

CAREER SERVICES *at Whitworth*

Guide to Interviewing

Congratulations! You have been invited to a job interview. Based on your resume and cover letter, your qualifications match those the employer is seeking in a candidate. The next step is the interview.

The resume tells an employer what you've done.

The interview enables you to tell the employer what you have learned from what you've done.

PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

Preparation is critical in conveying a positive and polished image, and having a productive and successful interview.

Know Yourself

- Identify your skills, interests, and values.
- Consider your strengths and weaknesses.
- Identify accomplishments you are proud of and things you might have done differently.
- Provide examples to demonstrate how you have developed your skills.

Know the Employer and the Field

- Research the employer, the position, and the industry or field.
- Read current periodicals and trade journals to learn about current trends in the field.
- Review mission statements, annual reports, and company websites.

Practice for the Interview

- Participate in a videotaped mock interview at Career Services.
- Review interview questions with a friend.

Additional Tips

- Prepare a game plan or strategy for every interview; make sure you share the information that you feel is most appropriate and relevant.
- Keep to the point. Don't bring up irrelevant matters.
- Don't try to dominate the interview. Let the interviewer guide the questions.
- Ask appropriate questions.

THE INTERVIEW

Employers hope to learn as much as possible about you in the interview. They will be paying attention to:

Nonverbal Communication Skills

- Greet the employer with a firm handshake.
- Maintain steady eye contact with the interviewer.
- Sit attentively to demonstrate your interest and enthusiasm.
- Dress in a suitable manner to convey a polished, professional image.

Verbal Communication Skills

- Listen carefully to what is being asked and answer the question.
- Ask for clarification if you don't understand the question.
- Use clear, concise answers.
- Use proper grammar.
- Don't exaggerate and don't be negative.
- Be specific; refer to concrete experiences.

Interview Etiquette

- Arrive on time.
- Introduce yourself.
- Get the correct spelling of the person's name and his/her exact title. Ask for a business card.
- Don't call the interviewer by his/her first name unless invited to do so.
- Don't ask about salary and benefits until the employer brings up the subject.
- Send a thank you note promptly.

BEHAVIOR-BASED INTERVIEWS

More and more employers are now conducting job interviews that focus on experiences, behaviors and dimensions that are job related.

Your answer to a behavior-based question must tell a story by giving a specific example of a situation you handled successfully. If your response is not specific, you will find that the interviewer will continue to probe until you have provided concrete examples. Be prepared to answer questions such as:

- "Tell me about a time when you had to work with a difficult boss."
- "Give me an example of a situation where you took charge."
- "Please describe a situation in which you were involved in a project as part of a team."

SAMPLE QUESTIONS ASKED BY EMPLOYERS

Questions about your college experience

- Why did you choose Whitworth University?
- Why did you choose your major?
- Which classes and subjects did you like the best? Least? Why?
- Do you think your grades are a good indication of your academic ability?
- Describe your most rewarding college experience.

Questions about your characteristics

- What do you consider to be your major strengths and weaknesses?
- How would a friend or professor who knows you well describe you?
- What accomplishment has given you the most satisfaction?
- What major problem have you encountered and how did you deal with it?

Questions about your work experience

- What have you learned from some of the jobs you have held?
- What job have you enjoyed the most?
- What kind of work environment do you prefer?

Questions about the position/employer

- Why did you decide to seek a position with this firm/organization?
- What do you know about our firm/organization?
- What are you looking for in a supervisor?
- Are you willing to travel?
- How do you handle pressure?
- What are your long-term goals/ where do you see yourself in five or ten years?

Open-ended questions

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why should I hire you?
- What makes you unique?

SAMPLE QUESTIONS TO ASK DURING AN INTERVIEW

- Please describe the typical path of a _____(insert job title)_____ in this firm/organization.
- What will be my opportunities for advancement?
- How will I be evaluated?
- What are the goals for this department/organization/firm for the upcoming year?
- What new projects has this department/organization/firm undertaken recently?
- Do you have any questions or concerns about my qualifications that I might answer for you?

