

18

Interviewing for Jobs

Key Terms

mock interview

etiquette

follow-up letter

postmark

informational interview

Chapter Objectives

After studying this chapter, you will be able to

- **prepare** for an interview.
- **explain** how to make a good impression on the interviewer.
- **write** a follow-up letter after an interview.
- **describe** the factors to consider before accepting or rejecting a job offer.

Reading Advantage

Make a list of everything you already know about the topic of this chapter. As you read the chapter, check off the items that are covered in the chapter.



Key Concepts

- A job interview is your chance to convince the employer that you are the right person for the job.
- Be sure to prepare thoroughly for your job interview by making a list of questions to ask and researching the employer.
- Before accepting a job offer, consider all the factors about the job.

The interview is usually the most important step in getting a job. Your application form, résumé, letter of application, or telephone call may have caught the employer's attention. However, it is the personal interview that will determine whether you are offered the job.

For the employer, the purpose of an interview is to evaluate the job seeker in person. The interviewer wants to find out if you have the skills to do the job and if you will work well with the other employees.

For you, the job seeker, the purpose of the interview is to convince the employer that you are the right person to hire for the job. The interview also gives you a chance to learn more about the job and the company. It may also convince you that the job is not right for you.

Preparing for an Interview

An interview is a talk between a job applicant and an employer. It can be a very important 20 or 30 minutes in your life. You should never expect to just walk into an interview without preparing yourself ahead of time. The better prepared you are for an interview, the better the impression you will make on the interviewer. To prepare for an interview, follow these tips:

- Learn about the employer and the job.
- Make a list of questions to ask.
- List the materials to take with you.
- Decide what to wear.
- Be prepared for questions.
- Practice for the interview.
- Know where to go for the interview.

Learn About the Employer and the Job

Become familiar with the employer before you go on your interview. You should know more about the company than the position for which you are applying. Find out about the company's products or services, size, reputation, and the possibilities for growth and expansion. Some companies publish annual reports that include this information.

You can generally find information about employers at your local or school library, 18-1. Descriptions of most corporations appear in business and industrial directories and library references. Ask the librarian to help you locate sources and obtain the information you need.

Ask your school-to-work coordinator and your guidance counselor if they can provide any information about the company. Talking with someone who works for the company will help you learn about the employer. Check with your chamber of commerce for information on companies in your area.

Another place to check is the company's Web site on the Internet. There you will often find information on the company's history, products, and employment needs. Companies cite their Internet addresses in TV commercials and magazine ads. You can also do an Internet search to locate their Web sites. Having some knowledge of the company will help you talk intelligently with the interviewer. It also shows the interviewer that you are interested enough in the company to do outside research.

Find out as much as you can about the job. Get information on specific duties and responsibilities, physical requirements, qualifications, hours, and opportunities for advancement. You can do this by requesting a copy of the job description. Save questions to which you cannot find answers for the interview.

Make a List of Questions to Ask

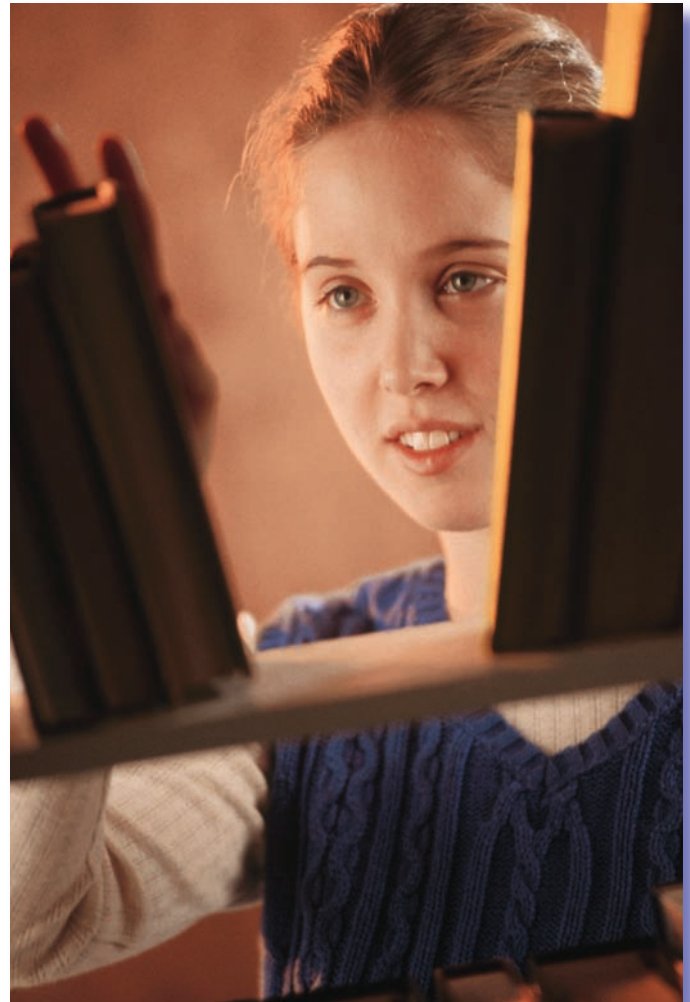
As you prepare for the interview, write down a few questions you would like to ask the interviewer about the job and the company. Asking questions, like researching the company, shows the employer that you have a serious interest in the company. The questions you ask can also help you decide if you really want to work for the company.

