cooperation of a group over which you had little or no authority. What did you do? How effective were you? *Seeking information on leadership skills.*
- ➔ Tell me about a time when you had to make a decision but didn't have all the information needed. *If possible, use a real anecdote from your experience. The answer does not have to be great and grand. It could be a simple situation that was handled well.*
- ➔ Have you ever had trouble learning a new method or procedure? How did you deal with that situation? *Investigating your learning ability.*
- ➔ Tell me about a problem you have had that would affect more than one department. How did you try to solve it?
- ➔ You are working with a co-worker who has the same job responsibilities as you. They consistently do not do their share of work and you find yourself pulling up the slack. On this particular day, you come to work and decide you are not going to do any of their work. How do you handle this situation?

ADMISSIONS INTERVIEWS FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION



Some schools will require an interview for acceptance. Your interview with a college to be considered for admission into their programs is similar to employment interviewing. Remember you are responsible for marketing yourself. You need to convince the educators you are serious about continuing your education in that field of study.

Your ability to answer questions clearly and thoughtfully is an important aspect of any interview. Some of the questions will likely be tailored to the educational institution and the opportunity in which you are applying. Others will be generic questions designed to inform the committee about your background, communication skills and goals. Candidates should stress their commitment to remaining in this career field. The school is committed to admitting students who are able to handle the rigors of the program based on academic, personal, physical, and psychological attributes.

Prior to your interview, take time to review and assess the following areas:
(See interview questions on page 36)

- Accomplishments
- Career development
- Coping with change
- Communication skills
- Dealing with conflict
- Educational experience
- Problem-solving skills
- Management skills and abilities
- Technical knowledge and skills
- Research skills

Questions to Consider

- ➔ What are the key challenges, objectives and opportunities involved in continuing your education?
- ➔ Why do you want to be a _____? (Respiratory Therapist, Physical Therapist, Medical Laboratory Technologist, etc.)

WHAT RECRUITERS ARE SAYING...

"It is extremely important for candidates to clearly articulate why they want to be in that career field and what contribution they hope to make to the field."

- ➔ List two or three things that are most important to you in a career.
- ➔ Why do you believe this is the best move at this stage in your career?
- ➔ How will you add value to this educational program?
- ➔ How did you evaluate the educational programs and determine where to apply?
- ➔ What appeals to you about our program?
- ➔ Do you think your grades are a good indication of your academic achievement?

For health-related fields:

- ➔ Do you think health care is a right or privilege?
- ➔ What are the biggest problems facing health care?
- ➔ Why might you be a stronger candidate for this school and more successful and effective in this profession than other applicants?
- ➔ What are the most compelling reasons you can give for the admissions committee to be interested in you?
- ➔ What are the most important rewards you expect in your professional career?
- ➔ If you do not get accepted into this program, what will you do?
- ➔ What do you think it takes to be successful in this profession?
- ➔ In what ways do you think you can make a contribution to this profession?

DRESSING FOR YOUR ADMISSIONS INTERVIEW

The best advice is dress conservatively. For women, this means well-styled hair, no excessive perfume, makeup, or jewelry. For men, wear a conservative tie, dress shoes, and no jewelry other than a watch and wedding ring.

"This may seem obvious but we have seen many qualified candidates blow their chance for admission by wearing ridiculous clothing to the interview. We've seen short skirts, purple hair, and sandals in the middle of winter. My last applicant had two visible tattoos and several body piercings. From the moment he walked in the door, regardless of what he had to say, I couldn't get past his own immaturity and poor judgment."

RESEARCHING THE COMPANY & POSITION

It is important to come prepared to an interview with questions that show your interest in the company and the position for which you are interviewing. Take time to research the company online, and generate questions from the website. This will help you frame intelligent questions and will show you are genuinely interested in the company and prepared for the interview. Listen carefully during the interview! It is appropriate to take a few notes during the interview, but be careful to focus your attention on the interviewer and NOT on your notes.

What information do you need to know about the company?

- ➔ What are the company's major products and/or services?
- ➔ What are the new products and/or services?
- ➔ Who are the company's clients or target markets?
- ➔ Who are the officers of the company?
- ➔ Who are the company's competitors?
- ➔ What are some of the company's recent projects, successes, new accounts, marketing/media events, or campaigns?
- ➔ What problems or issues are the company facing?
- ➔ What is the company culture?
- ➔ How large is the company in employees, sales, etc?
- ➔ How long has the company been in existence?
- ➔ Does the company have a history of laying people off?
- ➔ Is the company publicly or privately owned?

"I expect candidates to do their homework PRIOR to the interview! When I visit with a prospective employee who is asking questions about my company that they could readily access themselves, I am less than impressed."

