

INTERVIEWING

Interviews are exciting, but can also be stressful. Here are some strategies to help you prepare, complete and follow up on interviews. For additional assistance there are workshops and practice interviews available.

Before the Interview

Be Prepared

Know the position.

- *What makes you qualified for the job?*
- *What are the basic and preferred qualifications?*

Research the company and the interview team.

- *What do you know about the company? What are the company's missions, goals or values? Can you get a business card or names and titles from everyone before or at the beginning of the interview?*

Know yourself.

- Review your work history to make sure what you say matches your resume.
- *Why do you want to work at that company?*

Professional Presentation

- Wear Power colors: Black, Gray, Navy
- Choose clothing that fits well and is clean and pressed
- Polished shoes in good condition
- Deodorant is a must (avoid cologne, perfume or body sprays)
- Avoid smoking in interview clothes or around professional materials
- All visible body piercings should be removed, cover tattoos
- Clean, manicured nails
- No gum, drink containers, or large purses/bags

Conduct Company/Job Research

- Start by looking for a company website and thoroughly explore every link.
- Google the company name, learn a little more about them and the management. (Use social media such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
- Contact the potential employer to request details on the position you are interviewing for and ask for company literature.

Know the Employer's Needs

In order to best sell our skills and experience, you must know more about this specific employer.

Pay attention to:

1. How long has the company been in business and/or what is their history?
2. What services and/or products do they offer?
3. What are the company's missions, visions or values?
4. What new things will they be offering in the future?
5. Who is their target customer base?
6. Who are their competitors?
7. What is their mission, vision and values?
8. What are some of their successes? Challenges?

Questions to Ask When Setting Up the Interview

- Is there anything I should know about getting there or parking? Is there a cost?
- What's the best entrance to get to the interview location?
- Will I need to show ID to get into the building?
- Who should I ask for once I arrive?
- I am interested in who will be on the interview panel. Can you please give me their names and job titles?
- Is there anything I should know about the format of the interview? Will I need to bring any work samples or documents?



Reducing Interview Stress

- Try on your interview outfit ahead of time (and sit down).
- Make a trial run to the interview site.
- Prepare your talking points and success stories most relevant to the job description.
- Research your target company. Prepare to show how your qualifications match the employer and job.
- Conduct a vigorous job search to generate as many interviews as possible.
- **Practice makes perfect.** The more familiar you are with interviewing, the less anxiety you will feel with the process. Consider a practice interview at the WBC, especially if you are unfamiliar the process or it has been a long time since your last interview.

Materials to Take to the Interview

- Resume: Always take at least 3 copies with you to the interview.
- References: Have them typed up in a format that matches your resume and be prepared to present them.
- Water.

The Interview

Techniques to be Memorable

- Demonstrate a positive attitude and stay focused on the positives.
- Trust yourself and be confident.
- Give them a sense of who you are and how it would be to work with you.
- Leave them with stories that show real-life work examples, accomplishments or problems you solved.
- Convince the interviewer of your value to the company.
- When answering a question, consider the company's point of view. *What information are they looking for?*



Be Prompt

- Show up in the best possible shape. Get plenty of rest and eat before if necessary.
- Always arrive 10 – 15 minutes early. *If you arrive more than 15 minutes early wait outside.*
- Leave some extra time for any traffic, parking or unpredictable events.
- Get the contact information for the person with whom you are interviewing.

Be Professional

- Turn off your cell phone or to silent. Do not use it while you are waiting. Better yet, leave it in the car.
- Do NOT bring backpacks, gum, iPods, coffee or soda or anyone else into your interview.
- Be aware of body language. It's just as important as verbal communication.

Be Positive

- Stay Positive. Think Positive. Speak Positively.
- Convey a “can-do” attitude
- Smile and greet everyone from the reception staff to the interviewer. *(You never know who has input in the hiring process.)* Walk into the office with a smile, it will put you and your interviewer in a good mood.

What Not to Do During the Interview

- Don't Ask:
 - How much does this job pay? What are the benefits?*
 - How soon can I move up to higher position?*
 - Can I work from home?*
 - How much vacation would I get?*
 - Anything that causes them to give an opinion or make a judgment.*
- Don't give irrelevant information – stay focused on your professional strengths and only provide information the employer needs to hire you.
- Don't talk too much – A person's attention span is usually short. Total attention = 0 – 30 seconds
- Don't talk too little. Avoid giving only yes and no answers.

