

# Interview Tips

## BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

- **Be prepared -- have examples ready.**

Take time to think through some standard interview questions and what your answers will be. If it will help you – write out your answers and study them. Think about your experiences and education and how you will relate them to the questions you are asked. Choose 3 successful situations you have been involved in (and are proud of) and 3 situations that didn't work out so well (but that you are also proud of your response to). Keep these in the back of your mind and refer to them during the interview. Most interviews are behavioral-based and interviewers ask you to refer back to specific situations and outcomes. Take time to think about your upcoming interview and prepare some examples that you would like to mention. Try to vary your responses and examples.

  - When choosing experiences to share, consider this hierarchy:
    1. Work Experience
    2. Extra Curricular Activities (Leadership Positions, Clubs & Organizations, Non-Profit, Volunteering, Greek Life)
    3. School work/group projects
    4. Religious groups/affiliations
  - For extra practice, participate in a mock interview in the Carson Center
- **Take extra copies of your resume.**

Plan to take a portfolio. Not only can you carry your resumes in it, but you can write down your example responses and questions that you would like to ask about the job/company. This will make you look organized, prepared and professional. (See resume tips and samples [www.business.wsu.edu/carsoncenter](http://www.business.wsu.edu/carsoncenter))
- **Know the job you are applying for and the company.**

Do your homework. Study the job description and conduct thorough research on the company. Be familiar with the company website. Think about why you want the job and why you are interested in working for the particular company. Also, make sure you know the name of the person who will be interviewing you.
- **Plan what you are going to wear.**

It is best to wear a suit. Make sure your clothes are clean, ironed, and fit appropriately. Pay special attention to your shoes. Plan haircuts and manicures appropriately so that you are ready for your interview. Take extra time getting ready the day of your interview. **FIRST IMPRESSIONS COUNT!**
- **Prepare questions to ask.**

Think of 2-4 thoughtful questions to ask about the position or the company. In most situations, salary won't be discussed in the first interview; it usually comes up at a later date. You can ask if the position is commission-based and about benefits. You may also ask if they know when they expect to make a decision or the timeline for hiring. (This confirms your interest in the company and the position.)
- **Arrive 10 minutes early.**

This not only shows that you are prompt, but it also gives you a chance to gain your composure. Be friendly to the receptionist....they often are asked their opinion.

  - Find out exactly where you are going in advance -- where to park and how long it will take to get there. It is a wise idea to do a dry run prior to your interview. Drive to the business, park, locate the office, and time how long it takes. This will alleviate undue stress the day of the interview. If you are unable to do a dry run, call the office and get directions (you can ask how long it takes to get there from a particular city, street or landmark).
  - If for some unforeseen circumstance you are running late, call the office and let them know. If you are unable to make your interview be sure to call, explain the situation and apologize. Ask if you are able to schedule another time for your interview.

## DURING THE INTERVIEW

- **Make a good first impression.**  
Start off by introducing yourself –make eye contact, give a firm handshake, and a pleasant smile.
- **Listen attentively and maintain eye contact.**  
Take a seat facing the interviewer and be sure you are not facing into direct sunlight or some other uncomfortable situation. Pay attention to your posture. Look at the interviewer directly, but do not get into a stare down! Sit up straight. Control your use of “uh”, “um”, and “like”; they are distracting to the interviewer. It is perfectly acceptable to sit in silence as you think of an answer. It's also okay to ask for clarification or to ask the interviewer to restate the question once (a maximum of twice).
- **Avoid nervous mannerisms.**  
Pay attention to nervous mannerisms you might have such as clicking your pen, jingling change in your pocket, twisting your hair, biting your nails, moving around in your chair, etc. Control these impulses. Everyone is nervous to some extent; the key is to appear cool, calm and collected.
- **Speak clearly and openly.**  
Use proper grammar and portray a friendly tone. Do not use slang or inappropriate language. Never answer just "yes" or "no" to a question. Always clarify and expand on your answers, but be careful not to ramble on. Be honest and truthful. The interviewer is trying to get to know you, so answer questions in a way that allows them to see your strengths and who you are as a person. Make sure to formulate your responses in a manner that is easy to follow and understand. Consider using the **STAR (Situation Task Action Result)** method. This approach will help you deliver a detailed, concise and complete answer.
- **Be positive and enthusiastic.**  
You want to outshine all the other candidates so "turn it on" during the interview. No matter how impressive your credentials are, you will not be hired if the interviewer isn't sold. Pump up your enthusiasm prior to the interview and get ready to sell yourself. Never whine, gripe or complain about past employers, jobs, classes, etc. Let the interviewer know that you are excited about the position and that you are confident in your skills. Show them you are the right candidate for the job.
- **Act polite and professional at all times.**  
It is very important that you are on your “best behavior” in an interview. Be sure to exude a confident, but polite attitude – mind your manners.
- **Ask questions.**  
Ask 2-4 thoughtful questions pertaining to the job. Do not monopolize the interviewer's time, particularly if you know they have additional appointments scheduled.
- **Remember – you are interviewing them as much as they are interviewing you!**

## AFTER THE INTERVIEW

- **Thank the interviewer and get a business card.**  
Give the interviewer another handshake - thank them genuinely for their time. Let them know how interested you are in the position and that you look forward to hearing from them. With their business card you will have their contact information to send a thank you letter or follow up with them if you need to.
- **Send a thank you letter.**  
It is becoming more common to send thank you letters via email, but a traditional handwritten note will be remembered by the interviewer. A more formal letter is also appropriate. (See Thank You Letter Tips and sample thank you letters for specific guidelines and examples – [www.business.wsu.edu/carsoncenter](http://www.business.wsu.edu/carsoncenter))
- **Follow up with the company.**  
If you haven't heard from the company regarding their decision by the date they gave you, it is appropriate to give them a call or send an email asking about the status of the position. You can also express your continued interest.