You may want to ask some of the following questions: "Would I receive training for this job?" "What hours would I work?" "Are there opportunities for advancement?" "May I see the work site?" "Is there anything I should read or study to get a head start on learning this job?" Do not ask questions that can be readily found on a company's Web site. It shows that you have not done your homework.

Wait until the end of the interview to ask about the job's salary range and benefits. Sometimes these topics are covered more fully in a second interview.

List the Materials to Take with You

When you go to an interview, there are a few items you will need to take with you. You will need a pen and your personal fact sheet for filling out an application. You will also need your résumé and the list of questions you plan to ask the interviewer. To keep your papers neat and clean, carry them in a file folder or large envelope.



18-1

Take the time to research an employer before you go to an interview.

Thinking It Through

What questions would you want answered during an interview?

If you apply for a job as a drafter, photographer, writer, or artist, you should also take samples of your work. This is the time to display your portfolio. Take only your best samples to the interview. Your three best samples will have more impact than 10 average samples.

Decide What to Wear

Think carefully about what to wear to the interview several days in advance. Your clothes and appearance will influence the employer's impression of you. To make a good impression you should strive to look your very best, 18-2.

Let the type of job and company dictate your choice. A guideline you may want to follow when making your selection is: Dress one step above what is worn on the job. For example, if you are interviewing for a job as an auto technician, casual clothes business dress would be appropriate to wear. Avoid wearing work clothes, jeans, T-shirts, and tennis shoes. These clothes would probably appear too casual. It is always best to lean toward conservative in either professional or business attire. If you are still in doubt about what to wear, ask your instructor or counselor for advice. See 18-3.

Clothes should be clean, neat, and in good condition. Do not wear a torn shirt, a wrinkled coat, or muddy shoes. Have the shirt mended or choose something different. Get your coat pressed ahead of time, and clean and polish your shoes.

Remember, however, that neat, clean clothes will not leave a positive impression if you yourself are not neat and clean. Hair should be well styled. A beard should be neatly shaven or trimmed. Makeup and perfume should be applied sparingly.

Be Prepared for Questions

During an interview, you will be asked many questions to determine if you are the right person for the job. There are some questions that almost every job seeker can expect during an interview, 18-4. You need to become familiar with these questions and think about how to answer them. In fact, it is a good idea to write your answers on paper. Then you can read them over and decide if you phrased your thoughts clearly and positively. Sample interview questions may also be found on www.careerbuilder.com or www.monster.com. You may also want to try a Web search using the term *interview question answers*.

Early in the meeting, the interviewer is likely to say "Tell me about yourself." What do you suppose the interviewer wants to learn? He or she is exploring your educational background and

Thinking It Through

Why is it important to be well groomed for an interview? What clothes would you recommend wearing to an interview for these jobs: word processor, auto technician, restaurant server, and salesperson?



18-2

Strive to look your very best for every job interview.

