


NAVIGATING THE INTERVIEW




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Advising & Career Services

PURPOSE OF THE INTERVIEW

Employers are assessing:

- ▶ Your personality
- ▶ Your communication skills
- ▶ Your appearance
- ▶ Your fit with the organization
- ▶ Your strengths & weaknesses
- ▶ Your attitude
- ▶ And, verifying your resume



***You are also assessing the employer as well for fit.**

TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

Screening interviews:

- ▶ May be the first in a series of interviews and are used to determine if you have the basic qualifications.

One-on-one interviews:

- ▶ The most common type of interview

Panel interviews:


- ▶ The interview is conducted by a group.

Group Interviews:

- ▶ Applicants for the position are interviewed as a group.

Before the interview: Preparation

- ▶ Job: knowledge of the specifics of the position
- ▶ Self-knowledge: your skills, knowledge & experience and how they relate to the position
- ▶ Knowledge of your career field
- ▶ Knowledge of the company (very important)



Researching the Position

To prepare for your interview you should:


- ▶ Know the position description inside and out!
This is the foundation for your preparation.
- ▶ Know the preferred/required skills, education, and training.
- ▶ If appropriate, request more detailed information.
Many employers post abbreviated position descriptions.

Researching the employer

- ▶ Visit employer web sites.
- ▶ Search for articles online on newspaper, business or professional publication sites (Oregonian, The Business Journal, Willamette Week, New York Times, Wall Street Journal).
- ▶ Access resources in the Millar Library or the Multnomah County Library; ask a reference librarian.
- ▶ Use social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn.
- ▶ If the organization is too small and you can't find information, research the industry.

YOU MUST RESEARCH THE EMPLOYER because interviewers will ask you specifically "why do you want to work for us?" This is your chance to show you have done your homework and you are a good fit for the position.

- ▶ Know their mission, values, clients, products, . . .



Identifying relevant education, experience & skills

When identifying relevant education:


- ▶ Identify relevant courses and projects.

When identifying relevant experience:

- ▶ Consider volunteer and paid work experience, campus and community activities, academic projects, and internships.


When identifying relevant skills:

- ▶ Identify skills sought by the employer and then identify where you gained those skills (e.g. volunteer and paid work experience, campus activities, academic projects, and internships).



Basic Tips for the Interview

- > Arrive 15 minutes early
- > Bring extra copies of your resume
- > Bring samples of work that may be of interest to the interviewer
- > Prepare questions to ask the interviewer
- > Wear appropriate, professional attire
- > Bring a notepad and pen for notetaking
- > Shake hands firmly and smile
- > Know the interviewer's name




Types of interview Questions- Open Ended

Every question is essentially asking:
"Why should I hire you?"

Most Common open-ended questions you might hear:


- Tell me about yourself.
- What are your strengths?
- What are your weaknesses?



Tell Me About Yourself


- Response should be approximately 1-2 minutes long
- Talk about your relevant education, experience, and skills.
- Express enthusiasm for the opportunity to interview for the position

****Even though employers can see your resume, this is your chance to communicate and highlight aspects of yourself to employers that relate to the job.**




What are your strengths?

- ▶ What are your greatest strengths?
- ▶ Offer three strengths that relate specifically to the position.
- ▶ Choose one strength and give an example using S-A-R to support it.




What is your greatest weakness?

- ▶ What is your greatest weakness?
- ▶ Do not choose a weakness that is connected to a major component of the job to which you are applying.
- ▶ Mention a weakness that you are working on or will work on. Share steps that you have or will take to improve on your weakness.




Behavioral interviews

- ▶ Most employers will ask a mix of open-ended questions and behavioral questions.
- ▶ Behavioral questions ask about past experiences that demonstrate future performance.
- ▶ Questions begin with "tell me about a time when..." or "give an example of ..."
- ▶ Describe: "Situation, Action, Results."



**S.A.R. method
(Situation, Action, Result)**

- ▶ **Situation:** Describe a situation in which you demonstrated the ability to successfully utilize a specific skill.
- ▶ **Action:** Describe the actions you took.
- ▶ **Result:** Describe the result of your actions.




S-A-R example

I am able to organize a project from the idea stage through implementation:

Situation: There are many homeless families in our community. I came up with the idea and helped to organize a food drive to reduce food insecurity.


Action: Our goal was to gather a ton of food during a three-day weekend. I set up the meeting schedule and helped to break our goals into action steps. I also recruited and coordinated 25 volunteers and was responsible for all marketing efforts (e.g. flyers, newspaper ad)

Results: We exceeded our goal by 300 lbs.




Tell Me About a Time...

- ▶ Tell me about a time when you faced a challenge.
- ▶ Give an example using S-A-R to support it.



Positive self reference

- ▶ Avoid phrases like "I only have a 3.1 GPA".
- ▶ Only discuss your strengths - do not offer a weakness unless directly asked for one.
- ▶ If you are giving specific examples, you will not feel as though you are bragging.
- ▶ Speak in the first person, "I am proud of the work I did there ..."



Responding to Interview Questions

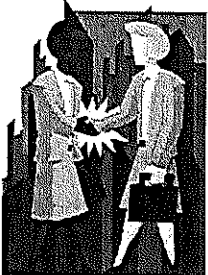
When responding to interview questions:

- Pause before responding.
- Ask for clarification if needed.
- Present themes.
- Give complete answers.
- Use active listening skills and maintain good eye contact.
- Be positive, enthusiastic, and relaxed.
- Be honest with your responses.
- Give specific examples of how you demonstrated the skill.

