



BRIDGEWATER STATE UNIVERSITY
CAREER SERVICES
...student to professional



Effective Interviewing

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EFFECTIVE INTERVIEWING

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PROFESSIONAL ETIQUETTE

In order to be viewed as a reputable candidate it is essential to maintain professionalism in all interactions with employers whether you are at a job fair, presenting your information on a job application, sending an email to schedule an interview or attending an actual interview. Some recruiters WILL dismiss an applicant's candidacy altogether if they find spelling mistakes, abbreviations or inappropriate language in email or conversation. Follow the guidelines below and you will save yourself from being cut.

E-Mail

- Use a professional email address such as joesmith@gmail.com.
- Use a descriptive subject line such as "Marketing Assistant Application".
- Use proper salutations: Mr., Ms., or Dr.
- **DO NOT** use slang words, texting or IM language such as "cuz, btw, or 4". Write in complete sentences. Spell out every word. Do not abbreviate.
- Be concise and to the point. Do not leave the employer with questions.
- Always thank the employer at the end of an email.
- Use spell-check and reread your message before sending.
- Know to whom you're sending a "Forward" or "Reply All" email.



Phone

- Provide the employer with the phone number you will most likely be available to answer. Do not give your landline if you are rarely home.
- Update your voicemail message to an appropriate and professional response such as, "Hello, you have reached ____, I'm sorry that I have missed your call, but if you leave your name and number I will respond as soon as I can. Thank you."
- Turn your cell phone OFF during an interview or meeting with an employer, or leave the cell phone in your car.
- Use discretion when on personal/business calls. Other people CAN hear you!



In Person

- Always greet the employer with a firm handshake, introduce yourself (first and last name) and express interest in meeting him or her.
- Start a conversation about the employer's work. Try to establish a genuine connection so the employer will remember you.
- If the conversation goes well, mention your career objectives and ask the employer for a business card to keep in touch.



Social Networks

Almost everyone has a Facebook or other social media account. Employers may view these accounts. Nothing online is private, so keep the following points in mind:

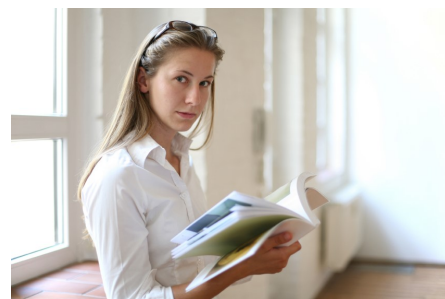
- Maintain strict privacy settings and monitor these on a regular basis (the rules change constantly).
- Everyone can generally see your profile photo, so be sure it is an appropriate image. Check other photos as well and if you question it, it is best to just delete or untag it.
- Examine all the information you have online, Google yourself and delete/update inappropriate information (at the very least during your job search).

STEP I: INTERVIEW PREPARATION

Success in the interview process requires advanced preparation. Preparation will make you more likely to get an offer of a second interview or a job and make you less likely to be nervous. Here are some strategies to help you ace the interview!

Know Yourself

- Know the type of position you are seeking
- Identify your top skill sets and abilities
- Know what you can offer to an organization
- Be able to show how your skill sets and experiences bring value to the job you are seeking
- Consider work and lifestyle values that are important to you when choosing jobs and where you want to work
- Understand the interviewing process and areas in which you may need assistance with



If You Are Unsure

Consider all of your past experiences (jobs, internships, volunteerism, activities, etc.) and ask yourself:

- What do you like to do?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- What motivates you?
- How important is money, location or travel?
- Where will you be happy, energetic and productive?

If you still have struggles with this piece of the puzzle, then contact Career Services and schedule a Career Counseling appointment with a staff member to discuss options and paths that might be suitable for your background.

Research the Employer

This is a commonly ignored step in the preparation process and a common way that candidates get crossed off an employer's list. Almost all interviewers will ask you a form of the question, "What do you know about our company?" or "What attracted you to applying for this opportunity?". A candidate that has good, thoughtful responses to these questions will stand out to an interviewer.

Here are some things you should know about a given company:

- History of the organization
- Organizational structure, branches, additional locations, size
- Major competitors (if applicable)
- Know what they do and/or what they produce
- The mission and vision of the company
- Any recent news, successes, changes to the company
- Know what is occurring in that company's industry in general

Some resources for finding this information:

- Company website
- Google the company
- www.glassdoor.com
- www.hoovers.com provides detailed information about public and private companies
- www.newspaperlinks.com allows you to search for online newspapers in the company's area
- Visit our Researching Employers page at: <http://www.bridgew.edu/CareerServices/Research.cfm>



Practice Commonly Asked Interview Questions

There are a variety of types of questions that an interviewer can ask you, but they tend to be either general questions to put you at ease (Did you have any trouble finding our office?), confirming information about your experience/skills or Behavioral Based Interviewing questions.

Common themes that employers will ask you about:

- Leadership experiences (academic, extra-curricular or work related)
- Teamwork capabilities
- Time management skills
- Ability to work under pressure
- Work ethic/dedication



Commonly Asked Questions Include:

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Who or what has had the greatest influence on the development of your career interests?
3. What factors did you consider in choosing your major?
4. What two or three things are most important to you in a position?
5. Why are you interested in our organization?
6. What goals have you set for yourself? How are you planning to achieve them?
7. What kind of work do you want to do?
8. Tell me about a project you initiated.
9. How do you solve conflicts?
10. What are your expectations of your future employer?
11. What is your GPA? How do you feel about it? Does it reflect your ability?
12. Tell me about how you perceive your strengths. Your weaknesses. How do you evaluate yourself?
13. What work experience has been the most valuable to you and why?
14. What was the most useful criticism you ever received, and who was it from?
15. Give an example of a problem you have solved and the process you used.
16. Describe the project or situation that best demonstrates your analytical skills.
17. What has been your greatest challenge?
18. Describe a situation where you had a conflict with another individual and how you dealt with it.
19. What were the biggest problems you have encountered in college? How have you handled them? What did you learn from them?
20. What are your team-player qualities? Give examples.
21. Describe your leadership style.
22. What interests or concerns you about the position or the company?
23. In a particular leadership role you had, what was the greatest challenge?
24. What idea have you developed and implemented that was particularly creative or innovative?



