

Interviewing is one of the most dynamic forms of business and professional communication. The interview gives you a chance to prove to a potential employer that you are capable, competent and qualified. This is your opportunity to effectively market yourself for the career opportunity you seek.

## INTERVIEW FORMAT

No two interviews or interviewers are alike. However, a typical 30-minute interview may follow a format similar to this:

### Greeting and Introduction

The first few minutes of an interview usually consist of a firm handshake, a brief professional introduction, and small talk to develop rapport between you and the interviewer. Make sure you smile and that you are positive. An employer spends the first minute of the interview developing an impression of you, and you spend the rest of the interview confirming or changing those impressions.

### Overview of the Position and Interview

After the greeting, the employer may give you an idea of how the interview will proceed. In some cases, the interviewer will briefly describe the position and/or the organization. This may last three to five minutes.

### Answering the Interviewer's Questions

This part of the interview will typically last about 15-20 minutes. You will typically be talking about 70% of the time and the interviewer will be listening. Remember that this is your chance to elaborate on your qualifications; it is essential that you provide clear examples that further highlight your skills.

Refer to the "Answering Questions" section to learn how to handle interview questions effectively.

### Asking the Interviewer Questions

Prior to your interview, create a list of 20 potential questions you would like to ask. Some of these questions may be answered during the course of the interview. However, you will add questions based on what you learn during your interview. Plan to ask three to five questions that reflect your interest in the position and/or organization. You may also want to ask the interviewer to provide additional information about a topic discussed during the interview or refer to information you learned during your employer research. This will communicate to the interviewer that you were listening and prepared for the interview.

### Closing the Interview

It will take three to five minutes to bring the interview to a close. The interviewer may outline what you can expect next in the employment process and/or invite you for a second interview. If the interviewer does not discuss the employment ask so that you will know what to expect

Thank the interviewer for the opportunity to learn more about the position and organization.

## TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

Here are a few examples of potential types of interviews:

### The Telephone Interview

Employers typically use telephone interviews as a screening to decide whom to interview in person. This can be a very simple interview with just a few questions, or it may be a full 30+ minute interview. Be careful to speak clearly, listen attentively and communicate sincerely since the interviewer does not have the ability to read body language over the telephone. You may have your reference materials (resume, notes related to typical interview questions, work samples, etc.) available to review during the interview.

Be careful to eliminate speak ticks such as "um," "like", "and," "ok," "ya know," etc.

### The One-on-One Interview

This is the most frequently used interview. This meeting allows you to meet directly with one interviewer. Work to establish rapport with the interviewer, as this is the person making a decision on whether to offer you a second interview, or even the job.

### The Panel Interview

In a panel interview, several individuals will interview you at one time. Interviewers may take turns asking you prepared questions. Relax, get a feel for the group dynamics, and keep communication lines open by periodically making eye contact with all panel members as you respond to questions.

### The Skype/Online Interview

Many employers are conducting Skype or other online tools for interviews. Typically, in this type of interview, the interviewee is sitting in front of a camera that is attached to a computer and communicates with the interviewer utilizing similar technology.

### The Group Interview

In the group interview, there is one interviewer and several interviewees, with interviewees competing to see who will surface as the leader of the group. The person who answers questions professionally and diplomatically wins the competition and the right to continue in the interviewing process or to get the job.

## The Meal Interview

Frequently utilized by business professionals, this interview will give the interviewer a sense of your ability to function in social settings. Brush up on your table manners and rules of professional etiquette, order non-messy foods, treat your server with respect and order a moderately priced meal. Avoid drinking alcohol because even one drink can reduce your ability to maintain a professional demeanor.

## The Follow-up Interview/On-Site Visit

If an employer is interested in continuing the employment process with you after the first interview, you may be invited for a second interview or on-site visit. A tour of the facilities, staff introductions, and multiple interviews typically characterize this type of interview. During tours, give the tour leader your undivided attention and ask questions.

## ANSWERING QUESTIONS

The way you respond to interview questions tells the interviewer whether or not you are qualified. A thorough review of the position job description will help you to prepare for the types of questions that you may be asked.

You may also wish to create an "interview study guide", highlighting key phrases from the job description, list your strengths and challenges, and write down specific examples/experiences where you have demonstrated the qualifications the employer seeks.

Practice interviewing before your interview. Start with a list of sample interview questions, prepare potential answers and practice interviewing with someone. Use Interviewstream and schedule an interview critique with an AACE counselor.

## The Three Ps

Before formulating an answer to an interview question, consider applying the following three Ps to your response:

- **Ponder**

Ask yourself why the employer has asked a question. This will help you determine what skill, trait, value or ability is being measured. Respond to the question by giving an example real or hypothetical when you demonstrated the criteria that are being sought or evaluated.