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Non-verbal communication

- ▶ Eye contact
- ▶ Posture
- ▶ Smiling and gestures
- ▶ Handshakes
- ▶ Voice modulation



▶

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At the end of the interview

- ▶ Have questions about the position and the organization prepared.
- ▶ Further clarification about the position: responsibilities, projects, travel
- ▶ Further clarification on the department: goals, career paths, training offered
- ▶ Further clarification about the plans, expansion, direction of the organization
- ▶ The timeline for a hiring decision


▶

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After the interview


- ▶ Send a follow-up letter within 24 hours of the interview.
- ▶ Do an assessment of your performance and work to strengthen any areas of weakness.
- ▶ Apply for another job.

▶



Interview thank you letter

- ▶ Options: typed, emailed, hand-written letters
- ▶ View a sample @ <http://www.pdx.edu/careers/interviewing>
- ▶ Send it as soon as possible, ideally right away!
- ▶ **Opening:** Express your appreciation for the interview; include the date of interview.
- ▶ **Middle:** Highlight any skills you want to bring to the employer's attention. Identify something good that happened at the interview or provide additional information.
- ▶ **Closing:** Emphasize your interest in the position and make a statement of action.



Sample thank you letter


Dear Mr. Kippstein:

I appreciated the chance to interview for the staff accountant position on October 23, 2013. I am very impressed with the opportunities available at Ace International.

I was especially fascinated by the cost accounting methods used by your firm, particularly the cost benefit study that originally led to your decision to manufacture construction equipment. As I mentioned during our interview, my coursework at Portland State University concentrated on cost benefit analysis. That coursework, in addition to my experience in managerial accounting, will make me an effective and productive employee for your company.


After speaking with you on Tuesday, I am even more interested in pursuing a career with Ace International. I will call you later this week to discuss the next step in the interview process.

Sincerely,



Next Steps

- ▶ Identify 5 situations relevant to the job/position announcement and prepare your stories, using the SAR method. Practice these prior to the interview.
- ▶ Develop strong responses to the 3 most common questions: "Tell me about yourself" "What are your strengths?" "Tell me a weakness"
- ▶ Know the job description inside and out (and how you fit with these requirements) and research general information about the employer, before the interview
- ▶ Practice Practice Practice!



Other Resources

- ▶ Effective Interviewing Workshop
- ▶ Video- recoded interviews.
- ▶ Appointments for any specific interviewing concerns and/or practice.

Advising & Career Services: 503-725-4005
www.pdx.edu/advising-career-services

OPEN-ENDED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. What are your strengths? Weaknesses?
3. How is your previous experience applicable to this position?
4. What do you know about our organization?
5. Where do you see yourself in five years? Ten years?
6. What kind of compensation are you looking for?
7. Why are you interested in this job?
8. Why should I hire you?
9. Why did you choose your major? What do you like about it?
10. What was your favorite class? Least favorite? Why?
11. How do you determine or evaluate success?
12. How would you describe yourself? How would someone else describe you?
13. What kind of personal characteristics are necessary for success in this field?
14. Why do you feel you would be good at.....?
15. Do you have plans for further study?
16. Do you think grades are a good indicator of success?
17. How do you work under pressure?
18. How do you deal with conflict?
19. What was the biggest obstacle you have overcome?
20. What two or three things are most important to you in a job?
21. How do you feel about relocation?
22. Are you willing to travel? To work overtime?
23. In what kind of environment are you most comfortable?
24. Describe the kind of relationship that should exist between a supervisor and supervisee.
25. Describe your ideal job?
26. What accomplishments are you particularly proud of?

BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Can you think of a time when you were successful in building a cohesive team? What did the team accomplish? What role did you play?
2. Tell me about a time when you had to cope with strict time demands or deadlines. Give a specific example.
3. Give me an example that demonstrates your ability to organize and maintain a system of records to facilitate your work.
4. Please describe for me a time when you demonstrated your ability to balance multiple, competing responsibilities.
5. Can you describe the most challenging situation you've ever had to deal with and how you dealt with it?
6. Describe a situation in which someone was unhappy with your performance and how you responded.
7. Describe a situation in which you've shown a great deal of initiative.
8. Can you give me an example of when you demonstrated your ability to be a self-starter?
9. Can you give me an example of your leadership ability?
10. Please describe a time when you worked with a strong sense of urgency to complete a project. Describe the situation, what action you took, and why it was urgent.
11. Describe a time when you reached a decision by organizing and reviewing the facts, weighing the options, and using your good judgment.
12. Think about a situation where your listening skills helped you be a better communicator. Describe what happened and how you handled it.
13. Describe a time when the goals of a project you were working on changed before the project was complete. What did you do?
14. Please share with me an example of a time when you demonstrated your problem solving skills.
15. Please tell me about a time when your final understanding of what your professor, employer or coworker needed was different from your initial impression.
16. Please tell me about the most important work or college project you directed that required a clear focus on quality.
17. Please tell me about the situation that best illustrates your ability to work collaboratively with a diverse group of people.
18. Please describe your most effective effort to create or promote a positive image for a work/group you joined.