THE END OF THE INTERVIEW

At the end of the interview, thank the interviewer for taking the time to meet with you. Make a short, concise summary of your qualifications and stress your interest in the position:

“This interview has convinced me that my abilities match your needs. I am very interested in this position. Could I call you in a few days to check on the status of my application?”

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

Within a few days after your interview, send a short thank you letter to refresh the employer’s memory of you. This is your opportunity to mention any experience or skills that were not discussed in your interview.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

<http://www.rileyguide.com/interview.html>

<http://www.careerjournal.com/jobhunting/interviewing/>

http://www.jobweb.com/Resumes_Interviews/default.htm

<http://content.monster.com/interview/home.aspx>

‘TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF’

Does not mean ‘Tell it all’

If an interviewer gives you the stage in this way, understand that responding is trickier than you think. The following tips can help you provide a memorable and effective description.

1. Start with the end in sight.

Despite the deceptive phrasing, the directive, “Tell me about yourself,” isn’t a polite request for your life story. What the interviewer wants to know is, “Why should I hire you?”

To prepare, you must develop a response tailored to the specific employer and addressing its interests, goals, and needs.

2. Take the time to establish rapport.

When interviewers invite you to tell them about yourself, they’re asking you to step into the spotlight, a place where extroverts and natural performers shine but where introverts can become anxious, tough-tied and self-conscious.

Smile, make eye contact, lean toward and talk *to* and not at your listener.

3. Sketch the big picture.

Experience candidates should focus on the big picture first so that interviewers will place later information in the proper context. Start by providing an overview that allows them to see your career in total.

4. Focus.

After you sketch the big picture, talk about specific experiences that are most relevant and interesting to an interviewer. Your research can pay off here. Learning as much as you can about the industry, employer and job (via the job description) allows you to zero in on your most relevant qualifications and experiences.

5. Highlight the benefits you'll bring to the employer.

A job search is a self-marketing campaign. Experienced marketing experts say to stress a product's benefits to the customer rather than its features, which could well be clever but the customer might not need them. In a job search, you're the product. Toward the end, orient any discussion of your skills and experiences toward showing how they can benefit your future employer.

6. Spotlight the positive.

Never say anything negative about yourself or previous employers. If you decide to highlight earlier experiences instead of a more recent role, be sure to present all your jobs in a positive light. To do that, emphasize how and why your later experiences enhanced your abilities and scope.

7. Provide details.

Don't expect interviewers to take your story on faith alone. Have specific examples ready to illustrate your skills. For example, to emphasize your problem-solving ability, describe a problem you faced in a past job, what actions you took to resolve it and the result of those actions.

8. Disclose personal information cautiously.

When it comes to disclosing personal information, there's no right answer. It depends on two factors: whether you feel comfortable using personal details and what you plan to accomplish by doing so. While disclosing personal information can be a good icebreaker and rapport-builder, it also can backfire. You never know how an employer will process that information. Will a hiring manager be glad to know you're a family man or worry that you won't be free to travel or work long hours?

9. Finish strong.

When should you return the floor to the interviewer? Use nonverbal signs as your cue. If an interviewer seems restless and bored, ask for feedback about your presentation: "Is this what you want to hear? Or is there something else that you'd like me to focus on?" This allows the interviewer to change the flow of communication and establishes a two-way dialogue.

If the interviewer remains attentive, you'll have more leeway in how you wrap up. The best way to end your statement is to put the conversational ball in the interviewer's court by saying why you're interested in the company and position and asking for more information about current needs. Listen

attentively to the response to determine what parts of your experience and accomplishments to mention as the interview progresses.

Additional resources:

<http://content.monster.com/articles/3479/17513/1/default.aspx>

<http://www.collegegrad.com/jobsearch/Mastering-the-Interview/Ten-Tough-Interview-Questions-and-Ten-Great-Answers/>

http://www.jobweb.com/Resources/Library/Interviews/So_Tell_Me_About_230_01.htm

<http://hrinterviews.blogspot.com/2006/07/01-tell-me-about-yourself.html>

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Employer Informational Interview Questions

Being prepared for your informational interview will be crucial to your success.

