

Interviewing Skills Workshop

Cal State L.A.
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



Employer Research

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 website
- www.hoovers.com
- www.rileyguide.com/employer.html
- JFK Library
- Career Development Center Library

Practice Questions/Prepare Answers

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

Some frequently-asked interview 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).

Rehearse Presentation

- **Mock Interviews**
- **“Perfect Interview”**

(These services are available at the Career Center).



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.



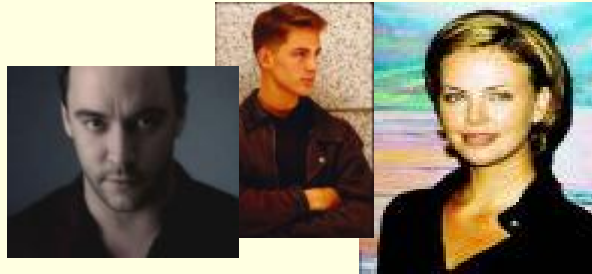
What to wear



What to wear

■ Hair

Neatness counts!



■ Jewelry



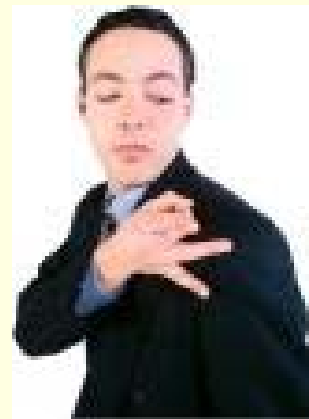
Not this! For women, tasteful earrings (one per ear), a necklace and a watch are fine. For men, a watch only is preferred.

■ 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

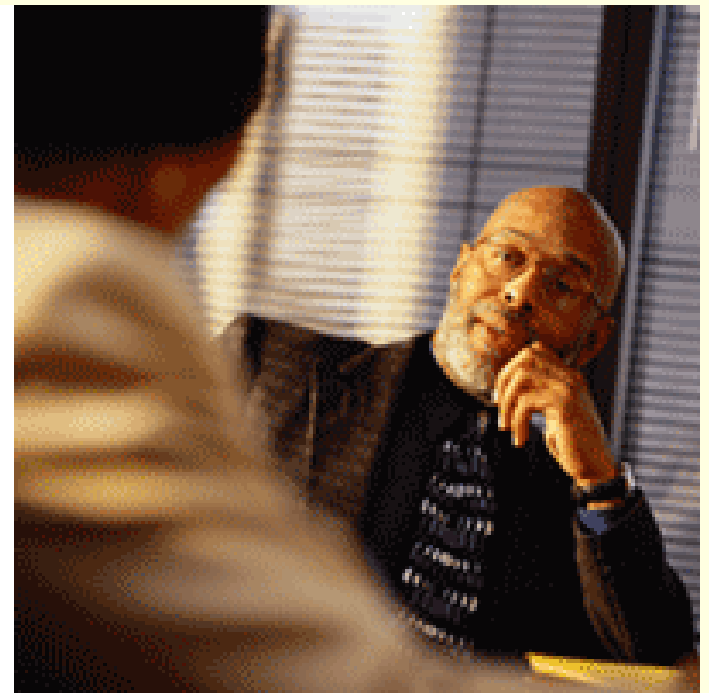
In addition,

- Show confidence and poise
- 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. Mention anything relevant that you feel is important. Repeat your “sales pitch” as you show enthusiasm for the job.
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!!

Best of Luck!

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

