Interviewing Tips

What Interviewers Look For
It is vital to understand what interviewers are looking for and how you can give it to them. They want to know:

- How you present yourself - A good first impression is vital.
- How bright or intelligent you are - Ask good questions during the interview.
- What you’ve done - Emphasize your experience (internships, part-time jobs, special accomplishments, student organizations, etc.)
- How committed you are to work - Convey your willingness to work hard.
- What kind of person you are - Convey maturity, responsibility, enthusiasm, confidence, energy and trustworthiness.

Your Appearance

- Appearance should reflect maturity and self-confidence.
- Dress tastefully. A suit or sport coat with a tie and slacks for men and a suit or tailored dress for women are acceptable. Make sure your dress and/or neckline are not too short or too low.
- Avoid too much make-up, jewelry, or cologne/perfume.
- Leave your phone OFF and off the table.
- Do not chew gum during an interview!
- Leave large bags outside the interview room.

Know Your Product

In order to “sell” yourself, you will need to organize your thoughts in advance. Know your resume cold. It is your responsibility to convey a good picture of who you are and how you would fit into their organization. Emphasize your professional compatibility to the organization and job description through your:

- Interest, values, skills, and personality
- Education and experience
- Proudest achievements
- Ways you have overcome obstacles
- Personal strengths/weaknesses
- Why you are attracted to the position
- Have at least 5 success stories prepared – people remember stories longer than lists of qualities
- Bring quantifiable, concrete data to prove to the interviewer that you have what it take, avoiding generalities or vagueness

Know Your Buyer

Make sure you know your career field and industry as well as the company of the interviewer. Make sure you know about their:

- Services and products
- Organizational structure
- History of their organization
- Future plans
- Recent information in the news
- Growth record
- Main competitors (if possible to find)

Become a Good Communicator

- Understand your audience.
- Tailor your answers according to your interviewer’s position in the company.
- Senior members of an organization will be concerned with strategic and large-scale issues.
- Day-to-day supervisors will be more concerned with tactical and small-scale issues.
Responding to Questions
Make sure to keep in mind the following:
- Speak clearly and concisely (two to three minutes per question)
- Take time to collect your thoughts.
- Use nervous energy in a positive manner.
- Be enthusiastic.
- Use active verbs and concrete examples.
- Avoid filler words like “um”, “like…”, “ya know”…etc.
- Do not insult previous employers.
- Maintain a conversational flow.
- Use open and engaged body language.

Be Sincere and Unique
Recruiters are adept at sensing “canned answers.” These responses don’t convey interesting or reliable information about you. When you answer remember these guidelines:
- There is no single right answer. How you answer is often much more important than the exact content of your answer.
- Be honest. Don’t pretend, for example, that you were sure about your major from the start. The details about how you chose it may illuminate your decision making process.
- Give details and examples. General answers become boring.
- Be specific. Details illustrate your points and make answers more vivid and memorable.
- Stay focused and don’t ramble.
- Don’t repeat yourself.
- Respond directly and succinctly.
- Keep the position in mind.

Emphasize Your Best Qualities
Because recruiters look for these qualities, you should highlight them in your interview answers:
- Goal Oriented/High Energy
- Initiative
- Leader
- Organized
- Quick Learner
- Team Work
- Self-Confidence
- Handle Ambiguity
- Integrity
- Communication Skills

Repeat your key strengths several times during an interview
It’s essential that you comfortably and confidently articulate your strengths. Explain how the strengths relate to the company’s or department’s goals and how they might benefit the potential employer. If you repeat your strengths then they will be remembered and if supported with quantifiable accomplishments; they will be more believable.

Put yourself on their team
Emphasize alliance with the prospective employer by using the employer’s name and products, or services. For example, “As a member of _____, I would carefully analyze the _____ and ______.” Show that you are thinking like a member of the team and will fit in with the existing environment. Be careful though not to say anything that would offend or be taken negatively. Your research will help you in this area.

Practice, Practice, Practice
Practice will help you hone your message and improve your delivery. It’s your choice; you can get your practice in the interview or beforehand. Then review what went well and what you could improve for future interviews. Make an appointment with your career advisor and also practice in the comfort of your own home with Interview Stream, our on-line interactive video tool.