Commonly Asked Interview Questions Continued

25. What characteristics do you think are important for this position?
26. How have your educational and work experiences prepared you for this position?
27. Take me through a project where you demonstrated leadership skills.
28. How do you think you have changed personally since you started college?
29. Tell me about a team project of which you are particularly proud and your contribution.
30. How do you motivate people?
31. Why did you choose the extracurricular activities you did? What did you gain? What did you contribute?
32. What types of situations put you under pressure, and how do you deal with the pressure?
33. Tell me about a difficult decision you have made.
34. Give an example of a situation in which you failed and how you handled it.
35. Tell me about a situation when you had to persuade another person to your point of view.
36. What frustrates you the most?
37. Knowing what you know now about your college experience, would you make the same decisions?
38. What can you contribute to this company, organization or school?
39. How would you react to having your credibility questioned?
40. What characteristics are most important in a good manager? How have you shown one of these characteristics?
41. What challenges are you looking for in a position?
42. Are you willing to relocate or travel as part of your career?
43. What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction?
44. Describe a leadership role of yours and tell why you committed your time to it.
45. How are you conducting your job search and how will you make your decision?
39. What is the most important lesson you have learned in or out of school?
47. Describe a situation where you had to work with someone who was difficult. How was the person difficult and how did you handle it
48. We are looking at a lot of great candidates. Why are you the best person for this position?
49. How would your friends describe you? Your professors?
50. What else should I know about you?



Behavioral Based Interviewing Questions

Behavioral based interviewing questions are becoming more common and popular with interviewers. These questions ask you how you responded to a particular situation in the past so that the interviewer can get a sense for how you might react in their workplace. While these questions can seem daunting, a variety of examples or responses can be used.

Detecting the Format

To succeed in a behavioral based interview, you must first recognize you are in one. You probably won't be able to tell during the introductory stages, since most behavioral based interviewers still lead off with the traditional "getting-to-know you" chitchat, such as "tell me about yourself." The line of questioning will become more focused and directed towards your previous work experiences. Key tip-off phrases to listen for include:

- "Give me an example of a time when..."
- "Tell me about a situation in which you..."



In behavioral based interviews be prepared to provide much more detail to the hiring manager than you normally would. You will need to answer precise questions regarding your abilities, decisiveness, assertiveness, organizational talents and other skills the employer thinks you need to succeed in this particular position.

Preparation is the Key

The candidates who do the best in these conditions are those who have predicted the questions (or at least the topics) and have planned and practiced their answers. By focusing on the following three areas, you will be able to provide more detailed responses that are essential in behavioral interviews.

1. *Know the Prospective Employer*

Thoroughly research the company and industry you're targeting. The better you understand the company and the industry, the easier it will be for you to provide relevant examples from your previous work experience. Based upon your research, think about the strengths the employer is likely seeking.

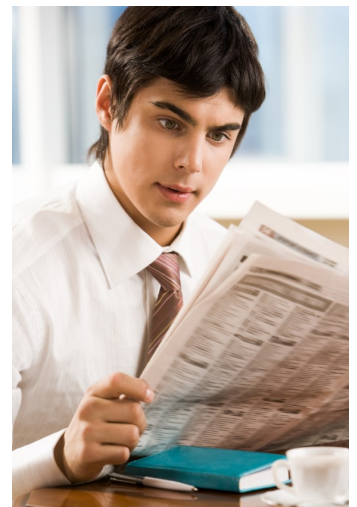
2. *Know the Potential Job*

Don't make assumptions about the available position based on the title. Two positions with identical titles may require very different skills and distinctly different duties. Request a copy of the job description before interviews. It would also be helpful to have copies of your prospective supervisor's and subordinates' job descriptions. These will give you a more complete picture of the department you would join. Armed with this information you will have a better sense of the strengths necessary to succeed in the position you are seeking.

3. *Know Yourself*

Before each interview, try to determine how you would best help the prospective employer. Ask yourself the following questions:

- **What can I really do for this employer?** (What are my strengths and skills?)
- **What could get in the way of success?** (What are my weaknesses?)
- **What motivates me to succeed or do my best?**



Your resume is a starting place, but keep in mind that the interview will focus on what's behind the bullet-pointed points you want to emphasize. If you stress your strong interpersonal, organizational or team-playing skills, choose accomplishments to support your contention. This will allow you to answer behavioral questions with more detail and confidence.

Behavioral Based Interviewing Continued

You will also be successful if you follow the STAR Method approach to answering these questions.

State the situation (What was the project/situation?)

Tasks involved in the situation (What were the tasks/items that had to be completed?)

Actions taken in the example given (Tell the story of how you completed the tasks.)

Results of the actions described (What were the final results of the project?)

Some common examples of these questions are:

- Give me an example of how you exercised leadership in a recent situation.
- Tell me about a recent project you were assigned and how you organized yourself.
- Tell me about a time you were held responsible for a problem you did not cause and how you reacted to it.



With these questions especially, be careful not to get off subject or speak too long. These and most interview questions should be more than a 30 second response, but if you are going well over 2-3 minutes without being asked for more details, you may appear long winded. Always try timing your responses to practice questions to get an idea if you are in the right ballpark.

Handling Failure

Be prepared to provide examples of occasions when results were different than expected. Your skills in handling failure as well as successes will be probed. Think back over the past few years and outline a few job-related errors. As you document these incidents think about what you have learned and how you have changed as a result. Use good judgment when selecting “errors” to mention.

Some Common Mistakes

The following are three key mistakes that candidates frequently make.