In addition to knowing about the company, gather as much information as possible about the job itself.

- ➔ Ask friends, neighbors, networking contacts, or anyone you know if they know someone who works at the company.
- ➔ Job advertisements often contain information about key responsibilities, qualifications, and salary
- ➔ Visit the company website.
- ➔ Visit the SCC Placement Office to find information on current and past job openings with the company.

BE READY TO ANSWER QUESTIONS

- ➔ Tell me about yourself. *Employers are searching for information regarding your professional world and education, not your personal background. This is not an invitation to tell your life story. Prior to the interview, create a written inventory of your skills and then quantify each specific skill. Consider which skills and abilities are most needed for the job for which you are applying, review your inventory of skills, and be able to emphasize those in your interview.*
- ➔ Why did you choose this career field?
- ➔ Please describe your work experience and how it pertains to this job description.
- ➔ What are your long-term and short-term career goals? How are you preparing to achieve them?
- ➔ Why do you want this job?

- ➔ Why do you want to work for this company? *Specifically mention several things that demonstrate you have invested time in the research process. Avoid statements like, "I've heard some good things about your company." or "My friend works for your company and told me about your tuition reimbursement plan."*
- ➔ Why are you leaving your present position?, or why did you leave your last job?
- ➔ How would your co-workers describe you?
- ➔ Tell me about your education. Do your grades reflect your best efforts and your true capabilities? How did your education prepare you for this position?
- ➔ What experience have you had that qualifies you for this position?
- ➔ On a scale of 1-10, with 10 as best, where do you rate as far as getting along with people and why?
- ➔ Describe an ideal job or ideal supervisor.
- ➔ What are your strengths? / What are your weaknesses?
- ➔ What motivates you in a job?
- ➔ Who are your role models, and why?
- ➔ Which three accomplishments in your work world are you most proud of? *Prior to the interview, create a list of your accomplishments.*
- ➔ Have you ever spoken before a group of people? How large was the audience, and what was your role?
- ➔ What classes in your major did you like the best and least? Explain why.
- ➔ Were you financially responsible for any portion of your college education?
- ➔ Have you ever done any volunteer work? If so, what did you enjoy the most?
- ➔ What professional magazines do you read regularly? Tell me about a recent article you've read.
- ➔ How do you plan to stay up-to-date in this field?
- ➔ What salary do you expect?
- ➔ Why should we hire you? *Opportunity to talk about the skills you bring to the company and how the position/company matches your needs.*
- ➔ Which supervisors have you found easiest to work with, and which have you found most difficult?
- ➔ What did you like best and least about your previous job? *Checking for administration and management skills.*
- ➔ Explain how you organize your work day.
- ➔ You have experience and education beyond what this job requires. Will you explain to me how this job is going to satisfy your needs?
- ➔ Tell me how you handle interruptions in your planned day?
- ➔ What did you find most challenging about your clinical site or practicum experience?

- ➔ Give me an example of a time when you had to persuade another person to take action.
- ➔ After reading a description of this position, how do you see yourself fitting in with this job?
- ➔ Please describe your computer knowledge, specifically your database experience.
- ➔ Have you used the services of our business? If so, what suggestion do you have for our business regarding customer relations?
- ➔ Please give an example of a stressful work challenge or workplace conflict, and describe how you handled it.
- ➔ Please describe your organizational abilities and how you accomplish that task.
- ➔ What is the most significant contribution you made during your internship and/or practicum?
- ➔ In summarization, what qualifications do you have that make you the best candidate for this position?

What Recruiters are Saying...

"One of my favorite interview questions is, "If you could wake up tomorrow and change one thing about yourself personally as well as change your career choice, what would they be?" I usually follow up with, "What, if any, steps have you taken to help you reach your desire to change that one thing?"

Recruiters are asking applicants to demonstrate their skills, and many times this process is timed.

Examples of possible skills to demonstrate:

Food Service/Hospitality students may be asked to:

- Demonstrate how they prepare a place setting.
- Show skills in carving an ice sculpture.

Computer Aided Design Drafting students may be asked to:

- Demonstrate their AutoCAD or SolidWorks skills by designing a simple drawing.

Office Professional students may be asked to:

- Take a timed typing test.
- Complete a proofreading worksheet.
- Given an office scenario: for example, asked to answer the phone, direct the call, or solve a problem.

Business Administration students may be asked to:

- Demonstrate their ability with Access or Excel.

Early Childhood Education students may be asked to:

- Design a simple bulletin board display.
- Create and plan a child's activity.

Welding Technology students may be asked to:

- Test MIG, TIG, or other welding skills.

Computer Information Technology students may be asked to:

- Solve a problem by phone with a customer.

