

The Interview

1. INTERVIEW PREPARATION – see CDC’s “Interview Prep” worksheet

- Anticipate employer needs and list necessary skills.
- Have a job description of idea of what job entails and/or what company values in employees – this is where networking comes in handy!
- Interviewing gets easier the more it’s done; those who interview best, know themselves best (this comes with age and experience!).

2. OBJECTIONS/The “Question Behind the Question” (Richard Bolles)

- Objections are assumptions employers make about you based on your age, gender, background, etc. that might affect your job performance – usually not legal to ask.
- Objections are reasons why an employer may not hire you.
- We *all* have objections; your job as the job hunter is to identify your objections and work “antidotes” into your answers/dialogue with the employer; ask yourself, “Why are they asking me this question?”
Ex 1: International student | Objection: Doesn’t speak English language well
Antidote: Address concern openly and assure them you understand English – give some proof of knowledge (writing samples or test scores like TOEFL); best antidote is to speak well in the interview.
Ex 2: Twenty-one year old recent grad | Objection: Young, inexperienced, not sure what you want to do
Antidote: Do homework on industry; have good questions; know what skills you have and would be able to contribute to the company; eliminate the “likes” and “ums” in your dialogue.
- The “Question behind the Question” refers to an employer fear behind a question. If you know why the interviewer is asking the question you can give a better answer.
Ex: How do you handle stress? | Fear: Employer has probably had employees that can’t handle stress.
Antidote: Assure them you can and give an example of when you handled a stressful situation positively.

3. QUESTIONS

ILLEGAL QUESTIONS

- You will sometimes get asked illegal questions such as age, health, marital status, what parents do.
- Employers usually ask them out of ignorance, not malice (HR people will never ask these!).
- Best way to answer those is to qualify first and then answer the question. Ex. “I don’t believe my age will affect my job performance, but to answer the question, I’m 22.”

TOUGH or “LEFT FIELD” QUESTIONS

- Ok to have interviewer repeat a question or count to three silently before answering to buy time.
- Answer the question and end it – don’t ramble; less said is better.
- Remember to turn negative questions into positives.
Ex. “Any weaknesses you have?” | Answer: “Sometimes I’m a perfectionist and take on more responsibility as I want to make sure things are perfect.”
- Answer “left field” questions with middle of the road.
Ex. At a party are you the first to leave, do you leave in the middle, or do you shut the party down? Answer: They’re looking for the middle person: “I’m not a party pooper, but not a party animal.”

4. FOLLOW UP

- Find out timeline before you leave; how many others are they interviewing; when are they planning on making a decision?
- Get correct spelling and title of person(s) you interviewed with; ask for business card.
- Send thank you in timely fashion – include any themes you may have left out or answer objections.
- If making decision quickly – okay to email or FedEx the thank you.
- If you haven’t heard within timeframe, do one short, friendly follow-up call.

Interview Etiquette

1. DRESS – Moderation is the key!

- Avoid excess of any kind (jewelry, makeup, perfume/cologne); understated always best.
- Watch the too short, too tight factor.
- Watch the wrinkle factor (like you slept in your clothes) and make sure your jacket isn't too big.
- Networking will be a big help when determining what to wear—always serve on the professional side.
- You must be comfortable – discomfort will show!
- ALWAYS try outfit on before the day of interview.
- Better to be overdressed than under – shows respect and seriousness.

2. ARRIVAL

- Get specific directions (in big cities, get streets) and floor number; ask about parking if applicable.
- Find out if there will be check-in with security (they'll need your name and who you're meeting with).
- Find out who and where you will be meeting.
- Arrive 10 to 15 minutes ahead, but don't "check in" – go to bathroom and do once over.
- Check in with receptionist, three to five minutes before scheduled appointment.

3. THE HANDSHAKE & GREETING

- Make sure handshake is not the "limp fish" or too strong – first impression very important.
- Make eye contact and smile, "Nice to meet you Mr./Ms. _____."
- Repeat name if difficult to pronounce; don't be afraid to ask correct pronunciation.
- Men: DO NOT give the softie handshake to women; women – maintain firm grip!
- Interviewers are looking for poise and confidence (you'll possibly be representing the company).

4. BREAKFAST/LUNCH

- Remember – whoever invites, pays (in other words, don't invite unless you intend to pay!).
- Dinners unusual unless a group is going – usually will stick with lunch or breakfast.
- Alcohol – generally avoid it at lunch; if at dinner with group and others are imbibing, have *one*.
- Avoid messy, sloppy things like spaghetti, French onion soup, etc.
- Avoid garlic and other strong smells (cooked spinach DOES stick in your teeth!).
- Avoid extremes or anything potentially controversial (don't order the veal, etc.)!
- Remember your table manners: napkin in lap; proper use of silverware; break rolls, don't cut them.
- Don't plan on eating much – they'll keep you talking.
- They will be watching your judgment and poise in a dining situation – something you may be doing with clients.

5. WHAT TO BRING TO THE INTERVIEW

- Copies of your résumé and reference list
- Any samples of your work (clips) or portfolio
- A list of your questions for the interviewer (see CDC's *Interview Prep Worksheet*)
- A notebook or something to take notes on
- Basically anything that will help you. You aren't expected to memorize EVERYTHING!