1. *Giving Just The Facts:* While you want to be concise and direct, behavioral questions can't be answered well in 15 seconds. It is important to take the time to reply to the questions, then support your answer.
2. *Rambling:* To avoid making the interviewer feel bombarded, gauge the effectiveness of your responses by their content, not on the length of time or quantity of words you're using.
3. *Twisting:* To avoid revealing negative information about themselves, interviewees may twist their responses to make it seem like they are responding to a hypothetical, rather than a behavioral question. If you really can't think of an example from your background that will address the interviewer's question - say so, then go into a hypothetical mode.

For example, you might say: “I can't think of a time when I faced that type of problem, but if I were in such a situation I believe I would...” This lets the interviewer know that you understood the question and are replying to the best of your ability. It is important to try to answer the question you're asked, not the ones you prepared for.

Remember that Career Services is here to help you with the interview process. Schedule a practice interview appointment with a counselor to review your interview preparedness.



Candidates Need to Ask Questions Too!

An interview is a two-way street. The interviewer is learning about you, but this is also your time to learn more about the company and job. Having questions prepared also reinforces your interest in the position and having questions for the interviewer is expected. However, you should limit your questions typically to 2-3 (but have at least 10 prepared), and these questions should not be easily answered by reading company literature, visiting their website or from what was discussed in your interview. Also note that until you have a job offer, you should not ask questions about salary or benefits.

Sample Questions for Candidates to Ask

1. What is your method of training new employees?
2. What type of orientation would I receive?
3. How closely will I be supervised?
4. What is the typical time frame for advancement?
5. How often are performance reviews done?
6. How soon will I be given responsibility?
7. How much travel is normally expected?
8. What characteristics do you think are important for this position?
9. What are some of the major short and long range goals that the company/organization has?
10. In what area does the company/organization excel, and in what area does it have limitations?
11. What are some of the common denominators among the organizations' successful employees?
12. Based on what you have seen of me so far, where do you think I could contribute most effectively?
13. Is there anything you perceive as a weakness in my background?
14. What are some of the characteristics that the company/organization considers to be unique?
15. What would add or subtract from the incumbent's performance to increase their effectiveness?
16. Can you give me some idea of the projects that I may be working on?
17. Could you describe any opportunities for advancement within the organization/company?
18. What outside influences affect the company's/organization's growth?
19. What characteristics do you think are important for this position?
20. Has the company had to lay off employees in the past couple years?
21. How has the company/organization changed over the past 5 or 10 years?
22. Who would you consider to be your major competitors?



Other Questions You Have Developed:



INTERVIEW PREPARATION TIPS FOR EDUCATION MAJORS

Researching School Systems

The research needed when seeking a job in education can be different than what you might need to do when applying to other organizations. School systems can have many similarities and it might be hard to find unique information on one school system versus another. Below are some tips to help in this process:

Review annual reports and school information from district or town websites, public libraries, school departments, local newspapers, real estate offices and city or town halls. A number of useful resources are located on the Career Services web site in the section called *Researching Employers*. There you will find school websites, the Department of Education's School District Profiles and a database of school districts to name a few. To access these websites go to: <http://www.bridgew.edu/CareerServices/Research.cfm>

Additionally, you can get a lot of great information through networking and talking with other people. See if anyone you know works for the school system, and talk to residents of the town.



The following is a list of areas that you may want to research before your interview to give you a better idea of the school, the district and the community you are considering:

- Structure of the school system
- Geographic area/climate/community
- Academic departments or divisions that interest you
- Demographics: size of the school system and school you may be assigned to, enrollment projections, student-teacher ratio, percentage of students who are college bound and drop out rate.
- Diversity of student body and faculty
- Educational philosophy and objectives
- New buildings, projected growth or special programs
- Salary data, personnel policies, tenure and benefits
- Professional development opportunities
- Budgetary concerns

Commonly Asked Interview Questions in Education

As the research process is different, the types of topics and questions that will occur during an education candidate interview will be different as well. The following questions were gathered from school hiring officials and are representative of those that you are likely to encounter as you interview for teaching positions.

Motivation/Experience/Training

- Tell us about yourself.
- Why did you enter the field of teaching?
- What experiences have you had related to teaching?
- What qualities do you have that make you an effective teacher?
- What grade levels or subjects do you prefer to teach?
- Have you taught or are you interested in teaching combination classes?
- Do you have experience with special education students?
- Why do you want to teach in our school district?
- Do you have (multicultural, urban, learning problems) teaching experience?
- What do you remember most about your own education?



Commonly Asked Interview Questions in Education Continued

Teaching Effectiveness

- How do you meet the range of skills and needs commonly present in a classroom?
- When do you use an individual, group and/or whole class teaching approach? Why?
- Let's imagine we are going to observe a teacher teaching a lesson. I tell you in advance to expect a superb lesson. What would you expect to see in that lesson?
- If a teacher wants to be sure pupils will learn a skill to be taught, what should he/she do when teaching?
- How do you diagnose your students' needs?
- How do you make sure your lessons are taught at the correct level?
- How do you stimulate active participation in the classroom?
- How would you use parents in the classroom?

Teacher Planning/Preparation

- What kinds of planning do you see a teacher doing?
- How do you plan for a year? A week? A day?
- How do you know what you will cover?
- What types of resource materials do you like to use?

Classroom Management/Discipline

- What are some characteristics of a well-managed classroom?
- Talk to us about classroom control.
- What discipline methods work for you?
- What is your primary goal with student discipline?
- What are some examples of rules you would have in your classroom?
- How would you be sure your rules are carried out?
- How much responsibility for their learning do you feel students should have to take?
- Are you a "let 'em go to the pencil sharpener whenever they want" type of person or a "raise your hand and ask permission" type of person?
- What types of rewards and consequences would you use?
- Describe your most difficult student discipline situation and how you handled it.



Staff Development/Professional Growth

- What do you see yourself doing over the next several years to improve your abilities as a professional?
- What professional development topics most interest you?

Staff Rapport/Relationships

- As a teacher new to a school, what would you see yourself doing to contribute to healthy staff relationships and to become part of the staff?
- What should a principal expect from teachers?
- What should teachers expect from the principal?

