Interviewing Skills Workshop

CAL STATE LA
CAREER DEVELOPMENT CENTER
Preparation and Practice
What is a job interview?

- An interview gives a prospective employer the opportunity to speak with you and consider your appropriateness for the job in question.

- Since your resume or job application showed that you possess the desired skills for the job, the interview will focus on those intangibles (such as your personality and style) that will help the employer decide whether or not you will fit into the company culture.
Types of Interviews – Part 1

Find out ahead of time what type of interview you will have, who will interview you, and the jobs of those interviewing you.

- **Telephone (Screening) Interview**
  Try to arrange this on your time schedule so you can prepare.

- **One-on-one face-to-face Interview**
  This is the type we most typically prepare for.
Types of Interviews – Part 2

- **Stress Interview**
  The goal is to see how you handle stressful situations.

- **Behavioral Interview**
  Your past performance and behaviors are important. Sample question: “Give me an example of a time when you had to make a quick decision.”

- **Sequential Interviews**
  A number of interviews held on the same day at which you meet with different interviewers.
Types of Interviews – Part 3

- **Series of Interviews**
  Coming back for the second or third or fourth time---

- **Panel Interviews**
  A number of interviewers will grill you simultaneously!

- **Group Interviews**
  You and other candidates are interviewed at the same time. Your attentive behavior and smart questions can get you an individual interview. Some group interviews simulate a team challenge, and you are observed on your behavior within the group.
# The Interview Process

## Preparation
- Employer Research
- Practice Questions
- Rehearse Presentation
- Plan ahead
- What to wear / what to bring

## The Interview Itself
- The First Impression
- Information Exchange
- Closing the interview
- Interview Follow-up
Preparation
Q: What is the biggest mistake you can make in a job interview, according to recruiters?
A: Knowing little to nothing about the company with which you are interviewing!

Check out these resources for employer research:
- Employer websites and company LinkedIn profiles
- [www.hoovers.com](http://www.hoovers.com)
- [www.rileyguide.com/employer.html](http://www.rileyguide.com/employer.html)
- [www.glassdoor.com](http://www.glassdoor.com)
- [Vault Career Insider on Cal State L.A. Career Express](http://www.vaultcareerinsider.com)
- [Cal State L.A. Job Hunting Resource Databases](http://www.csula.edu/career-center/resource-databases)
Some frequently-asked interview questions

- “Tell me about yourself.” (The interviewer is looking for communication skills and clear thinking about your recent history, not your childhood).
- “What is your biggest strength?” (Know your top 2 or 3 strengths and be prepared to discuss each with an example).
- “How do you handle stress on the job?” (Provide a good example of how you have dealt with stress in the past. It’s possible that stress can actually help some people perform better!)
More Practice Questions

- **Describe your most significant accomplishment.** (Relate the situation, the obstacle and the outcome. Tell what qualities were needed to achieve this. You don’t have to confine your discussion to work-related accomplishments: you could mention a life experience that illustrates your best attributes).

- **What do you see yourself doing in five years?** (You should assure the employer that you’re worth the investment in time and training, and that you plan to be around for awhile – learning and contributing more along the way).

- More practice questions are on the “Interview Skills” flyer.
Rehearse Presentation

- Mock Interviews (by appointment)
- “Perfect Interview” (via CareerExpress)
- “Interview Stream” (via CareerExpress)
Plan ahead

- Make a trial run to the interview site to gauge how long it will take you to get there.
- Get proper rest the night before.
- Avoid caffeine and spicy goods on the day of the interview.
- Arrive early and use this time to freshen up.
- Chat with the receptionist.
What to wear
What to wear

- Hair
  Neatness counts!

- Jewelry
  Not this! For women, tasteful earrings (one per ear), a necklace and a watch are fine. For men, a watch only is preferred.

- Fragrance
  Less is best or, better yet, none at all. Your interviewer could be allergic.
What to wear

- Attention to details is important. Avoid the sloppy look, iron your clothes, no tennies or dandruff, and turn off your cell phone!
What to bring

- Professional-looking portfolio/briefcase
- Several copies of your resume
- Copies of your cover letter
- Nice (not cheap-looking) pen and paper for note-taking
- Copy of job posting
- Personal calendar
- Information that may be needed in case you are asked to complete a job application
- Brush/comb
- Breath freshener
The Interview Itself
Create a Good First Impression

Recruiters will size you up in the first 30 seconds of your interview. Make sure that you create a good first impression by being aware of the following:

- Good eye contact
- The importance of the smile
- Strong, dry handshake
- Clear introduction

In addition,

- Show confidence, poise and energy
- Maintain good posture
- Repeat recruiter’s name
- Be aware of vocal tone and volume
Information Exchange

- Listen carefully
- Take time with your answers
- Respond positively
- Focus answers on the needs of the employer
- Ask insightful questions, showing your knowledge of the employer
- Give examples and provide details: tell stories that illustrate your achievements
Closing the Interview

1. Repeat your “sales pitch.” If you are truly interested in the job, make sure you tell the interviewer this!
2. Take the employer’s business card and thank him/her.
3. Ask what the next step is in the hiring process.
Interview Follow-Up

- Send a prompt thank you letter or email.
- Follow up if you have not heard from the employer in the time period earlier specified.
Interview Don’ts

- No bad manners or rudeness (treat all office staff nicely)
- DON’T speak poorly of past employers.
- DON’T appear needy and desperate for a job.
- DON’T whine or complain about others or about your ‘bad luck.’
- DON’T flirt with the interviewer.
- DON’T be a know-it-all.
- DON’T try to be funny (but a genuine sense of humor is a good thing).
- DON’T discuss salary or benefits until you have been offered a job.
Summary of Important Points

- Research the employer and the industry
- Practice interviewing
- Be aware that you are in control of creating a good first impression, and know what makes a good first impression
- Make sure your interview attire is clean, polished, pressed and appropriate
- Be confident and positive!!
- Send a thank you, and follow up with the employer.
Best of Luck!

- Interviewing can be like public speaking – it gets easier the more you do it.
- Remember: prepare and practice.