Take time to research the company before you interview,
then be ready with articulate questions to ask the employer.

- ~ What are the business's locations and products or services?
- ~ How many people are employed?
- ~ What types of positions are available within the business?
- ~ What qualities and skills does the business look for in hiring new employees?
- ~ What is the rate of employee turnover in your firm?
- ~ What is the average age of (position interested in) employees?
- ~ In the firm, is this position more analytical or more people-oriented?
- ~ What is their educational background? Their major?
- ~ What other courses are most helpful for gaining this particular position?
- ~ What training/schooling aids in preparing for the position?
- ~ Is experience valuable in obtaining positions with the business? If so, what type?
- ~ Is there a training program?
- ~ How many individuals progress through it each year?
- ~ What indoctrination, training, and work is expected during the first few years?
- ~ Are employees required to continue their education in their field once hired?
- ~ What are the starting salaries for entry-level positions in _____?
- ~ What is the average time it takes to advance to _____ level in the business?
- ~ What are the employee benefits with the company/service?
- ~ What is the normal work load/routine?
- ~ Is work at an individual's pace or is it structured?
- ~ How often are performance reviews given?
- ~ Do employees work many hours of overtime?
- ~ How much decision-making authority is given after one year on the job?
- ~ How much travel (if any) is normally expected?
- ~ How frequently are employees relocated (if ever)?
- ~ Is it possible to transfer from one division to another?
- ~ How much input does the new employee have on geographical location?
- ~ Has there been and is there, the promise of technological change?
- ~ What trends and changes will occur with the business in the future?
- ~ How will the current employees be prepared/educated to adapt to these changes?

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“50 Most Common Interview Questions”

1. What are your long range and short-range goals and objectives, when and why did you establish these goals and how are you prepared to achieve them?
2. What specific goals, other than those related to your occupation, have you established for yourself for the next 10 years?
3. What do you see yourself doing five years from now?
4. What do you really want to do in life?
5. What are your long-range career objectives?
6. How do you plan to achieve your career goals?
7. What are the most important rewards you expect in your business career?
8. What do you expect to be earning in five years?
9. Why did you choose the career for which you are preparing?
10. Which is more important to you, the money or the type of job?
11. What do you consider to be your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
12. How would you describe yourself?
13. How do you think a friend or professor who knows you well would describe you?
14. What motivates you to put forth your greatest effort?
15. How has your college experience prepared you for a business career?
16. Why should I hire you?
17. What qualifications do you have that make you think that you will be successful in business?
18. How do you determine or evaluate success?
19. What do you think it takes to be successful in a company like ours?
20. In what ways do you think you can make a contribution to our company?
21. What qualities should a successful manager possess?
22. Describe the relationship that should exist between a supervisor and subordinates.
23. What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction? Why?
24. Describe your most rewarding college experience.
25. If you were hiring a graduate for this position, what qualities would you look for?
26. Why did you select your college or university?

27. What led you to choose your field of major study?
28. What college subjects did you like best? Why?
29. What college subjects did you like least? Why?
30. If you could so do, how would you plan your academic study differently?
31. What changes would you make in your college or university?
32. Do you have plans for continued study? An advanced degree?
33. Do you think your grades are a good indication of your academic achievement?
34. What have you learned from participating in extracurricular activities?
35. In what kind of work environment are you most comfortable?
36. How do you work under pressure?
37. In what part-time work are you interested? Why?
38. How would you describe the ideal job for you following graduation?
39. Why did you decide to seek a position with this company?
40. What do you know about our company?
41. What two or three things are most important to you in your job?
42. Are you seeking employment in a company of certain size? Why?
43. What criteria are you using to evaluate our company?
44. Do you have a geographical preference? Why?
45. Will you relocate? Does relocation bother you?
46. Are you willing to travel?
47. Are you willing to spend at least six months as a trainee?
48. Why do you think you might like to live in the community in which our company is located?
49. What major problem have you encountered and how did you deal with it?
50. What have you learned from your mistakes?

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