Grading Systems

- What grading system works for you?
- Under what conditions, if any, would most of your pupils receive D's and F's? How and why could this happen?

Closing Comments/Questions

- What additional talents and skills do you have?
- What extracurricular activities can you supervise?
- Do you have questions or additional comments for us?

Candidates Must Be Prepared to Ask Questions Too (Education)

Many articles and books have been written about the “art” of interviewing, but few writers discuss the types of questions teacher candidates should ask their interviewers. By asking pertinent and intelligent questions, a teacher candidate tells the administrator or committee several things. First, the choice of questions lets the interviewer know whether or not the applicant understands fundamental issues related to teaching. Second, the questions also indicate whether or not the candidate is familiar with different issues related to non-teaching responsibilities.

How and what the prospective teacher asks can indicate whether the applicant is seriously interested in teaching students or is just interested in the benefits of the job such as number of days off or sick leave policies. You should be prepared to ask questions, and have several questions in mind prior to your interviews. The questions will be easy to remember if you catalog them into three areas.

Instructional Strategies

- Which grades are responsible for what topics?
- Who has the responsibility for a particular topic?
- May I have a copy of the scope and sequence?
- Tell me about supervision visits.
- How does the administration work with teachers to improve instruction?
- Are there school psychologists, counselors or public agencies that help students and teachers?
- What types of media resources are available?
- How is the budget for this academic program developed?
- What textbooks do you use in this subject area?
- Describe the district’s textbook adoption policies.



Staff/Students/Community

- How would you describe the typical professional staff member in this district?
- What professional skills do you expect of the person you hire?
- Does the staff spend time together outside of normal school hours?
- How does the staff feel about new teachers?
- How active are teachers in working with community organizations?
- Tell me about the students who attend this school.
- How involved are parents in school activities?
- What do parents expect of their teachers?

Extracurricular Responsibilities

- What is the budget for this activity?
- What does the community expect of activity sponsors?
- Are there auxiliary groups involved in the activity?
- Are there fund-raising requirements that are part of this activity?
- May I have a copy of this year’s activity calendar?
- Are other faculty members also assigned to this activity?

If you plan ahead for your interviews, your questions can give the interview team an idea of how knowledgeable you are about educational issues. Your questions can also indicate your philosophy about working with students and staff and any special expertise you may have.



Don’t forget—the interview should go both ways. You need to ask questions not only to indicate your interest and knowledge, but also to determine if this position is the one you want.

WHAT TO BRING AND WHAT TO WEAR

Prepare What You Need to Bring for Your Interview

- Professional attire that is cleaned and ironed.
- Padfolio or folder that holds a pad, pen and copies of your resume.
- Bring extra copies of your resume for additional interviewers.
- Bring a references page or copies of letters of recommendation in case they are requested.
- Map out the location of your interview and allow extra time.
- Practice driving to the location (if need be) to avoid errors.
- Know the location and cost of parking.
- Arrive 10-15 minutes prior to your interview. It is unacceptable to be late, but if unforeseen circumstances occur, call and say you are running late. You should always give yourself at least an extra 30 minutes.
- Bring your sheet of questions to ask and notes on the company.
- Avoid bringing too much. Keep bulky bags and purses at home or locked in your car.
- Keep your cell phone in your car.
- Get a good night's sleep and be sure to eat something!



Professional Dress

How you look and present yourself is extremely important in the interview process. Professional attire shows the interviewer that you take them seriously, are interested in the position you are applying for and that you are a confident, professional individual.

While you may not need to dress up in a suit when you actually begin working at this organization, you should always go above and beyond; it is EXPECTED by recruiters that you will do this. However, there are a handful of fields such as the creative arts where such attire may seem over the top. The best bet is to err on the side of caution and overdress, or when scheduling the interview appointment, inquire as to the expected attire of employees to gain some insight into the operation.

Clothing

- Look professional - positive first impression
- Conservative suit, navy blue, black, gray
- White or pale colored shirts/blouse
- Black or dark shoes
- Match belt color with shoe color
- Wear something that makes you feel terrific and is comfortable
- Combine personal style with good taste
- Accessories: Minimal, simple/ tasteful jewelry, watches, ties, scarves, barrettes, etc.



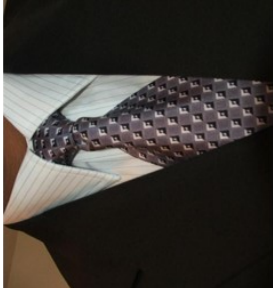
Grooming

- Hair and make-up should be neat and not attract attention
- Scents, perfume and aftershave should be subdued...don't overdo it
- Men, clean-shaven or beards/mustaches trimmed
- Hands clean and nails manicured
- Watch what you eat before/during an interview (no onions, spinach, etc.)
- No visible piercings or tattoos

The charts on the next two pages will give you some details and insights into what you need to dress professionally.

