

Topic: Preparing For an Interview

Objective:

When you complete these activities, your student should:

- Understand how to dress appropriately for an interview
- Know how to prepare for an interview
- Be familiar with ways to best represent themselves during an interview

Resources Needed:

- Computer and Microsoft Word
- Internet Access

Dressing for an Interview:

- There is a saying that goes something like this; you only have one chance to make a first impression. When walking into an interview the first judgment made about you will be based upon how you look. Please see Dressing for Success that follows.
- If it's been a while since you've dressed for an interview, take a look at some ideas of suitable clothing here
 - <http://jobsearch.about.com/od/interviewsnetworking/tp/interviewattire.htm>

Preparing for an Interview:

- Learn all you can about the company with which you are interviewing. Do research on the company by visiting their webpage and complete the Company Research page that follows.
- Review the job description and think about how your skills match up with those the employer is seeking.
- Make sure you have all materials prepared and ready to take with you – 3 copies of your resume, 3 copies of your references, your ID, the name of the person you will be meeting with and directions to the interview site.
- Eat a healthy meal before.
- Take a moment to think about the day ahead of you. How would you like this day to go? What can you expect from this day? What may be some issues you will have to deal with?
- Plan to arrive 15 minutes before your scheduled time.

Preparing for Interview Questions You May be Asked:

- Be mentally prepared to answer many different types of questions. These questions may go beyond what your employment history has been. It is important to also be prepared to ask questions of the person conducting the interview. It is important that the questions you ask are not things that you could find on their website or within the job description. Please see, Interview Questions, below to prepare yourself.
- Practice interviewing with a job coach (tutor), a family member or friend. This will help you become more comfortable with the interview process and giving answers.
 - Practice giving concise and complete answers. You may lose track of your point if your answer becomes too long and complicated.
 - Practice making and maintaining eye contact with the interviewer while you are answering questions.
 - Do not speak too slow or too fast.
 - Ask for honest feedback. Do not get defensive; the person is trying to help you grow your skills to better your chances of getting a job. Work to improve your interviewing skills.

During the Interview

- Be honest with your answers.
- Keep your answers complete, but short, simple and to the point.
- Don't be afraid to admit that you do not know an answer to a question. If you do not know the answer, just tell the interviewer that you do not know the answer to that question and that you will get back to him/her with the answer.
- Be courteous during the interview. Turn **OFF** any cell phones or electronic devices before your interview – or better yet, leave them in your car. Speak clearly. Remember to say, “please” and “thank you” when appropriate.
- Thank the interviewer for his/her time when the interview is completed, and state that you are excited about the job opportunity and hope to hear back from him/her soon. You may also choose to ask at this point what the timeline is for decisions.

After the Interview

- Send a letter of appreciation to the person who interviewed you.
- In the letter, thank the interviewer again for his/her time and reinforce that you are excited about the possible opportunity to work for the company.
- It is appropriate to send an email thank you if you have the email address.
- Be sure to reiterate your skills that you offer and emphasize how you can help the company. This is also a great time to bring up any skills or strengths you have that you were not able to discuss in the interview. See sample thank you letters here:
 - <http://jobsearch.about.com/od/thankyouletters/a/thankinterview.htm>

Dressing for Success

- Remember that interviewer will make his first impression on you based upon how you are dressed. It is important to dress appropriately to show respect to the interviewer, to demonstrate that you are serious about this position and finally, dressing this way can increase your confidence.
- Dress 1-2 levels above the job you are applying for. You would not wear dirty work clothes to an interview as a maintenance worker even if that is what you would wear to the job.
- Clothing should be neat and clean.
- Do not wear trendy clothing.
- Women should not wear sheer or low cut blouses.
- Women should not wear anything too short, just barely above the knee is appropriate
- Do not wear tight clothing, you want to feel and look comfortable.
- Men should keep their pockets empty – avoid keys jingling, etc.
- Avoid bold colors like red.
- Make sure your finger nails are clean, neat and trim. Ladies should wear neutral nail color, if any.
- Shoes should be conservative, neat and clean. No open toed or open heeled shoes for women.
- Men should be sure to shave.
- Hair should be clean, neat and conservative.
- Make-up should be kept to a minimum.
- Avoid cologne or perfume.
- Be sure to shower before and wear deodorant.
- Brush your teeth and make sure your breath is fresh.
- Do not have gum or candy in your mouth.
- Remember, it is far better to be too dressed up.
- Smile, use a firm handshake and go get, em!

Company Research

Before going to an interview it is important to know as much as you can about a company. A great place to begin is the company website. If the company does not have a site, you may still be able to glean some information from a Google search.

How old is the company?

How many employees does the company have?

Where are the headquarters?

What types of goods and services does this company provide?

Who are the clients or customers?

Who are the company's biggest competitors?

What is the company most well-known for?

Has the company been in the news recently? If so, for what?

What is the company's mission? (This can usually be found on the website)

**If you know the name of the person you will be interviewing with, see if you are able to get any information about them. You may find it on the company website or on LinkedIn.

Interview Questions

Interviewers ask all kinds of questions, no two interviews are alike. Make sure you are prepared for whatever they may ask by being able to answer all of the following questions.

- ❖ How did you hear about this position? Be sure to tell the interviewer if someone in particular told you about the job opening.
- ❖ What jobs have you had before?
- ❖ What kind of task did you perform on your previous jobs?
- ❖ What did you like about your previous jobs? This is a chance for you to talk about something you not only liked, but did well.
- ❖ What didn't you like about your previous jobs? Remember – it is ok to talk about specific tasks that you did not like, but do NOT criticize your former employer, coworkers or the company.
- ❖ Why did you leave your previous job?
- ❖ Why do you want to work for this company?
- ❖ Why should this company hire you?
- ❖ What is your greatest strength?
- ❖ What is your greatest weakness?
- ❖ Tell me about a problem you from a previous job and what you did to solve it.
- ❖ What questions do you have for me? Do NOT say, “None.” Be sure to prepare some thoughtful questions before heading into the interview. A few examples:
 - What is a typical day like in this role?
 - What do you enjoy most about working for this company?
 - What do you feel will be my biggest challenge working here?
 - What are you looking for in an ideal candidate?

