

## Effective Interviewing

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### The Goal of Interviewing

- Convince the employer that you are the best candidate for the job.
- Demonstrate that you possess the necessary skills for the position:
  - Job specific skills
  - Transferable skills
  - Personal characteristics
- Exhibit enthusiasm, confidence, professionalism, and preparedness throughout the entire interview process!

### Pre- Interview

Research:

- Learn about the internship, scholarship, graduate program, or job
- Know what skills, abilities, and attributes are expected of candidates (position listing)
- Familiarize yourself with issues in the field and know something about the organization with which you are interviewing

Know why you're a good candidate: Setting the interview agenda

- Studies have shown that approximately 90% of people cannot adequately define their skills.
- Make an inventory your experiences, skills, and qualifications (i.e. strengths)
- Prepare personal examples of times you positively demonstrated your strengths.
- Each example should include the situation (S), the actions you took (A), and the positive results of your actions (R); this is also known as the SAR technique

Prepare for Typical Interview Questions:

- Tell me about yourself"
  - Common mistakes
    - Story telling: I want to live in the city...I was born in New York... I have 5 siblings..
    - Personal facts: I enjoy baseball...My favorite color is purple...I have 2 dogs and 1 cat.
  - What employers really want to hear
    - Why are you qualified for this position?
    - Why do you want to work for us (and not our competitor)?
- "What are your strengths/weaknesses"
  - This question shows the employer that you are self-aware and have assessed your own skills.
  - Answering honestly is important, it shows the employer that you are human and have improvements to make
  - Don't leave your weakness hanging – describe how are you making it a strength
  - Provide examples for each strength and weakness.
    - I am an organized person; I always keep my planner with me and update accordingly for efficient time management skills.
    - Being organized wasn't my strongest point, but I implemented a time management system that really helped my keep track of my projects.
- Behavior Based: "Tell me a time when..."
  - These questions require you to provide a specific example of a time when you did something using the SAR Technique: Situation, Action, Result

#### Verbal and Non-verbal Communication.

- Over half of what we communicate is non-verbal. Don't let your non-verbal cues get in the way of what you are actually saying
- Do you use filler words such as like, 'ya know', 'I mean', 'um', etc.? If so, stop it! Listen to yourself when talking to others. If you are using filler words, stop it!
- Video tape or watch yourself responding to questions in a mirror to see your nonverbal communication
- Look interested, confident, and engaged
- Make regular eye contact?
- Smile on a regular basis especially at appropriate times

#### **During the Interview**

##### Making a positive impression

- Positive impression includes paying attention to personal grooming, dress, eye contact, nonverbal behavior, and even your tone of voice.
- Dress in a manner consistent with how you want to be perceived.
- Dress: Suits for men, pant or skirt (knee length) suit for women
- Personal Hygiene: freshly bathed, mild scented deodorants or perfumes, well-groomed fingernails, polished shoes, and fresh breath
- Presentation: confident handshake, smile, make eye contact, and listen attentively

##### Appropriate Mannerisms/Behaviors

- Focus on the positives, not negatives
- Be enthusiastic, confident and energetic, but not aggressive, pushy or egotistical
- Smile and show interest
- Show positive body language
- Know and practice professional etiquette, good manners, and hygiene at all times
- Stand-up whenever you meet or greet someone, if can't stand-up offer an apology and continue
- Make eye contact
- Introduce yourself immediately
- Offer a firm handshake

##### Ask Questions!

- Questions demonstrate your interest, knowledge, seriousness, and commitment
- Questions often stem from thoroughly researching the company/organization
- Don't ask about salary, vacation time, etc. until after you are offered the position
- Always ask what to expect next
- Be sure to get their contact information (e.g., business cards) to write a thank you letter.

#### **Post-Interview**

##### Follow up! - Send a thank-you letter within 24-48 hours of the interview!

- The letter should be brief, but communicate your appreciation for the interview, highlight aspects of the conversation you found helpful, restate your interest, and provide any additional information requested
- Ideally you should write letter to each person you interview with, but if there are several, then a letter to the person in charge of the search committee will suffice

**Next Steps:** Make an appointment for a **Mock Interview** at the Career Resource Center