Interviewing Skills: Before, During & After Your Interview

Before—Preparing for Your Interview

Do your research:

- When scheduling your interview, ask about the interview format.
- For example: Will you be meeting with one person or many people at once?
- Research the organization, the position you are seeking, and the people with whom you will be interviewing—learn as much as possible.
- Know the organization’s history, products, services, locations, mission statement, and corporate culture. Utilize a variety of sources when researching.
- Review your resume. Using your resume and the position description as a guide, think of concrete examples of how your experience and skills match those sought by the employer.

Practice interview questions:

- Interviewing is a skill—practicing will make an impact!
- Review sample interview questions. Start by answering these questions for friends or family.
- Schedule a mock interview with Career Services or attend an Interviewing Skills Workshop.

Create a portfolio of items you may need:

- Pen, paper (in case you are asked to write something down—even if usually use your phone to jot down notes.)
- Completed employment application/information needed to complete an application.
- Questions to ask employers at the end of the interview (yes, it’s okay to write these down!) 
- Copies of your resume and references (bring more than needed); copy of transcript (can be an unofficial, updated copy of your transcript that you make multiple copies of for the purpose of interviewing).

Your first impression:

- Have a neat, well-groomed appearance and wear a business suit. The focus should be on you, not what you are wearing.

During: Finding Interview Success

Good manners are extremely important!

- Be prompt; for an interview, this means arrive about 15 minutes early.
- Be polite and pleasant to everyone with whom you come into contact as soon as you are on site— even in the parking lot.
- Offer a firm handshake—look the person in the eye with an enthusiastic smile!
- Use proper English/grammar (e.g., "yes" versus "yeah").
- Be aware of your body language and other nonverbal cues, such as eye contact.
- Listen to the interviewer. Respond completely to all aspects of a question. Ask for clarification if necessary.
- Interviews are conversations between you and the employer. Don’t monopolize the conversation—use this time to learn as much as possible about the organization.
Be positive; don’t complain about a former employer, job, or academics.
Avoid questions on salary, benefits, or vacation. Focus on what you can do for the employer.
Ask for a business card at the end of the interview, or write down the employer’s contact information.

**After: Assess your Performance**

Immediately after the interview, take notes:

- Write down the questions you were asked and your responses.
- Evaluate your performance and how you can improve.
- Did the interviewer make specific comments or appear impressed with any answers, your resume, specific aspects of your experience?
- What interested you about this position? Why do you want this job? Do you have any concerns about the organization or the position?
- Use this information to assist in following up with the employer.

**Follow Up: Say Thank You**

Send a “Thank You” letter within 24 hours to each person with whom you interviewed:

- Structure your thank you letter as follows:
  - Remind the interviewer why you are a good match for the position.
  - Add any information you forgot to give during the interview.
  - Thank the interviewer for his/her time and attention.
  - Close by arranging follow-up.
- Thank-you letters can be hard copy/typed, handwritten or e-mailed. Consider your audience and the employer’s timeline when selecting a thank you letter format.
  - E-mail is appropriate, but be sure to keep your format and content professional.
  - Hard copy thank you notes are the most formal. Handwritten thank you notes are more personal.

**Side Note: Organize Your Job Search**

- Keep good records of interviews as well as the rest of your job search.
  - This includes, but is not limited to, positions for which you have applied, position descriptions, interview dates/times, thank you letter sent, and additional follow up.
  - There are many ways to track these details; use the system that works best for you and is easily accessible should an employer contact you.

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