Appropriate Interview Attire		
	Professional	Casual Business
Men	Two-piece suit—dark colors	Sport coat or blazer—not required, but avoid loud colors and patterns Pants—no jeans, avoid baggy pants
	Long-sleeved shirt coordinated with suit—white, blue or conservative stripe, no bright colors	Shirt—button-down or polo shirt—wear collar open if not wearing a tie
	Tie—coordinated with suit and shirt, conservative colors and patterns, no character ties	Tie—not required but appropriate
	Socks—calf-length coordinated with suit (usually black or brown)	Socks—conservative, mid-calf length
	Belt and shoes—leather, black or brown to match suit; no boots	Shoes—leather loafers or dress; no sandals, athletic shoes, or boots
	Jewelry—very little: conservative watch, no body piercings or chains	Jewelry—very little; no chains or body piercings
	Cologne—very little	Cologne—very little
Women	Two-piece dress or pants suit—conservative color (navy, dark gray, black, or brown); avoid short or tight skirts; no revealing slits	Skirt or pants—casual, solid conservative colors, avoid short or tight skirts, no revealing slits
	Blouse—tailored, cotton or silk, small collar, sleeves; no cleavage	Shirt or blouse—conservative, tailored, no cleavage
	Scarves—if worn, should be conservative colors that complement suit and blouse	Sweater—tailored knit or sweater set
	Shoes—pumps with low heel; color should match suit; toes should be covered	Shoes—leather or fabric loafers; dark colors to coordinate with wardrobe
	Hose—light color to match wardrobe, no patterns	Hose—light color to match wardrobe, no patterns
	Purse—small and simple	Purse—small and simple
	Jewelry—small, conservative; no body piercings except earrings	Jewelry—small, conservative; no body piercings except earrings
	Cosmetics—conservative, less is better	Cosmetics—conservative, less is better
	Perfume—very little	Perfume—very little

18-3

When in doubt, lean more toward professional than casual business dress.

18-4

Be prepared to answer these questions completely before you go on your first interview.

Interview Questions	
Possible Questions	Possible Responses
“Won’t you tell me about yourself?”	Succinctly summarize your abilities as they relate to the job qualifications or your career goals. Do not provide a general life history.
“Why do you want to work for this company?”	Tell what you know about the company. Explain how your abilities match the company’s needs.
“Why do you think you will like this kind of work?”	Relate the job requirements to successful experiences you have had in the past.
“What were your best subjects in school?”	Name two or three and relate them to job qualifications.
“What were your poorest subjects in school?”	Explain what have you done to try to improve.
“What other jobs have you held?”	Focus on jobs with skills that relate to the jobs you are seeking.
“Why did you leave your last job?”	Be honest. However, avoid saying anything negative about your previous employer.
“Have you ever been fired from a job? If so, why?”	Answer honestly. If you have been fired, try to turn it into a positive by sharing what you learned from the experience. Avoid trying to blame others.
“What is your major strength?”	Select one and relate to the job qualifications.
“What is your major weakness?”	Be honest but explain what you have done to improve. Give an example.
“Have you ever had a conflict with a coworker? How did you handle it?”	Briefly describe the situation and how you handled it. Avoid placing all the blame on the other person. Explain what you learned from the experience.
“What do you expect to be paid?”	If possible, determine the salary range before the interview. Say that you are willing to discuss, or state a range you feel comfortable with.
“Are you willing to work evenings and weekends?”	Ask how much evening and weekend work would be required and then answer honestly.
“What are your future plans?”	Describe how the need to learn and grow is important to you. Confine your answer to the company with which you are interviewing.
“Why should I hire you?”	Be specific. Explain how your qualifications match the job requirements.

job skills. At the same time, the interviewer is checking how well you express yourself. Provide the interviewer with responses that highlight your qualifications for the job.

Keep in mind that the subjects that interviewers cannot explore and the questions they cannot ask. A list of illegal questions for job application forms and job interviews is found in Chapter 16, “Applying for Jobs.” These questions involve a job candidate’s race, skin color, religion, national origin, sex, age, or disability. They are forbidden by laws that address discrimination, which is discussed in Chapter 20, “Diversity and Rights in the Workplace.”