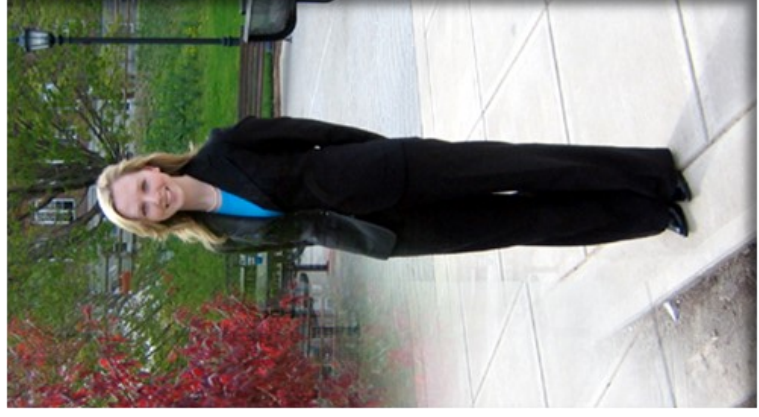
Dress for Success Checklist for Men

- ☐ **Suit**—Wear a matching two-piece suit in dark gray, navy, brown or black.
- ☐ **Shirt**—White, solid, or striped shirt in cotton with long sleeves.
- ☐ **Tie**—Should contain colors of suit or shirt and be long enough to hit at or fall just below the belt.
- ☐ **Belt**—Solid color, plain and smooth leather; belt should match shoes.
- ☐ **Socks**—Dress socks, not heavy or cotton athletic socks. Match the color of your suit.
- ☐ **Shoes**—Dress shoes, polished and well-maintained. The color should match the belt.
- ☐ **Accessories**—Minimal jewelry: classic watch, one or two rings at most, piercings removed. Bring a padfolio containing a few copies of your resume, reference page, a notepad, a pen and business cards.
- ☐ **Grooming**—Clean shaven or recently trimmed facial hair. Neatly arranged and recently trimmed hair. Shower morning of interview and apply minimal cologne if any and use deodorant. Clean, clipped nails.
- ☐ **One More Thing**...Be sure to stop by the men's room before the interview and make sure your tie is straight, your hair is neat, any tattoos are hidden, your shirt is tucked in and your breath and teeth are clean.



Dress for Success Checklist for Women

- ☐ **Suit**—Wear a matching two piece suit in dark gray, navy, brown or black; the suit can be a pants or skirt suit.
- ☐ **Blouse**—White, solid, or print shirt in cotton; a blouse can be substituted; no low necklines, no cleavage showing, no large patterns.
- ☐ **Skirt**—If you choose a skirt suit, the skirt should be at or barely above the knee and not tight fitting.
- ☐ **Pantyhose**—Pantyhose should always be worn in a skin toned shade. You can wear knee highs hose with pants only. Be sure to bring an extra pair of panty hose with you in case of a run.
- ☐ **Shoes**—Dress shoes, polished and well-maintained. Color should be either black or match color of suit. No open toed shoes, no flats; no heels above 2 inches.
- ☐ **Accessories**—Minimal jewelry: classic watch, one or two rings, small gold or silver earrings, simple necklace at most. No bangle bracelets. Just one piercing in each ear, all others should be removed. Bring a padfolio containing a few copies of your resume, reference page, a notepad, a pen and business cards. Handbag, if needed, should be small and match shoes.
- ☐ **Grooming**—Neatly arranged hair. If hair is below your shoulders, it needs to be pulled back in a pony tail or a bun. Shower the morning of interview and apply minimal perfume if any and use deodorant. Clear or light-colored polish on nails. Makeup is recommended but minimal and lightly applied - light toned lipstick, eyeliner, mascara, blush and foundation if needed.
- ☐ **One More Thing...**Be sure to stop by the ladies room before the interview and make sure your skirt is straight, your hair is neat, any tattoos are hidden, your shirt or blouse is tucked in and your breath and teeth are clean.



PHONE INTERVIEWS

Phone interviews are often used to screen candidates in order to narrow the pool of applicants who will be invited for in-person interviews. Most recruiters will contact you to set up a phone interview that is at a mutually beneficial time. There are cases when you may be contacted by a recruiter who is interested in holding an impromptu phone interview. Be prepared for either situation.

Prior to the phone interview you should prepare by do the following:

- Confirm day, date and time of the interview. Be sure you know whether the interviewer is calling you or if you need to call him/her.
- Know who will be conducting the interview. When you are scheduling a phone interview or an on-site interview ask with whom you will be speaking. You may be interviewed by multiple people and if so, you want to be mentally prepared to do so.
- Research the organizations website and review the job description.
- Practice answering commonly asked interview questions and select questions you would like to ask.
- Use a land line if possible. If you are using a cell phone make sure you have crystal clear reception.
- Find a quiet place where you will not be disturbed and will be able to concentrate.
- Collect your cover letter, resume, job description, a pad of paper and pen and have them in front of you.
- If possible turn on your computer/laptop and have the organization's website in front of you.



The phone interview is very similar to that of an in-person interview. You will be asked a series of questions and will then be given the opportunity to ask the interviewer(s) questions.

Below are some pointers you should keep in mind during your phone interview:

- Keep a glass of water nearby in case you need to wet your mouth.
- Smile. Smiling will project a positive image to the listener and will change the tone of your voice.
- Speak slowly and enunciate clearly (don't smoke, eat or chew gum).
- Dress the part. Some candidates feel that if they dress in interview attire for their phone interview it puts them in the right state of mind.
- Use the person's title (Mr. or Ms.) and their last name. Only use a first name if they ask you to.
- Don't interrupt the interviewer.
- Take your time - it's perfectly acceptable to take a moment or two to collect your thoughts.
- Give short, detailed answers providing examples when you can.
- Ask 2 - 3 questions when given the opportunity to show your interest in the company and the position.

At the end of the interview, thank the interviewer(s) for their time and ask them what the next step is in the process (if they haven't already discussed it with you). If you do not have the interviewer's email address ask for it at this time.

After the Phone Interview

Immediately after the phone call, send a thank you to all parties involved in the interview thanking them for their time and reiterating your interest in the position.

Resources: www.quintcareers.com and jobsearch.about.com



STEP II: THE ACTUAL INTERVIEW

It is a simple fact that everyone is nervous during interviews. However, with practice and some knowledge of the process, it is easier to quickly overcome those fears and take control of the interview.