Visual Publications students may be asked to:

- Create a design using PhotoShop and/or Quark.

ILLEGAL QUESTIONS

So, what is an illegal question? Laws forbid employers from discriminating against any person on the basis of sex, age, race, national origin, or religion.

The following are your options when asked an illegal question:

1. You are free to answer the question but risk giving the wrong answer in doing so.
2. You can ask how the question is relevant to the position.
3. You can refuse to answer the question and risk coming off as uncooperative or confrontational.
4. You can examine the intent behind the question and answer appropriately. *For example, if the interviewer asks who is going to take care of your children when you travel, he or she may be concerned that you won't be able to meet the travel requirements of the job. Simply state that it sounds like there is a concern and would he or she mind sharing that concern with you. Once the concern is conveyed, you can respond by saying, "My child care needs are taken care of, and I can meet the travel and work schedule that this job requires."*

EXAMPLES OF ILLEGAL QUESTIONS		
	Illegal Questions	Legal Questions
National origin	Are you a U.S. citizen? Where were you born? What is your native language?	Are you authorized to work in the U.S.? What language do you read, speak or write fluently?
Age	How old are you? What is your birth date? When did you graduate from (high school, college)?	Are you over the age of 18?
Marital/Family status	What's your marital status? Who do you live with? Do you plan to have a family? When? How many children do you have? What are your child care arrangements?	Would you be willing to relocate? Would you be able and willing to travel? Would you be able & willing to work overtime?
Religion, political beliefs, or affiliations	What clubs or social organizations do you belong to?	List any professional or trade groups or other organizations that you belong to that you consider relevant to your ability to perform this job.
Personal appearance	How tall are you? How much do you weigh?	Are you able to lift a 50-pound weight and carry it 100 yards, as this is part of the job?
Disabilities	Do you have any disabilities? Please complete the following medical history. Have you had any recent or past illnesses or operations? What was the date of your last physical exam?	Are you able to perform the essential functions of this job? Can you demonstrate how you would perform the following job-related functions?
Criminal record	Have you ever been arrested?	Have you ever been convicted of ____? (the crime should be related to the performance of the job). Applicants may be excluded from employment if they have been convicted of certain offenses which relate to the job in question.
Military	If you've been in the military, were you honorably discharged?	In what branch of the Armed Forces did you serve? What type of training or education did you receive in the military?
Spouse's name or work	What is your spouse's name and where does she/he work?	No questions should be asked regarding spouse's name or work.

BE READY TO ASK QUESTIONS

Remember that an interview is a *two-way* communication between you and the employer. An applicant needs to determine if it is the right fit, and you can do that by preparing questions to ask at the interview. The employer should provide an opportunity for you to ask questions at or near the end of the interview.

NEVER ask about salary and benefits issues at a first interview until those subjects are raised. If those issues have not been addressed by the second interview, it is your responsibility to ask so that you can make an informed decision.



Here are some questions you may want to ask at an interview:

- Could you describe a typical day in this position?
- Ask about specific numbers, such as, “How many patients could I expect to see in a day?” or “What are the quotas for your production work?”
- What qualifications are you looking for in a candidate to fill this position?
- What expectations does your company have for new employees?
- What kind of training does the company offer?
- Will I be assigned a mentor? If so, for how long?
- What are the major responsibilities for this position?
- How would you describe your company's personality and management style?
- What career path could I anticipate with your company?
- What policy does your company have regarding promotions? Do current employees have an opportunity to be considered before it is advertised to the general public?

WHAT RECRUITERS ARE SAYING...

“I am impressed with a candidate who comes prepared with a written list of questions! Just make certain that you are listening carefully during the interview and not asking questions that have already been covered.”

- What are the opportunities for growth with this job?
- Is relocation a possibility?
- Is overtime mandatory?
- Is this a newly created position?
- What is the retention rate of people in the position in which I am interested?
- Has your company had a layoff? If so, how long was the layoff, and was everyone recalled?
- How often do you evaluate employees? What is your procedure?
- Who will review my performance?
- What are the future plans of your company? (One year, three years, five years?)
- What is the hiring process for your company?
- Could you explain your organizational structure?
- What is the company's policy on providing seminars, workshops, and training so employees can keep up their skills or acquire new ones?
- What particular computer equipment and software do you use?
- Typically how long does it take for your company to make a decision for a new hire?
- How many people work in this office/department?
- How much travel is expected?
- *If this is an internship position:* Is there a possibility of full-time work when I graduate?



PORTFOLIOS

A portfolio shows an employer what talents and skills you can bring to the job and how you think through situations and problems. It is a showcase of what you have to offer as an employment candidate and is a compilation of your best and most recent work. Your portfolio is a piece that is always in progress and always evolving as you gain experience. During the interview, tell the interviewer that you have a portfolio; but allow them to decide whether and when it will be viewed.