Although laws to prevent discrimination make certain questions illegal, that does not mean they will not be asked. Prepare yourself now and you will not be taken off guard if you hear an improper question. For example, you might respond by saying, “Please explain how that relates to the job” or “I would rather not answer personal questions.” You could also respond to the intent of the question without answering it directly. For example, if the employer asks how old you are, you could respond by saying, “My age won’t be a factor in performing the duties of this job.”

If the interviewer innocently asked a borderline question, he or she will restate the question and keep the interview on a professional course. If questions or comments of a questionable nature continue, you should become suspicious of the interviewer. Remember, you are not obliged to answer illegal questions. When you suspect an interviewer of violating your legal rights, simply end the interview. Politely say that you are no longer interested in the job.

Practice for the Interview

Take some time to rehearse your interview. Ask a friend, family member, or other adult with business experience to interview you. These are known as **mock interviews**. You should also practice by interviewing yourself in front of a mirror. Practice answering questions that are likely to be asked. However, do not memorize your answers. Try to make them sound natural and positive. It is important to let your personality show through.

Most people usually feel nervous when interviewed. That is why practicing ahead of time is important. Practicing builds your self-confidence and helps you feel more relaxed during the actual interview.

Know Where to Go for the Interview

What a waste of time and energy it is to prepare for an interview and miss it by going to the wrong place. This has happened. One job seeker, for example, assumed his interview would be at the company’s manufacturing plant. When he arrived at the scheduled time, he learned that all interviews were held at the company’s headquarters across town. Another job seeker missed her interview because she wrote down the wrong time and did not double-check. For these reasons, it is important to keep an accurate record of each interview you schedule.

Thinking It Through

Why is it important to be prepared for interview questions? How should you react if you think an interviewer’s question is illegal? Would you want to work for someone who does not carefully avoid discriminatory practices?

Thinking It Through

Why is it important to practice for an interview? What are some good ways to practice?

Extend Your Knowledge

Interview Parking Tips

When arranging the interview, remember to ask where to park. Knowing where to park can save you valuable time. Some companies have special areas for visitor parking. If you are interviewing in a city, you may need to park in a parking garage or a parking lot. Make sure to bring extra money; parking in a city garage can be expensive.

It is a good idea to visit the company before the interview to be sure you know how to get there and where to go. The trip will help you estimate the travel time. Be sure to allow extra time on the day of the interview so you arrive early.

One easy way to keep your interviews organized is by preparing an index card for each, 18- 5. Write the date and time of the interview, the employer's name, and the exact location. Also note the name of the person to contact and the title of the job for which you are applying. Be sure to double-check all information to make sure you have recorded it correctly.

On the bottom and back of the card, leave space for comments. After each interview, make notes about what questions were asked and how well you answered them. Evaluating yourself can help you have a more successful interview next time.

18-5

Filling out a note card for every interview helps keep track of important facts about the employer and the result of each interview.

Job Interview	
Date of interview	<u>May 14, 20xx</u>
Time of interview	<u>8:30</u>
Employer	<u>Whitaker Publishing Company</u> Contact <u>Robert Drake</u>
Location	<u>1822 W. Meridian St.</u>
	<u>Milwaukee, WI 53172</u> Phone no. <u>(414) 555-2323</u>
Job title	<u>Office assistant</u>
Comments	<u>I interviewed with Mr. Robert Drake, Personnel Manager. He was very interested in my business education background and keyboarding skills. He plans on making a decision about the position by next Friday.</u>

The Interview

Once you have prepared for an interview, you are ready to meet your interviewer face to face. However, there are a few other details you need to consider. For example, what time should you arrive at the interviewer's office? How should you greet him or her? How should you behave during the interview? How should you end the interview? Knowing the answers to these questions will help you handle yourself with confidence and make a good impression on the interviewer.

Arrive five to ten minutes early for the interview. Relax and be yourself. Tell the receptionist or person in charge who you are and who you are scheduled to see. Do not take someone with you to the interview. Taking a friend or family member may give the impression that you will not be comfortable working alone. You certainly do not want to give this impression. Be sure to turn off your cell phone.

The interview begins with a formal introduction. This may be one of the most important parts of the interview. It is the first impression your prospective employer will have of you. It is important that you make eye contact when you are introduced to someone and maintain it throughout the entire conversation.

