Interviewing

Interviewing is a focused dialogue with an immediate goal – to convince the employer that you are the best candidate for the position. Preparation is the key! Know the company and even more so, know your motivation. What are you bringing to the table? You won’t always have practiced the questions you’ll be asked, but if you’re confident in your fit, convincing the employer of this becomes easier.

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

Learn as much as you can about the type of position you are pursuing.
Read the job description if it is available. Don’t be discouraged if you don’t have capabilities in every area, but think about your transferable skills or experiences.
Conduct informational interviews with alumni in this type of position or at the company.
What have been some of the major news items and trends in the business or other trade publications in the past year or six months?

Research the organization.
Besides going to the employer’s web site, read their annual report (call and ask for one).
Know what products or services the employer produces or performs.
Find out about the employer’s reputation within the industry.

Keep calm through preparation.
Attend an interview workshop and/or schedule a mock interview through the Center for Career Development.
Think about your strengths and work skills and be able to demonstrate these through an example or story.
If possible, go to the location a few days before your interview to see how long it takes, to learn where parking is available, and to see the building.
Practice the “Tell me about yourself” question. Develop a 1-2 minute speech that introduces you, briefly tells about your background and education, and makes 2-3 points that you’ll want to re-visit during the rest of the interview.
Think about and prepare questions you would like to ask the interviewer

DURING THE INTERVIEW

First impressions matter.
Arrive 10-15 minutes ahead of time. This gives you time to go to the restroom one last time to check your hair and clothes and to get to the waiting area in advance. Be pleasant and polite to everyone you see.
Smile and introduce yourself to the receptionist. That person can be a true ally to you.
Establish good eye contact and greet the interviewer with a firm handshake.

It’s show time!
Really listen to the question, reflect first on your response and then answer the question. If you do not understand the question, politely ask for clarification.
Be specific about your skills and experiences and how they can be of benefit to the employer.
Examples help to emphasize the points you want to make.
If you are in a group interview, make eye contact with everyone as you speak. Start and end with the person who asked the question.

**Wrapping it up.**
Be ready at the end to ask your questions.
It is generally not appropriate for you to bring up salary and benefits in a first interview, but be prepared to talk about this if the interviewer introduces it.
Sum up your interest and enthusiasm for the position.
Ask the interviewer about the timeline for making decisions and follow-up.
Make sure to get each interviewer's business card.

**AFTER THE INTERVIEW**

**Reflect on your experience.**
What parts of the interview went well for you? What went poorly?
Use this to improve future interviews.

**Thank the interviewer.**
Write a thank-you note to each interviewer within 24-48 hours of the interview. It may be typed or hand-written.
Make sure to briefly include things that you might want the interviewer to know about you.
Keep it personal, mentioning specific things you discussed.

**DRESS FOR SUCCESS!**
Dressing correctly for an interview means wearing appropriate attire for the field in which you are interviewing. This shows the interviewer that you understand the position and take it seriously. In the business world, suits are the norm - usually in dark colors. The education and non-profit worlds are less demanding in attire of their professionals. Either way, it can be helpful to check with professionals that you know in the field to ensure that you are appropriately dressed. If you have any questions, call the Center for Career Development.

**General Tips on Any Kind of Interview Attire**
Clothes should be well tailored, cleaned and ironed and shoes should be shined.
Jewelry, accessories, and fragrances should be kept to a minimum. Prominent piercings should be less noticeable for the interview.

**THE PHONE INTERVIEW**
Are YOU Ready to be Interviewed by Phone? More hiring managers rely on telephone contact to determine whether a meeting is needed.

**Always be prepared for a full-blown interview, not just a quick screening.**
Have copies of your resume and cover letter stored somewhere near your phone to use as a guide as well as your system to track your current applications so you have the job description available during the interview.

**Be ready to give a 60-second commercial to interviewers outlining the highlights of your background, skills and knowledge.**
This description should qualify you and justify your reason for wanting to work for the company.
PRACTICE QUESTIONS

“STRESS” QUESTIONS:
These questions are intended to put you on the spot. Interviewers want to see how you can handle stress or a sticky situation so that they know you are reliable under pressure. Simply be calm and specific.
EXAMPLE: What makes you think you are qualified for this position?

BEHAVIOR– BASED QUESTIONS:
These questions are another example of how you can use your experience and solid examples of what you have done to show an interviewer that your background and past practices will enhance their organization.
EXAMPLE: Describe a time in which you were faced with problems or stresses that tested your coping skills. What did you do?

GOAL RELATED QUESTIONS:
What are your long-range and short-range goals and objectives?
Why did you establish these goals and how are you preparing to achieve them?
Are there personal goals that you have set for yourself in the next ten years?

FUTURE RELATED QUESTIONS:
What do you see yourself doing in the next five years?
What do you really want to do with your life?

PERSONALITY RELATED QUESTIONS:
How would you describe yourself?
What do you consider your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
What motivates you to give your best effort?
How do you determine or evaluate success?
How do you work under pressure?
What have you learned from your mistakes?
How do you spend your spare time? What are your hobbies?
What do you want me to know about you that is not on your resume?

CAREER RELATED QUESTIONS:
Why did you choose the career for which you are preparing?
What qualities should a successful manager possess?
What two or three things are the most important to you in your work?
Are you seeking employment in a company of a certain size? Why?
What criteria are you using to evaluate the company for which you hope to work?
Do you have a geographical preference? Why?
Are you willing to relocate or travel?
What are your salary requirements?
Give me some examples of times that you have been criticized at work. How did you react?
How would you describe your last boss? In what ways were you similar or different?

ORGANIZATION RELATED QUESTIONS:
What qualifications do you have will make you successful in an organization like ours?
If you were hiring someone for this position, what would you look for?
Why did you decide to seek a position with the company?

EXPERIENCE RELATED QUESTIONS:
What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction? Why?
What major problems have you encountered and how did you deal with them?
What supervisory or leadership roles have you had?

NOTE ON UNETHICAL QUESTIONS
It is illegal for a prospective employer to ask questions that relate to race, gender, religion, marital status, or other personal areas that do not have any bearing on your ability to do the job. An interviewer may not intend to break the law with certain questions—he or she may not have the experience to know what subjects to avoid. If you feel that an inappropriate question has been asked, you can consider that the interviewer is either uninformed, trying to put you on the spot, or may actually be unethical. Examine whether or not this question was intentional and then decide how you should handle it; either by sidestepping the question, or, in a severe case, by confronting the interviewer about the question.

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE INTERVIEWER
What type of personality/traits does it take to succeed in this company?
What is the organization's competitive strategy?
What skills do you find most valuable in an employee?
What percent of the employees pursue advanced degrees/training?
What would a typical first assignment be in this company?
Where do you see the company going in the next four years?
What is your typical day like in this position?
What is the management style of this organization?
How long do people generally stay in your department and/or company?
How are important decisions made in this organization?