Types of Interviews

- **Screening Interviews:** These are often brief 20-30 minute sessions focusing on resume type information. They can either be in person or over the phone.
- **Human Resources:** Often before you meet with an actual supervisor, you meet with the organization's human resources representative to cover basic questions and determine your suitability.
- **Hiring Manager:** Meeting with your potential supervisor often comes later in the process once your basic suitability for the position has been determined. This interview often is more focused on your skill sets and personality to see if you are a good fit for the work team.
- **Group or Panel Interviews:** Often there are search committees established to assist with the recruiting of candidates. This team assists with resume reviews, screening interviews and are often included in the second or final round of interviews. The preparation is the same, but remember to write down everyone's name and title for thank you notes! When someone asks you a question first address that person but then be sure to engage the rest of the group in the conversation by making eye contact with all; you do not want people to feel left out.
- **Dining Interviews:** While not common, you might be invited to a meal with an interviewer or be taken out to lunch when you go for your on site interview. The keys to remember are to use proper manners (they are assessing these skills), the focus is conversation and not the meal, and remember to avoid messy foods!
- **Case Interviews:** With this type of interview, candidates are given a task or problem and asked to come up with a resolution. As a candidate it is expected that you will ask detailed questions about the situation to help you formulate a response. The actual solution is not as important as how you formulate and defend your argument. The purpose is to assess your numerical and verbal reasoning skills, communication and presentation skills and your awareness of market trends.
- **Inbox Task Interviews:** Similar to the case interview, you are given a situation or task you would receive on the job and must complete the task. Your productivity, communication skills, time management and professionalism are being assessed.



Stages of the Interview

- **Introduction and rapport building:** The interviewer will ask general questions such as "Did you find us okay?" to put you at ease.
- **Verifying Information From Your Resume**
- **Questions and Answers:** Types of questions can vary by interview, so be sure to prepare for various types of interview questions.
- **Candidate's Questions:** You should have questions to ask the recruiter! Have a list of at least ten questions prepared but generally you should ask only a handful of those. These questions should not be related to salary or benefits and should not be easily answered by looking online.
- **Promoting Organization:** The organization wants top talent, so they will spend time trying to sell you on them and the position.
- **Closing and Follow-up:** The recruiter should let you know what the next steps are in the application process and appropriate means of communicating with them. If not, you should ask for this information and always leave with a business card!



The Importance of Effective Communication

The importance of effective communication skills, both verbal and non-verbal, cannot be emphasized enough. Hiring managers consistently state that candidates, especially recent graduates struggle in their non-verbal mannerisms and how they verbally express their ideas and/or skill sets.

Nonverbal Communication

Something that candidates do not often think about is the importance of your first impression; You only have one chance to make this impression. People tend to form judgments about someone within the first 10-30 seconds of meeting a person and much of this is based on your appearance, body language and other nonverbal cues.

To avoid being counted out during the first few moments of your interview, here are some tips to keep in mind:

- **Dress professionally:** Professional interview attire is one of the first things an interviewer notices and not dressing professionally is one of the quickest ways to get crossed off the list. Argue all you want about needing to dress up, but consider this: if all things are equal in terms of skill sets and you are the only person who did not dress professionally, chances are you will not get the job.
- **Always greet individuals with a firm handshake:** Avoid crushing their hand, sweaty palms or only offering your palm (dead fish). Practice your handshake with others ahead of time.
- **Address everyone by name:** Be sure to pronounce their name correctly.
- **SMILE!:** This not only shows that you are friendly but that you are confident, enthusiastic and ready to impress those whom you are meeting.
- **Maintain eye contact:** While it is not a staring contest, you need to be tuned in to the person to whom you are speaking. Nothing says "I am not interested in what you are saying" like looking around the room or down at the floor. Lack of eye contact makes it seem as though you lack confidence or are lying.



- **Posture:** Posture says a lot about your confidence and comfort level. Sit up straight and lean slightly in to indicate interest in what someone is saying. Avoid crossing your arms or legs as this shows that you are feeling uncomfortable or defensive.
- **Gestures:** We all do things like move our hands around while talking, but be conscious to not overdo it! Avoid hair twirling, nail biting and/or pen clicking. Keep your hands in your lap if possible.
- **Personality:** You express this even before you start talking. You want to appear enthusiastic, excited and interested in the opportunity.

Verbal Communication

What you say during the interview is obviously important, but it is also important how you say it. During an interview you should:

- Speak clearly and articulately.
- Carefully pronounce what you are saying. Avoid abbreviations or slang terms.
- Speak loud enough so that you can be heard without strain.
- Use a warm and friendly tone of voice.
- Control the rate of your speech. Try to avoid talking too fast.
- Match your communication style to that of the interviewer. If they are using a business-like tone, then you should as well.
- Never interrupt the interviewer.
- Be comfortable with silences; it is okay to take a moment to collect your thoughts.
- Related to this, avoid verbal fillers to fill in silences. These are the “umm”, “like” or “you know” statements that end up making you seem unprofessional and unorganized.
- LISTEN: If you are not carefully listening, you could end up answering the wrong question.
- Ask for clarification if you are unsure of what the interviewer is asking; it is better than going off on a tangent.



Answering the Questions Effectively

A common complaint from hiring managers is that candidates often do not clearly articulate certain key skill sets such as leadership abilities and organization skills. You need to be ready with relevant examples of how you exhibited key skill sets in your life. The position description will help you identify what are some of the important skill sets to hone in on, but below are some of the most commonly sought after skills today.

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| • Communication Skills (Verbal) | • Technical Skills |
| • Strong Work Ethic | • Organizational Skills |
| • Teamwork Skills (Works Well With Others) | • Leadership Skills |
| • Analytical Skills | • Self Confidence |
| • Initiative | • Tactfulness |
| • Problem Solving Skills | • Friendly/Outgoing Personality |
| • Communication Skills (Written) | • Creativity |
| • Interpersonal Skills (Relates Well to Others) | • Strategic Planning Skills |
| • Computer Skills | • Entrepreneurial Skills/Risk Taker |
| • Flexibility/Adaptability | • Sense of Humor |
| • Detail Oriented | |

From Job Outlook 2011, National Association of Colleges and Employers, Annual Report, November 2010

When you get questions about key skill sets, here are some things to keep in mind:

- The example is not as important as the skill set. If you are asked about your leadership skills, you do not need to have been the president of a club. Discuss supervising others, maybe you are a manager at work or you lead a team on a class project; the point is to explain your skills to the employer.
- Have a well formed example that is not too long.
- Give details to back up the example; do not just mention what you did without discussing it.
- Think about the key skill sets in advance and think about potential responses.