- **Prove**

Prove every statement you make by providing clear and specific examples. If you say that you have excellent communication skills give examples of situations where you utilized these skills. If you claim that CSU East Bay has provided you with an outstanding, well-rounded education, discuss the curriculum requirements.

- **Project**

Project a positive image even if the questioning gets negative. If you are asked to state one of your weaknesses, do so. However, explain what you are doing to eliminate that weakness and what you have learned in the process.

## Types of Interview Questions

In general, employers ask three types of questions in interviews: positive, negative and skill-based questions. There can be variations but you should know how to formulate your responses for each type of question.

- **Positive**

These questions are usually brief (i.e. What was your favorite/best/etc.?). Consider giving three relevant responses and proving your response succinctly.

- **Negative**

These questions seek information that you or the interviewer may consider negative (i.e. What are your weaknesses?). Respond honestly to these questions without providing too much information. The purpose is to identify, when you have difficulty what resources do you call upon? How have you grown through challenges?

- **Skills Based (Behavioral Interviewing)**

Employers seek to determine whether or not you can demonstrate skills needed for the position. Behavioral questions may be: Give examples of instances when you demonstrated a particular skill. The premise is that past performance is an indicator of future performance (if you did it before, you should be able to do it again).

When answering these questions; consider using the "STAR" technique; provide examples by discussing the Situation you were in or the Task you completed, the Actions that you took and the Results. It's okay to give an example where you did not have a successful outcome, as long as you describe what you learned and what you would do differently in the future when faced with a similar issue.

## HANDLING INAPPROPRIATE QUESTIONS

You may be asked questions regarding marital status, age, race, religious preference, children, sexual orientation or other issues that are not job-related. These questions may not be illegal but are inappropriate interview questions because they are unrelated to the job qualifications. Handling these questions can pose a personal dilemma as you decide how to respond. There are no strict guidelines to respond to these questions and interviewers may be unaware that the questions are inappropriate to ask. If you are uncomfortable about a question ask yourself: Does the interviewer realize that this question is inappropriate?

Based on your responses you may wish to:

1. End the interview.
2. Ask the interviewer what relevance the question has to the position.
3. Refuse to answer the question.
4. Answer the question with or without regret.

Note, the way you handle this reflects your professionalism and maturity. Remain positive, polite and assertive.

## SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The following is a list of sample questions that you may be asked; note that some of these are behavioral questions:

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Why did you choose this occupational field?
3. What do you consider to be your three greatest strengths?
4. What do you consider to be your three greatest weaknesses?
5. What things are most important to you in a job?
6. What do you know about our organization that makes you want to work with us?
7. What accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction?
8. Describe a situation that required you to complete a number of different tasks at the same time. How did you handle this?
9. Talk about a time that you worked on a team project. What was the project and what particular role did you play in the team?
10. Where do you see yourself five years from now?
11. Discuss a situation in which you had to adjust quickly to changes in your scheduled plans. What did you do in this situation and how did it affect you?

## ASKING QUESTIONS

It is essential that you ask questions during your interview; this demonstrates to the employer that you are interested in the position and/or company. While questions regarding salary and benefits are considered inappropriate in a first interview, the following are examples of questions that you may ask during an interview:

1. How long have you been with this organization?
2. Describe your career path within this organization.
3. What do you enjoy most about working for this organization?
4. Is there a formal orientation program?
5. What is the typical career path for this position?
6. What are some of the biggest challenges facing this position, this department or this organization?
7. What are the performance expectations for this position?
8. How frequently is performance evaluated?
9. Will I have supervisory responsibilities? If so, how many people will I be supervising?
10. How would you describe your leadership/management style?
11. How would you describe the individuals I will be working with?
12. What kind of training and/or professional development programs do you have?

## INTERVIEW FOLLOW-UP

It is important to always send a thank-you letter to the interviewer(s) after an interview. Note the names and positions of everyone you meet during an interview. Thank-you letters should be mailed to every person who interviewed you within 24 hours of your interview; emailed letters are appropriate. Consider sending thank-you notes to people you met throughout the day but who did not interview you (i.e. support staff members and tour guides).

## GREAT INTERVIEWEES

- Are on time
- Are dressed professionally
- Are well groomed
- Have a firm handshake
- Are self-confident and assertive
- Smile and have a sense of humor
- Possess excellent communication skills
- Demonstrate impeccable interpersonal skills
- Answer questions succinctly
- Are aware of non-verbal cues
- Speak objectively about their qualifications without appearing boastful
- Show interest
- Have applicable work experience
- Are focused
- Are flexible
- Are polite and conscientious
- Are positive
- Can accept negative feedback
- Carry extra copies of their resumes
- Carry tools; pad, phone etc. to record important information
- Have documentation and reference information available
- Can pass the drug screen
- Follow-up

## ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS

There are many online resources to help you develop your interviewing skills.

Schedule an appointment to discuss interviewing with Academic Advising and Career Education counselor