

How To Interview Like You Mean It

A Broadcast From The University of Tennessee
Featuring: Mr. Donald Asher

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Interview Do's

1. **Research the company *before* the interview (their Web site, Google, business press, etc.).**
2. **Prepare a list of stories you can tell about yourself that show you solving problems or contributing to a team effort.**
3. **Practice interviewing with a friend, or in mock interviews in your career center.**
4. **Discover how people dress on the job, and prepare to dress as they would on a day when an out-of-town big boss visits the office.**
5. **Consider removing piercings and covering tattoos.**
6. **Allow *plenty* of time to arrive at your appointment five minutes early.**
7. **Have a firm, business-like handshake (if in doubt, *practice, practice, practice*).**
8. **Sell yourself, be positive and confident, and don't hold back on representing your abilities.**
9. **Find out what happens next (how many interviews, when they'll make a decision, what you should do next).**
10. **Send a thank you note (by email *and* by mail) immediately after the meeting.**

Adapted from "Interviewing Like You Mean It," a national teleconference with Donald Asher sponsored by the University of Tennessee, Fall, 2003. Used with permission. Asher Associates, 415-543-7130.

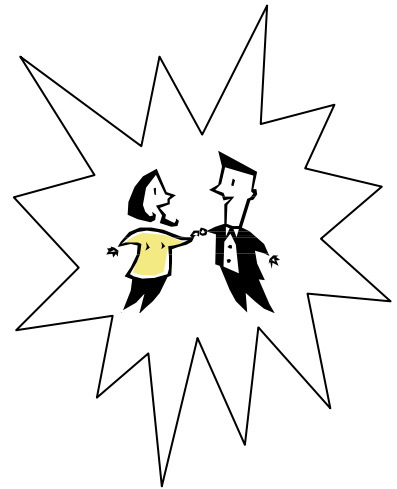
Interview Don'ts

- 1. Don't be late, ever!**
- 2. Don't lie, oversell, or misrepresent yourself.**
- 3. Don't dominate or take over the interview.**
- 4. Don't initiate discussions of salary and benefits.**
- 5. Don't try to be funny or entertaining; don't joke around.**
- 6. Don't talk about politics, religion, or socially sensitive issues.**
- 7. Don't use slang or student lingo.**
- 8. Don't wear strong scents or too much jewelry.**
- 9. Don't whine or malign; don't talk in negative terms about other people, employers, or the college experience.**
- 10. Don't worry so much!**

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Career Services: How to Interview

Employers expect today's applicants to be ready for the interview. Sitting passively in an interview will not get you the job. Research is necessary. Employers expect interview candidates to be more knowledgeable and aware of industry trends. Preparation is the key to getting a job. Listed are some general guidelines in preparing for your interviews.



- Know Yourself
 - ✓ What you want to do and where you want to do it
 - ✓ What you have to offer
 - ✓ Skills, accomplishments and goals
 - ✓ Complete the Self-Assessment for Interviewing (attached)

- Look the Part
 - ✓ Conservative well tailored look in suit, shoes and accessories
 - ✓ Minimal jewelry
 - ✓ Well-groomed appearance (hair, nails, etc.)
 - ✓ Minimal use of perfume or aftershave

- Research the Company and the Job
 - ✓ Internet
 - ✓ Career Resource Center
 - ✓ Company literature
 - ✓ Library
 - ✓ Faculty
 - ✓ Friends
 - ✓ On site observation/Current employees

- How to Answer and Ask the Right Questions
 - ✓ Anticipate key questions
 - ✓ Review and practice answering the most commonly asked interview questions (see next pages)
 - ✓ Demonstrate interest in the company/position through your questions (attached)

- Effective Communication Skills
 - ✓ What you say (verbal) must match your body language (non-verbal) or people will pay more attention to your body language and not what you are saying
 - Verbal: clear, concise, relevant responses
 - Non-verbal: good eye contact, good posture, appropriate facial expressions and hand gestures

- Follow-up After the Interview
 - ✓ Send a note of appreciation thanking the employer and restating interest in the company (Not always recommended for on-campus interviews)

SELF-ASSESSMENT for INTERVIEWING

Instructions: Using the scale below, rate yourself to your perception of your competence in each quality and skill. Write the number in the blank. Provide an example in the Evidence column.

