

# Interviewing Skills Workshop



**CAL STATE LA**

CAREER DEVELOPMENT CENTER

# Preparation and Practice

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# What is a job interview?

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- 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

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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

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## ■ **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

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## ■ 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

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## 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

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# Employer Research

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**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. CareerExpress](#)
- [Cal State L.A. Job Hunting Resource Databases](#)

# Practice Questions/Prepare Answers

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## 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

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- **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

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



# Plan ahead

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- 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

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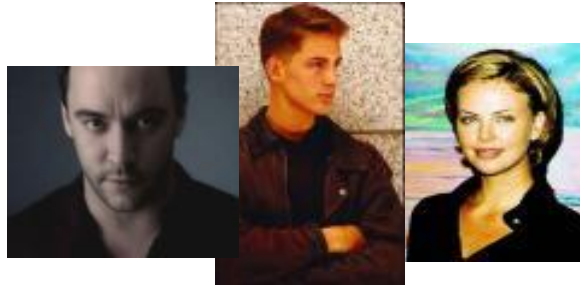


# What to wear

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## ■ 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

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- 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

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# Create a Good First Impression

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**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

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- 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

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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

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- 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

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- 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

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- 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!

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