Step III: Interview Follow-up: *What It Is and Why It's Needed*

The practice of following up on a personal interview cannot be stressed too strongly. Follow-up basically means that **within one to two days** of your interview, you prepare and send a formal letter, email or a personal note of thanks to the person(s) who interviewed you. The basic points to be made are:

1. Thank you for the opportunity to interview for the position.
2. Reference conversation, reiterate skills and abilities.
3. Look forward to continuing the interview process.

Writing a follow-up indicates that you are courteous, knowledgeable about the job search process, are still interested in the position, and have thought further about the match-up between the employer's needs and your background.

Even though you may not be offered the position interviewed for, the impression made on the interviewer is usually very positive and may lead to employment with the same firm/organization at a later date. Follow-up is worth the time and effort involved.

Street
City, State, Zip Code

Date

Name of Person, Position
Company Name
Street or P.O. Box
City, State, Zip Code

Dear _____:

First Paragraph. Explain why you are writing. Thank the reader for taking the time to meet with you. Demonstrate your knowledge of the company and position; include specific references to your prior conversation. Grab the reader's attention and spark their interest in inviting you for a second interview and/or hiring you.

Second and Third Paragraph. Focus on two or three outstanding skills or characteristics you can offer the organization. This section of your thank you letter should expand on the discussions that took place during your first interview, elaborating on your skills and abilities, and your commitment to goals and professional accomplishments. What valuable contribution can you make to their organization? Use the personal pronoun "I" sparingly.

Fourth Paragraph. Outline potential next steps. Discuss your continued interest in the company. Demonstrate your initiative by outlining how you will follow-up on this letter. You keep control of the process by specifically stating, "I will call you the week of.....to follow-up". Thank the reader again for their time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Your Signature

Name (Typed)

Sample: *Interview Follow-up Letter*

8712 Graham Boulevard
Staunton, VA 23212

January 28, 2012

Edward Jason
Personnel Administrator
City of Charlestown
P.O. Box 4561
Charlestown, MA 02111

Dear Mr. Jason:

I appreciated the opportunity to interview with you today. Having talked with you and found out in greater depth about the opening you have, I am more sure than ever that I would like to work for the City of Charlestown as Parks and Recreation Director.

Because of my experience directing community recreational programs in Stanton, New York, I feel can bring the kind of leadership to the program in Charlestown that you indicate you need. I believe that, under my supervision, it would be possible to expand the programs without increasing the budget. In these recessionary times that becomes a critical consideration.

I hope to have the opportunity to help Charlestown revitalize its recreational programs. Please let me know if I may provide any further information that will be helpful as you make your decision.

I will call you next Friday, as you suggested, to see how your selection is going. Thank you again for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Sylvia Whitehurst

(Hand written or electronic signature here)

Sylvia Whitehurst

(Typed name)

Excerpted from Interview for Success by Caryl Rae Krannich and Ronald L. Krannich, Ph.D. Copyright Impact Publications, 1998

EMPLOYER FEEDBACK

A commonly overlooked step in the job search and interviewing process is getting feedback on how you are doing. If you never ask a recruiter why you were not offered a position, you cannot make corrections or changes to your strategy. By politely asking an employer if they are willing to share any insights on how you could have been a more likely candidate for the job, you can find issues to correct. Maybe you need more experience, perhaps you interview poorly; these are all things that can be worked on in some way. Below are some common feedback items from employers and things you should be aware of.

Common Constructive Comments Made by Recruiters

- Unsure of career goals
- Work on presenting self
- Not assertive/aggressive enough
- Unable to communicate
- Nervous
- Did not know anything about company
- No enthusiasm
- Lacks confidence
- Too quiet
- Too arrogant, boastful
- No eye contact
- Not serious
- Will have problems dealing with people
- Sounded artificial

Negative Factors Evaluated During an Interview That Frequently Lead to Rejection

- Poor personal appearance
- Overbearing, overaggressive, conceited “superiority complex,” “know-it-all”
- Inability to express him/herself clearly, poor voice, diction, grammar
- Lack of planning for career, no purpose and goals
- Lack of interest or enthusiasm, passive, indifferent
- Lack of confidence and poise, nervousness, ill at ease
- Failure to participate in activities
- Over emphasis on money
- Poor scholastic record, just got by
- Unwilling to start at bottom
- Makes excuses, evasiveness, hedges on unfavorable factors in record
- Lack of tact
- Lack of maturity
- Lack of courtesy, ill mannered
- Condemnation of past employers
- Lack of social understanding
- Marked dislike for schoolwork
- Lack of vitality
- Fails to look interviewer in the eyes
- Limp, fish handshake
- Indecision
- Unhappy personal life
- Friction with parent
- Sloppy application form
- Merely shopping around
- Wants job for only a short time
- Little sense of humor
- Little knowledge of the field
- Parents make decisions for him/her
- No interests in company or in industry
- Emphasis on who he/she knows
- Unwilling to go where we send him/her
- Cynical
- Low moral standards
- Lazy
- Intolerant - strong prejudices
- Narrow interests
- Poor handling of personal finances
- No interest in company activities
- Inability to take criticism
- Radical ideas
- Late to interview without good reasons
- Never heard of company
- Failure to express appreciation for interviewer’s time
- Did not ask questions about the job
- High-pressure type
- Indefinite response to question



As reported by 153 companies surveyed by Frank Endicot, Northwestern University.

