



INTERVIEWING SUCCESS

Don't underestimate the importance of an interview. It is the single most important part of an employer's selection process. But there's no need to get butterflies or sweaty palms if you're prepared to effectively package and present your skills and abilities, work and volunteer experiences, academic accomplishments, and career interests.

Interview Goals and Objectives

The purpose of an interview is to determine whether you are right for the job and whether the job is right for you. The job interview is a two-way exchange of information between you and a prospective employer. Equally important, the interview also provides an opportunity to ask pivotal questions about the organization and the position. This will help you decide if there is a good match between your qualifications, career goals, and the position for which you're interviewing.

YOUR INTERVIEW GOALS

- Demonstrate how your experience, knowledge, and capabilities match the qualities and skills the organization is seeking.
- Convince the interviewer of your enthusiasm for their company, that you will "fit in," and that you will contribute to the needs of the organization and the position.
- Gather information that will help you decide whether you can be successful in the position and whether the company will give you the opportunity for growth and development.

EMPLOYER'S INTERVIEW GOALS

The employer wants to find out:

- Can you do the job? (Skills needed to do the job)
- Can you handle the work? (Transferrable skills: manage, communicate, coordinate, etc.)
- Does your personality fit the job and the team? (honest, open-minded, flexible, tolerant, team-player)
- Do you really want to work there?

IMPORTANT EVALUATION CRITERIA

- **Appearance:** Dress appropriately for the interview.
- **Greeting/Introduction:** Stand to greet your interviewer with a handshake, using their name. Also, make good eye contact with the interviewer, smile, and be professional.
- **Body Language:** During the interview, be aware of your eye contact, subtle use of hands while speaking, good posture, etc.
- **Attitude:** Your attitude toward work and working with others is crucial in the hiring process. Be sure to convey an attitude that is enthusiastic, sincere, and genuine.
- **Responses to the Interview Questions:** Do your research and practice, practice, practice! Know your goals and be able to express them to the interviewer.
- **Oral Communication:** Speak clearly and concisely. Try to think out your response before jumping to answer a question.
- **Preparation:** Prepare questions for your interviewer and research the position and company.



Interview Settings

PHONE & VIRTUAL INTERVIEWS

Many employers conduct initial screening interviews or interviews with long-distance candidates, via telephone or video conferencing software such as Skype. While these are more efficient and cost-effective methods of interviewing, they come with an additional set of challenges than in-person interviews.

Tips for Phone Interviews

- **Avoid Distractions:** Conduct the interview in a quiet place, where you will be free from distractions and interruptions. Be sure to turn off the ringer on all phones. Don't drive during the interview or engage in any other activities.
- **Use a Landline:** Try to use a landline whenever possible to ensure a higher quality call. If you must use a cell phone, make sure the battery is charged and you have a strong signal.
- **Ignore Call Waiting:** Do not answer any other phone calls during your interview.
- **Prepare Notes:** One advantage to the phone interview is that you can refer to notes. Write down key points or examples of success stories you wish to share during the interview. Keep your resume, cover letter, and the job posting nearby for reference.
- **Give Focused, Concise Responses:** Since you are unable to pick up on the interviewer's nonverbal cues it is more difficult to know how you are coming across. End your sentences with definitive stopping points to avoid confusing the interviewer.
- **Ask for Time:** During phone interviews it is important to communicate your need for more time when answering a tough question. Failing to do so may create an awkward silence.
- **Dress Professionally and Smile:** It may be difficult to convey professionalism and enthusiasm over the phone. To help you get into a professional frame of mind, wear professional attire and sit at a desk or table. To convey enthusiasm, smile throughout the interview.

Tips for Video Conference Interviews

- **Test Out Your Computer Equipment:** Make sure your software is properly installed and that your webcam and microphone work a few days before your interview. Do a couple test runs with family and friends so you can get feedback about how you come across.
- **Sign on Early:** Sign on 15- 20 minutes ahead of time to be sure you are available when the interviewer calls to reach you.
- **Remember, They Can See You:** This means you should dress and groom yourself as you would for an in-person interview.
- **Prepare Your Backdrop:** Be sure to set up your webcam so it faces a professional-looking background. Rearrange things if necessary or choose a location where there is only a wall behind you.
- **Speak Slowly and Clearly:** Be sure to speak slowly and clearly since you may have to deal with technical interference or noises.
- **Look into the Camera:** Remember to look at the camera rather than your screen. Although this may feel awkward at first, it will help ensure that you are making good eye contact.
- **Don't Forget to Smile!**



ON-SITE INTERVIEWS

The on-site visit may be your first contact with the prospective employer, or it may be the final step in the process. The on-site interview gives you a chance to tour the facility, interact with staff at all levels, learn more about the organization's products and services, and experience the work environment and its employees.

An initial on-site interview will generally last 45 minutes to one hour. If things are going well, it may last several hours. It is not uncommon for follow-up interviews for entry-level jobs to last an entire day. An important point to keep in mind is scheduling. Do not schedule more than two initial interviews in one day. When you receive an invitation to a follow-up interview, try to clear your schedule for the entire day so that you do not have to cut short your opportunity to present your qualifications and obtain a job offer. On-site interviews may include multiple interviews, meals, a tour, and require you to give a presentation.



Common Interview Types

TRADITIONAL

The traditional interview is what most people think of as an "interview." It is directed by the interviewer who typically speaks about 25% of the time and the interviewee speaks 75% of the time. A traditional interview relies upon a question and answer session and has a structured format with a formal introduction and a closing.