Chances are that you will first introduce yourself to a receptionist. Smile and offer a friendly greeting such as "good morning." Clearly state your name and the purpose of your visit. You will probably be asked to take a seat to wait for your appointment. It is important that you conduct yourself professionally at this time. Sit up straight. Use this time to review your notes or look over any brochures or professional magazines in the reception area. Of course, be prepared to carry on a conversation with the receptionist if prompted.

When the interviewer arrives, the receptionist may introduce you. If so, stand and wait for him or her to complete the introduction. If not, stand and introduce yourself. In either case, be sure to include a friendly greeting and restate the interviewer's name. This will help you remember it. Ask the individual to repeat his or her name if you did not hear it clearly or are unsure of the pronunciation. It is very important to smile and act relaxed. Remove gloves if you are wearing them and shake hands firmly.

When you are offered a seat, sit in a comfortable position but do not slouch. Sit straight and look alert. Your body language often tells the employer as much about you as what you say. Avoid doing anything distracting such as smoking, chewing gum, or cracking your knuckles. It is natural to be nervous, but do your best to appear relaxed.

As the interviewer asks you questions, listen very carefully. Then respond positively and honestly about yourself and your experiences. Keep your answers brief and to the point. Do not brag about your qualifications, but do not be bashful to tell the interviewer about your accomplishments.

Throughout the interview, act interested in what the interviewer is saying. Do not look out the window, around the room, or at the floor. Look pleasantly at the interviewer and maintain eye contact. Show you are enthusiastic about the job and the company.



Reflect Further

What impression do you want the interviewer to form of you during the interview?

When the interviewer asks if you have any questions, that is usually a signal that he or she has all the information needed about you. It is your turn to find out more about the job to help you decide if it is really for you. It is important to have your questions ready at this time. You will want to ask the questions about the job and the company that you have not been able to answer in your research on the company. For example, you might ask about the opportunity to learn and grow on the job. What are the opportunities for advancement? You might also ask about a typical workday or what the interviewer likes about working for the company. However, these types of questions should have a low priority. It is usually best to save questions about salary and benefits for a follow-up interview. After your questions are answered, the interview is just about over. At this time, thank the interviewer for seeing you and again express your interest in the job.

Seldom will you be offered a job at an interview. Most likely, the interviewer will want time to consider your qualifications and those of the other job candidates. The interviewer may promise to contact you on a certain date to let you know if you have the job. Sometimes the interviewer may ask you to call him or her at a later date. If you do not get the job, the interviewer is not likely to call you at all.

If no mention is made at the end of the interview of what happens next, it is appropriate to ask when a hiring decision will be made. You should leave an interview with a clear idea of when the newly hired person will be notified.



Reflect Further

Why is a firm handshake important?

The Dinner Interview

It is possible that you may be asked to interview for a job over dinner. You may also be asked to attend a dinner meeting as part of your job. In these situations, it is important to follow etiquette. **Etiquette** is the code of behavior that guides social situations. Observing proper table manners is an example of etiquette. Your behavior while dining can influence whether you are offered the position or have a successful meeting.

Table etiquette begins as you approach the dining table and does not end until you have left the dining area. Wait for your host to seat you. Men should offer to pull out a woman's chair.

Begin by removing the napkin and placing it in your lap. If you are dining in a formal situation, you will notice that the dinnerware and eating utensils are placed in a specific order. The forks will be on your left and the knife and spoons on your right. If the utensils are wrapped in a napkin, you should place them in their proper place. As you begin eating, always use the utensils on the outside of your place setting first. For example, the fork farthest away from your plate will be the salad fork. The spoon on the far right will be the soup spoon. When in doubt, follow the lead of your host.

As you begin eating, it is important to note that you will be expected to engage in conversation. Of course, you should not chew or talk with your mouth full. Therefore, you will need to control the amount of food you place in your mouth at one time. Take small bites so you can chew, swallow, and

still converse in a timely manner. Bread and rolls should be broken into small pieces as you eat them. Cut meat as you eat each piece. Certain foods such as olives and corn on the cob are considered finger foods. Finger foods may be picked up by hand, but other foods may not. You may place your elbows on the table between courses, but not while eating.