4 3 2 1 0
Excellent Good Average Weak Poor

Personal Qualities

(Evidence for each rating of 3 or 4)

____ 1. Enthusiastic/Energetic	_____

____ 2. Resourceful	_____

____ 3. Quality Oriented	_____

____ 4. Goal Oriented	_____

____ 5. Competitive	_____

____ 6. Persevering	_____

____ 7. Responsible/Reliable	_____

____ 8. Demonstrated Initiative	_____

____ 9. Proven Work Ethic	_____

____ 10. Effective Team Member	_____

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE....

SELF-ASSESSMENT, Continued

Skills

_____ 11. Analyze	_____

_____ 12. Create/Develop	_____

_____ 13. Implement	_____

_____ 14. Administer/Manage	_____

_____ 15. Communicate Effectively	_____

_____ 16. Sell/Promote	_____

_____ 17. Teach/Train	_____

_____ 18. Motivate	_____

_____TOTAL Now total your scores from the test. Below is a guide to help you evaluate how you scored. There are a total of 72 possible points.

SCORE	EVALUATION
58-72	This score indicates that you have acquired most of the traits that employers desire. If you have good evidence of these abilities you have the potential to do very well in job interviews.
45-57	You are a strong candidate. You have many of the necessary skills to succeed in job interviews. You need to build on these strengths and work on the weaker categories.
32-44	There are two ways to look at this score. Either you are average at many things or you are good at some and weak at others. If you are average at many things, you need to identify ways to improve in some of these areas. If you are good at some and weak at others you need to build on the good points and work on some of the weaker ones.
21-31	There is definite need for improvement here. These are traits that most employers value and you have ranked yourself weak on many of them. You may want to discuss your self-assessment with one of the Career Services staff.
20 or lower	You should make an appointment with a career advisor.

FORTY-FIVE COMMONLY ASKED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. What are your long range and short-range goals and objectives, when and why, did you establish these goals and how are you preparing yourself to achieve them?
3. Why did you choose this major? this career?
4. How would you describe your ideal job?
5. Describe a situation in which you were successful.
6. What do you think it takes to be successful in this career? in a company like ours?
7. Tell me about some of your recent goals and what you did to achieve them.
8. Are you a team player?
9. What motivates you?
10. Why should I hire you?
11. How would you describe yourself?
12. How do you think a friend or professor who knows you well would describe you?
13. What do you see yourself doing five years from now?
14. Where do you want to be ten years from now?
15. Do you handle conflict well?
16. How do you determine or evaluate success?
17. What major problem have you had to deal with recently?
18. In what ways do you think you can make a contribution to our company?
19. Do you handle pressure well?
20. How much training do you think you'll need to become a productive employee?
21. What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction? Why?
22. Describe your most rewarding college experience.

23. What qualities do you feel a successful manager should have?
24. What is your greatest strength?
25. What is a weakness you have?
26. What led you to choose your field or major study?
27. What college subjects did you like least? Why?
28. Why did you choose to attend your college?
29. How has your education prepared you for your career?
30. Do you have plans for continued study? An advanced degree?
31. Do you think that your grades are a good indication of your academic achievement?
32. What have you learned from participation in extra-curricular activities?
33. What were your favorite classes? Why?
34. Why is your GPA not higher?
35. How familiar are you with the community that we are located in?
36. Are you willing to travel? How much?
37. Why did you decide to seek a position with this company?
38. What do you know about our company?
39. Is money important to you?
40. Are you seeking employment in a company of a certain size? Why?
41. What criteria are you using to evaluate the company for which you hope to work?
42. Do you have a geographical preference? Why?
43. Will you relocate? Does relocation bother you?
44. What kind of salary are you looking for?
45. What have you learned from your mistakes?