Commonly Asked Questions Tips

- **Tell me about yourself.**
The wrong answer is telling your life story or giving irrelevant information. One way to answer is with your Elevator Speech. An **elevator speech** is a short professional summary used to quickly and simply define yourself and your value and is tailored to the person and company you are talking to.
- **What is your greatest weakness?**
It is best to accentuate the positive. Choose examples that might be seen negatively, but prove how they are positive.
- **What salary are you expecting?**
The best starting point is to say it's "negotiable". However, it is still important to know what the current salary range is for the profession. Find salary surveys at the library, on the Internet or on O*Net to see what comparable jobs in your area are paying. This information can help you negotiate compensation once the employer makes an offer.

Reasons for Leaving Last Job

Don't Say	Better Explanation
◆ Quit	◆ Resigned/Job Ended
◆ Fired	◆ Growth Opportunity
◆ Boss didn't like me	◆ Relocated
◆ Bad/Unsafe working conditions	◆ Financial Reasons
◆ Not enough money	◆ Seeking salaried employment
◆ Didn't like the work	◆ Career change
◆ Transportation issues	◆ Office/job location
◆ Personal family problems (no childcare)	◆ Personal considerations (no longer an issue)
◆ Injury on former job	◆ Laid off
◆ Illness	◆ Raise family/care for sick family member
◆ In prison	◆ Temporary employment
	◆ Self-employed
	◆ Business closed
	◆ Contract Ended

Dealing with Illegal Questions

Employers should not ask about any of the topics in the list to the right unless it specifically relates to the job requirements; to not hire a candidate because of any one of them is discriminatory.

You have 3 options for responding:

1. **Refuse to answer the question.** (Not a good choice.)
2. **Answer the question.** If you do not mind or do not think they will hold it against you, feel free to answer it.
3. **Answer the "intent" of the question.** Tell them the only legal information they need to know for the position. For example, if they ask personal questions about children or transportation, explain you have plans for those issues so they won't get in the way of work.

This is not an exhaustive list.

- Race
- Color
- Sex
- Gender
- Religion
- Age
- National origin
- Birthplace
- Disability
- Marital/family status

"Do you have any questions?" "Yes!"

Here are a few questions to ask at the end of the interview. Asking questions shows interest in the position and active listening during the interview. The right questions can also help you decide if you really want the job.

- **What are the most important qualities for someone to excel in this role?** This question can give information that's not in the job description.
- **Can you describe the culture of the company?** It can help you learn about the company culture and expectations so you can show that you are a good fit.
- **What are the biggest opportunities/challenges facing the company/department that I can help to overcome?** This question shows your drive to seize opportunity and may help you learn more about where the company will be focusing over the next several months.
- **What are the next steps in the interview process?** This question shows that you are eager to move forward in the process and gives the timeline for hiring so that you can follow up in a timely manner. Find out how to contact them and their preferred method of communication.
- **Follow up with additional questions and provide additional information as appropriate.**

Closing the Interview

- There's much more to an interview than simply shaking hands and saying good-bye. You have the opportunity to make a closing statement that makes a strong impression, summarizes why you are the right person for the job or clears up any misconceptions that may have cropped up.

After the Interview

Post Interview Tasks

- Get a business card from everyone who interviewed you and thank them for their time.
- Make notes of the questions asked in the interview, good responses you made or ones you want to improve.
- Write a “Thank You” letter.
- Track your interviews and follow up within the appropriate deadline.

Interview Checklist

Pre-Interview

- Plan, Prepare, Practice, Perfect**
- Know how you satisfy the job requirements**
- Research the company and prepare examples of how you will benefit the company**
- Select professional interview clothes**
- Prepare copies of resumes and list of professional references**
- Do a practice interview and get feedback**
- Find out who will be part of the interview**
- Research the interviewer/team if possible**

During the Interview

- Carry the interviewers contact information with you**
- Have copies of your resume, references and water**
- Be friendly and build a professional rapport**
- Display a positive attitude and positive energy; demonstrate your ability/desire to learn**
- Maintain eye contact with the interviewer(s)**
- Monitor your tone and volume – Speak gently, but loud and clear**
- Be aware of your body language; read the interviewer’s body language and adjust your responses**
- Ask the interviewer for clarification of questions or terminology if it is unclear**
- If you don’t know something, admit it – then express your desire and ability to learn**
- Speak about your strengths with confidence**
- Prepare questions you would like to ask the interviewer**
- Have your positive closing statement prepared**
- Find out the timeline for hiring**
- Get the interviewer or interview team’s contact information**

Post-Interview

- Shake hands and thank them for their time**
- After the interview, take notes – How it went, unanswered questions, etc.**
- Write a “Thank You” letter within 24 hours and hand deliver it**
- Follow up with a call to see if they need additional information**