Five steps to creating a successful portfolio:

1. Self-assessment--Decide where you want this portfolio to take you.
2. Organization--Decide what you will include.
3. Design--Arrange your work based on size, portability, cost, durability, maintenance, and additions.
4. Review--Collect and consider feedback.
5. Production--Select a format, and finalize the presentation of your work.

Self-Assessment. Articulate your vision. Your portfolio should not only highlight your technical competence, but also reflect your style. Ask yourself if that organization's vision is consistent with your own, and tailor your portfolio to reflect your compatibility.

Organizing a Portfolio. Remember that the **quality** of your work is more important than the quantity. Group your pieces by type, rather than placing them in chronological order. Do not use samples with grades and/or instructor's comments. Stay away from anything that may be controversial. This will allow your interview to flow better. Put pieces in chronological order by section, if appropriate. Show your process. Provide your contact information in your portfolio. It could become separated from your cover letter and resume. If you have any loose pages, be sure that they are clearly labeled as well.

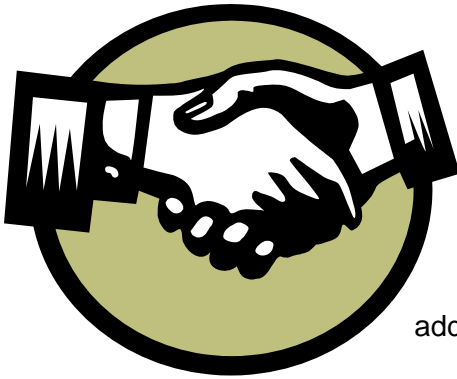
Designing a Portfolio. Develop a coherent image. Use similar design elements for your resume, cover letter, and portfolio. Present all of your samples in the same manner. Inconsistency is perceived as lack of taste or focus. Strive for simplicity and clarity. Be ethical. Remember to take credit for only what you did in a group. Be prepared to USE your portfolio in an interview. Do not include any pages that you would not feel comfortable explaining. Use your pages as visual references to your verbal ideas.

Production of a Portfolio. Proofread, proofread, proofread, and then have someone else proofread. Then proofread one more time! Consider that this will be viewed by many different readers. A portfolio should impress any reviewer, whether they thumb through it in 30 seconds or pour over it for a half-hour.

Review. Solicit feedback before showing your portfolio to an employer.

Special tips for online portfolios. Online portfolios are a great way to showcase your creative talent in any medium while at the same time highlighting your technical skills. However, you must plan your website carefully to maximize usability. Your website should be easy to navigate, quick to load, and aesthetically pleasing.

CLOSING THE INTERVIEW



It is important to have a good closure to your interview.

If you have asked the appropriate job-related questions, avoid prolonging the interview with unnecessary questions or conversation. Wrap up the interview in a positive manner, emphasizing your key strengths as they relate to the job for which you are applying.

Ask for the interviewer's business card. This will allow you to have an address and correct spelling of names and titles to mail your thank-you letter.

If a hiring decision timeline has not been discussed, make certain you know when they will be making a decision or what the next step is in the process, e.g., will there be another interview, when does the interviewer hope to make a decision, and how will they be contacting you.

Offer a handshake and thank the interviewer for the opportunity to interview; and again, express your interest in the position and company.

HOW DO YOU FOLLOW UP?

At the close of your interview, you should have discussed the hiring process and now understand the process. If the recruiter indicates that you can follow up in a week, make certain you do so. Keep your calls focused and to the point; goal-oriented conversations get the best results. If you are not able to speak with your contact for the company, ask for suggestions for next steps, additional resources or for another contact name. If you receive voice mail, leave a quick message stating that you are calling to check on the status of the position. Don't ask them to call you back.

"How often can I call?" Recruiters suggest it is appropriate to touch base no more than once a week. There is a very fine line between being a pest and being persistent, don't cross it!

"I interviewed for the Customer Service Representative position last week, and was following up on the status of my application. Thank you, you have been very helpful. If I have additional questions, could I contact you again?"

HANDLING REJECTIONS

If you get the dreaded rejection letter, be positive about the fact that the connection can still prove to be positive. Some job seekers follow-up with a letter expressing their positive impression of the organization, wish them continued success and ask them to keep you in mind when the next opportunity arises.

"Many companies simply do not respond to all of the applicants for a position. They will include information in the application process indicating they will be contacting applicants who meet their criteria. Some students apply for one job and wait for a response. The best policy would be to continue to search and apply for jobs, even if you've applied for your "dream job"!