BEHAVIORAL QUESTIONS

1. Describe a situation in which you were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to see things your way.
2. Describe a time when you were faced with a stressful situation that demonstrated your coping skills.
3. Give me a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.
4. Give me an example of a time when you set a goal and were able to meet or achieve it.
5. Tell me about a time when you had to use your presentation skills to influence someone's opinion.
6. Give me a specific example of a time when you had to conform to a policy with which you did not agree.
7. Please discuss an important written document you were required to complete.
8. Tell me about a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.
9. Tell me about a time when you had too many things to do and you were required to prioritize your tasks.
10. Give me an example of a time when you had to make a split second decision.
11. What is a typical way of dealing with conflict? Give me an example.
12. Tell me about a time you were able to successfully deal with another person even when that individual may not have personally liked you (or vice versa).
13. Tell me about a difficult decision you've made in the last year.
14. Give me an example of a time when you tried to accomplish something and failed.
15. Give me an example of when you showed initiative and took the lead.
16. Tell me about a recent situation in which you had to deal with a very upset customer or co-worker (or group member).
21. Give me an example of a time when you motivated others.
22. Tell me about a time when you delegated a project effectively.
23. Give me an example of a time when you missed an obvious solution to a problem.
17. Describe a time when you anticipated potential problems and developed preventative measures.
18. Tell me about a time when you were forced to make an unpopular decision.
19. Please tell me about a time you had to fire a friend.
20. Describe a time when you set your sights too high (or too low).

STAR Interviewing Technique

One strategy for preparing for behavioral interviews is to use the STAR technique, as outlined below.

Situation or Task

Describe the situation that you were in or the task that you needed to accomplish. You must describe a specific event or situation, not a generalized description of what you have done in the past. Be sure to give enough detail for the interviewer to understand. This situation can be from a previous job, from a volunteer experience, or any relevant event.

Action You Took

Describe the action you took and be sure to keep the focus on you. Even if you are discussing a group project or effort, describe what you did – not the efforts of the team. Don't tell what

Results you achieved

What happened? How did the event end? What did you accomplish? What did you learn?

EXAMPLE:

Situation (S): Advertising revenue was falling off for my college newspaper, *The Beacon*, and large numbers of long-term advertisers were not renewing contracts.

Action (A): I designed a new promotional packet to go with the rate sheet and compared the benefits of *The Beacon* circulation with other ad media in the area. I also set up a special training session for the account executives with a School of Business Administration professor who discussed competitive selling strategies.

Result (R): We signed contracts with 15 former advertisers for daily ads and five for special supplements. We increased our new advertisers by 20 percent [quantity is always good] over the same period last year.

What You Should Know About Asking Questions In An Interview?

After 30 minutes of being grilled by the interviewer with question after question, the interviewer finally asks, **“Do you have any questions for me?”** Now it is your turn to “interview” the interviewer. It is your opportunity to evaluate whether the position and organization has something to offer you.

The questions you ask are just as critical as the responses you give. Although you may have impressed the interviewer with your answers to the questions posed, you can leave the interviewer in doubt of your interest in and knowledge of the position and organization by not asking questions or not asking the right questions. Asking thoughtful, intelligent questions requires advance preparation on your part.



KNOW THE PURPOSE OF ASKING QUESTIONS

- Demonstrates you have done your homework and prepared for the interview. Shows your level of interest.
- Allows you to learn more about the position and organization. Helps you determine if the position/organization is right for you.
- Gives you the opportunity to further “sell” your qualifications by gathering specific information from the interviewer. By listening to the interviewer’s responses to your well thought-out questions, you may learn more about the organization’s needs. Then you can follow-up with up how you can help them meet these needs.



KNOW HOW TO ASK QUESTIONS

- Ask questions that are of genuine interest to you and will help you make an informed decision.
- Ask questions that show the depth of your research and preparation. Do not ask questions which could easily be answered on the organization’s website or by reviewing the job description.
- Do not ask questions about salary or benefits until you are offered a job. These types of questions will make the interviewer wonder about your priorities.
- Tailor your questions to the interviewer. A human resources representative may not be able to answer specific questions about day-to-day functions of the position, whereas a manager or supervisor can discuss the technical, more detailed aspects of the job.
- Ask questions throughout the interview. You do not have to wait until the end of the interview to get clarification of something the interviewer shared. Additionally, if the interviewer begins the conversation by discussing an area of the organization, such as the training and development program, and this

discussion sparks a question you have, then by all means ask. You might forget the question by the end of the interview. However, do not monopolize the conversation with questions and your own agenda. Let the interviewer lead and follow his/her cues.