RECAP OF INTERVIEW TIPS AND ADVICE

Important Interview Tips (The Do's)

- Map out the location of your interview in advance and allow extra time to arrive at your destination.
- You should arrive 10-15 minutes prior to your appointment time (this is considered "on time"; showing up at your appointment time is considered late).
- Before you check-in, go to a restroom to make sure your tie is straight, hair is neat, pop a mint, etc.
- Remember to treat everyone you meet as if they were the president of the company; interviewers often ask support staff and others about your politeness, etc.
- Turn off your cell phone and all other devices or leave them in your car.
- Address the interviewer by name and know how to pronounce it.
- Thoroughly research the institution/company and the job.
- Be relaxed, but confident. Be sincere and listen.
- Eye contact is critical, especially when making your key points.
- Dress professionally - formal is usually best.
- Be friendly but not pushy or "chummy."
- Use attentive posture and watch your non-verbal behavior.
- Be a problem solver - suggest solutions.
- Assertively express your strengths and accomplishments.
- Pause before answering questions. Prepare interview answers in advance...write down some points and practice aloud.
- Use action verbs in your interview and on the resume. Give concrete examples to back up your points.
- Be able to translate your skills to employer needs.
- Be ready to answer..."Tell me about yourself"... "Why should we hire you?"...and "In what ways can your skills and background be of benefit?"...(all in 3-5 sentences each).
- Prepare thoughtful questions to ask the interviewer that pertain to responsibilities, challenges, opportunity for involvement, staff development, etc.
- Write thank you notes following your interview.



Tips and Common Mistakes (The Don'ts)

- Arriving late, disorganized, poor excuses.
- Chewing gum, smoking, tapping the table, looking at the floor or telling jokes.
- Stumbling over your interview answers.
- Using slang, over talking, argue, being critical, or negative, or defensive, or acting intimidated.
- Evading questions or being afraid to ask questions.
- Acting like you know it all, acting desperate, beg or boast.
- Bringing social life into the interview, sharing personal information and bad experiences.
- Suggesting that the job is a "stepping stone".
- Talking in generalities, waste words or repeating yourself.
- Expressing concerns about title, status, salary, fringe benefits during the interview. This is done only after you have the job offer.
- Saying you "want to work with people".
- Allowing distractions.
- Going into too much detail...1-2 minute responses are appropriate. Don't race through your answer; take your time.
- Being casual in dress or approach.



Used with permission from Dr. Thomas Bachhube, A Guidebook for the Successful Student Development Job Search

Guide to Appropriate Pre-Employment Inquiries

ACCEPTABLE	SUBJECT	UNACCEPTABLE
"Have you worked for this company under a different name?" "Have you ever been convicted of a crime under another name?"	NAME	Former name of applicant whose name has been changed by court order or otherwise.
Applicant's place of residence. How long applicant has been resident of this state or city.	ADDRESS OR DURATION OF RESIDENCE	
	BIRTHPLACE	Birthplace of applicant. Birthplace of applicant's parents, spouse or other relatives. Requirements that applicant submit a birth certificate, naturalization or baptismal record.
"Can you, after employment, submit a work permit if under eighteen?" "Are you over eighteen years of age?" "If hired, can you furnish proof of age?" /or/ statements that hire is subject to verification that applicant's age meets legal requirements.	AGE	Questions which tend to identify applicants 40 to 64 years of age.
	RELIGIOUS	Applicant's religious denomination or affiliation, church, parish, pastor or religious holidays observed. "Do you attend religious services /or/ a house of worship?" Applicant may not be told "This is a Catholic/ Protestant/ Jewish/ Atheist organization."
Statement by employer of regular days, hours or shift to be worked.	WORKDAYS AND SHIFTS	Inquiries about work availability used to screen out applicants because of obligations to the military reserves or National Guard or religious affiliation.
	RACE OR COLOR	Complexion, color of skin or other questions directly or indirectly indicating race or color.
Statement that photograph may be required after employment.	PHOTOGRAPH	Requirements that applicant affix a photo to his application form. Request applicant, at his option, to submit a photograph. Requirement of photograph after interview but before hiring.
Statement by employer that if hired, applicant may be required to submit proof of authorization to work in the U.S.	CITIZENSHIP	Whether applicant or his parents or spouse are naturalized or native-born U.S. citizens. Date when applicant or parents or spouse acquired U.S. citizenship. Requirement that applicant produce his naturalization papers or first papers. Whether applicant's parents or spouse are citizens of U.S.
Languages applicant reads, speaks or writes.	NATIONAL ORIGIN OR ANCESTRY	Applicant's nationality, lineage, ancestry, national origin, descent or parentage. Date of arrival in U.S. or ports of entry; how long a resident has been in the U.S. Nationality of applicant's parents or spouse; maiden name of applicant's wife or mother. Language commonly used by applicant, "What is your mother tongue?" How applicant acquired ability to read, write or speak a foreign language.
Applicant's academic, vocational or professional education: schools attended.	EDUCATION	Date last attended high school.
Applicant's work experience. Applicant's military experience in the armed forces of United States, in a state militia (U.S.) or in a particular branch of U.S. armed forces.	EXPERIENCE	Applicant's military experience (general). Type of military discharge.
"Have you ever been convicted of a crime?" "If so, when, where and disposition of case?"	CHARACTER	"Have you ever been arrested?"
Names of applicant's relatives already employed by this company. Name and address of parent or guardian if applicant is a minor.	RELATIVES	Marital status or number of dependents. Name or address of relative, spouse or children of adult applicant. "With whom do you reside?" "Do you live with your parents?"
Name and address of person to be notified in case of accident or emergency.	NOTICE IN CASE OF EMERGENCY	Name and address of relative to be notified in case of accident or emergency.
Organizations, clubs, professional societies or other associations of which applicant is a member, excluding any names the character of which indicate the race, religious creed, color, national origin or ancestry of its members.	ORGANIZATIONS	List all organizations, clubs, societies and lodges to which you belong.
"By whom were you referred for a position here?"	REFERENCES	Requirement of submission of a religious reference.
"Can you perform all of the duties outlined in the job description?" Statement by employer that all job offers are contingent on passing a physical examination.	PHYSICAL CONDITION	"Do you have any physical disabilities?" Questions on general medical condition. Inquiries as to receipt of Workmen's Compensation.
Notice to applicant that any misstatements or omissions of material facts in his application may be cause for dismissal.	MISCELLANEOUS	Any inquiry that is not job related or necessary for determining an applicant's eligibility for employment.