NON-DIRECTIVE

This is a very unstructured interview style. It is more like a conversation than an interview. The interviewer may do all of the talking or very little. The best way to handle this type of interview is to make opportunities to talk about your skills and how they fit the position and to ask questions. Prepare for this type of interview by having five to ten points you want to make about your skills and how you can contribute to the company.

BEHAVIORAL

Research has indicated that the interview is not always the most effective means of selection, more and more companies are using this method. Behavioral interviews assume that past performance is a predictor of future behavior. Therefore, questions are targeted to measure your potential in several critical areas, such as leadership, problem-solving, and decision-making, by asking you to reference specific examples of your past performance in each of the designated areas.



Behavioral interview questions usually start with the following prompts “Tell me about a time when,” “Describe a situation when,” or “Give me an example of.” The following is an example of a behavioral question, “describe a time when other members of work team disagreed with your ideas. What did you do?” Strong responses to behavioral interview questions use the STAR technique.



S - Situation - Describe the problem, decision, project, etc.

T - Task - What were the major tasks involved?

A - Action - What did you do?

R - Result - What were the outcomes of your actions?

Responses to these types of questions are difficult to create on the spot and should be prepared ahead of time. Think about various situations from work, classes, or student organizations and use the STAR technique to identify key pieces of information. A list of sample behavioral questions can be found at the end of this guide.



Preparing Yourself for the Interview

The interview is your chance to really shine. Interviewing is a skill; strong interview skills are the result of practice. Careful preparation and knowing what to expect are critical to conveying a polished image.

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

Know Yourself

The best preparation is to know yourself: your skills and abilities, your talents and your values. Begin by taking time to assess yourself.

- Think of five to seven skills or qualities that you would use to describe yourself. You may be asked, “What three words would you use to describe yourself.” If you are, then you have a set of five from which to choose.
- Look at the job description and the requirements of the job. What skills do you have that directly match the position? If they are looking for someone with teamwork or leadership skills and you have developed those skills, emphasize those skills in the interview.
- Take some time to think about your past. How did you develop the skills you have? What did you do in college that made you who you are today? Did you learn teamwork from a student organization? Did you learn problem solving through jobs you’ve held or group projects?
- Finally, look over your resume and see if it adequately includes words and descriptions that will convey your skills to an employer. Write outlines for your answers to anticipated questions, and then rehearse them out loud for practice.

Know the Employer

Before each interview, take time to research the company. Researching the company or institution shows genuine interest in the career or educational opportunity and it allows you to gain valuable information as well. By learning about the company or institution, you are able to see if it is a place where you would like to find employment. Also, this time spent will help generate questions to ask the employer during the interview process. You should know the answers to the following questions for each company with which you interview:

- What is the company's culture, values, and history?
- What are the services, products, and programs this organization provides?
- Who are their competitors?
- What size is the company?
- Where are they located?
- Is it expanding or downsizing?
- What kind of training programs does it use?
- What new things are happening?
- What is the recent history of the company?



DURING THE INTERVIEW

You have done your research on yourself, the company, the industry, and how to interview, now you need to focus on the delivery of the information during the interview.

- Shake your interviewer's hand at the beginning and end of the interview.
- Stress the positive points about yourself in a confident, factual, and honest manner.
- Be concise and specific when representing yourself.
- Monitor your non-verbal communication (i.e. eye contact, voice projection, posture, nervous habits).
- Convey enthusiasm about the position.
- If you get stuck on a question, it is okay to pause. Often, you can say, "That's a very good question; let me take a minute to think about that." Although a short pause is okay, try to avoid a lengthy one.
- Avoid speaking negatively about yourself or others.
- Know and use the interviewer's name.
- Politely ask for clarification if you do not understand a question.
- Raise questions at the appropriate time. Coming prepared with three to six questions to ask the interviewer shows interest in the position. A list of sample questions to ask can be found at the end of this guide.
- Before you leave, know the next step after the interview by asking, "What are the next steps in the process and when should I be hearing back from you?"
- Be sure to thank the interviewer for their time and consideration.



FOLLOWING THE INTERVIEW

Always send a thank you letter within 24-hours following an interview. It is a professional courtesy and demonstrates your consideration, enthusiasm, and appreciation for the opportunity to interview. A brief, to-the-point letter can be the difference between getting the job or not. Check the letter carefully for grammar and spelling, and make sure you have the interviewer's name and title correct. Thank you letters are commonly sent via e-mail, but can also be hand written.

Be sure to include the following elements in your thank you letter:

- Thank the interviewer for their time and interest in meeting with you and explaining the position.
- Emphasize the skills, strengths, and ability you can bring to the position.
- Express your interest in the position.

Sample Thank You Letter

William J. Smith

123 Main Street, Columbus, OH 43210 • 555-123-4567 • buckeye.1@osu.edu

March 1, 20XX

Ms. Joanna Gray
Human Resources
WM Pharmaceuticals
111 Sunny Avenue
Columbus, OH 43212

Dear Ms. Gray:

I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to meet with you to discuss the pharmaceutical sales position. I enjoyed speaking with you and learning more about WM Pharmaceuticals, the Formulations department, and the position.

My enthusiasm for the position and interest in working for WM Pharmaceuticals has been greatly strengthened as a result of our interview. As I mentioned, my interests in the pharmaceutical industry began long before my academic program. I hope that my skills, experience, and enthusiasm reflect what you seek in a candidate. I am certain that my strong work ethic will support your staff and customers alike. I am confident that my academic background and work experience provide a good fit with the requirements of this position.

If there is any additional information you need, please do not hesitate to contact me. I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you again for the interview and for your consideration.

Sincerely,

William J. Smith