KNOW WHAT QUESTIONS TO ASK

- Make a list of the information you need to learn about the position and the organization. Prepare at least 5 good questions. Prioritize your questions and write them down to take with you to the interview.
- Consider questions that concentrate on the broad view of the organization and on the specific details of the position.
- Review the list of questions below. Use the questions to help you develop your own and/or adapt these questions to your own interests and concerns.



KNOW HOW TO PREPARE FOR THE INTERVIEW

- Research the organization so that you can compile a list of thorough, knowledgeable questions. Use the tools provided on the Career Services website in the “Student” section under “Job Searching.”
- Participate in a mock interview and practice your interviewing skills, including how to ask appropriate questions in the interview. Get feedback from a Career Services staff person. Call 974-5435 or visit our office in 100 Dunford Hall to make an appointment.

Sample Questions Demonstrating Your Research Efforts

1. I read in your literature that your training program is comprised of three six-month rotations. Does the employee have any input into where he will go at the end of each rotation? How do you evaluate the employee’s performance during the training period?
2. I recently read in *Business Week* that a major competitor of yours is increasing its market share in your main market. What plan does your firm have to regain its lost market share?
3. In the brochure “Diversity and Inclusion at Dow,” it mentions Dow’s plans to include progressive employee development programs. Could you tell me more about this initiative and the goals of the program?
4. On Kimberly-Clark’s website I reviewed the career information provided about the logistics opportunities. I understand that Kimberly-Clark offers way to advance, one of which includes specializing in a particular area. What kind of input does the employee have in selecting the area of specialization and how long does it typically take to advance once you gain experience in that area?
5. After reading your brochure about the Global Sourcing Internship Program at International Paper, I was excited about the possibility to develop and implement my own project. What are the chances that this would be a part of my experience and what kinds of projects have interns completed in the past?

General Sample Questions

The Position

1. What are the main objectives and responsibilities of the position?
2. How does the organization expect these objectives to be met?
3. Can you tell me about the primary people with whom I would be dealing?
4. Can you describe a typical day?
5. Is this a newly created position? If not, how long did the previous person hold it? Was the previous person promoted? What is the potential for promotion?
6. How many and whom would I supervise? To whom would I report?
7. How and when would my performance be evaluated?
8. Is regular travel a part of this position?
9. Where does this position fit into the company's organizational structure?
10. What results would you expect from my efforts and on what timetable? What improvements need to be made on how the job has been done until now?

The Company

1. What the organization's strengths, and what major problems/challenges does it face?
2. What significant changes do you foresee in the near future for the organization?
3. What do you see ahead for the company in the next five years?
4. What do you see in the future for this industry?
5. What type of training program does the organization offer?
6. How does the organization stand in comparison with its main competitors?
7. Can you describe the company's culture?
8. How does the company recognize diversity in its workplace and with its customers?

Education and Training

1. What additional training might be necessary for this position?
2. Is training done in a classroom/group session or is it handled on an individual basis?
3. Are there training and development programs offered within the organization so that I can learn and grow professionally?
4. Does the organization support further education for its employees?
5. Does advancement to upper management usually require an advanced degree?

The Interviewer

1. Can you please tell me how your career has developed at the organization? Would someone entering the organization today have similar opportunities?
2. How would you describe your management style/philosophy?
3. What do you enjoy most about working for this organization?
4. If you could change one thing about your position or the organization, what would it be?
5. How long have you worked for this organization?
6. What qualities are you looking for in a new hire?

The Closing

1. Are there any further questions about my qualifications I can answer?
2. What is the next step in the process?
3. When do you expect to make a hiring decision for this position?

****Always state you want the job (if you sincerely do) and why!**