Try to pace your eating so you do not finish too soon or too late. Wait for your host to conclude the meal. Place used utensils back on your plate when you are finished eating.

If you have been invited to dinner for a job interview, your host will pick up the check. The purpose of other meal functions will determine who pays the check. Try to determine this prior to the meal to avoid awkward situations when the check arrives. Avoid ordering the most expensive items from the menu if others are paying. Be sure to thank your host at the conclusion of the meal.

After the Interview

After an interview, do not just sit back and hope you will get the job. At your first opportunity, immediately send a **follow-up letter**. This is a brief letter written in business form to thank the interviewer for his or her time. It should be postmarked within two days of the interview. A **postmark** is the official U.S. Postal Service stamp on delivered mail. A follow-up letter reminds the interviewer of your interest in the job. You may want to include a brief comment on how your qualifications match the job requirements. See 18-6.

If the interviewer promised to contact you by a certain date and does not, also follow up with a telephone call. Be as pleasant and positive as you were during the interview. You may want to say something like this: “Mr. Roberts, this is Terry Brooks. I interviewed two weeks ago for the auto mechanic position. You mentioned that a decision about the job would probably be made by now. I am still interested in the job and wonder if you have made your decision.” You may learn the job has been filled. On the other hand, you may learn that you are still in the running and a final decision will be made in two weeks. Whatever the response, you will know where you stand.

Do not be discouraged if you do not get a job offer right away. Very few job seekers land a job after just one or two interviews. You may need to interview with a number of employers to find the best job for you. However, if you have missed out on several jobs, try to figure out why. Check the comments you have written down on your interview cards. Have you had any problems on your interviews? You may discover there is a specific reason why you are not getting job offers. To help you evaluate yourself on the job hunt, ask yourself the following questions.

- Are you qualified for the jobs for which you are applying? Perhaps you are applying for jobs that require more training and experience than you have. Be willing to start at the bottom if necessary.
- Are you applying to the wrong places? Apply where there are likely to be job openings. Consider applying for jobs in neighboring towns or moving to an area where there are more job opportunities.

Thinking It Through

Why would you want to avoid ordering the most expensive items from the menu if someone else is paying for the meal?

1036 Spring St.
Milwaukee, WI 53172
May 15, 20xx

Mr. Robert Drake
Personnel Manager
Whitaker Publishing Company
1822 W. Meridian St.
Milwaukee, WI 53172

Dear Mr. Drake:

Thank you for taking time yesterday to interview me for the office assistant position that will become available in June.

After talking with you, I am very excited about the possibility of joining your company. I am confident I have the ability to work independently, which is so important to you.

I look forward to hearing your decision and hope it will be a favorable one.

Sincerely,

Mary Poston

Mary Poston

- Are you filling out job application forms properly? If you are not filling out applications correctly and neatly, employers may think you will not be able to perform a job properly. Read the directions carefully on all applications and answer all the questions completely. Remember, you need not answer questions that violate your rights as a job applicant.
- Do you lack interest and energy? Not asking questions about the job or seeming uninterested could convince the interviewer you do not really want to be hired.
- Do you lack confidence? Appearing very nervous and ill at ease may make it difficult for the interviewer to talk with you.
- Are you being discourteous? Arriving late for the interview or not thanking the interviewer for seeing you may leave a bad impression of you.

One way to improve your job-seeking skills is to conduct an **informational interview**. Locate someone who is employed in a job area in which you are interested. Call the company and arrange for an interview with the individual. Tell the individual you are trying to learn more about an occupation and that you will not take more than 15 or 20 minutes of his or her time. Use the interview to learn more about the occupation and yourself.

Because you will not be under the pressure of applying for a job, you should be more relaxed and able to work on the interview skills discussed earlier. You may even want to ask what the interviewer seeks in a job candidate. Near the end of the interview, ask the individual to recommend how you might improve your interview skills. Be sure to express a sincere thanks at the close of the interview and send a follow-up letter, just as you would for an actual interview. This effort could even result in a future job offer.

Accepting a Job Offer

Before accepting a job offer, consider all the factors about the job. This will help you evaluate the job and the company. An important factor to consider is whether you will be happy in this position. Excellent working conditions and good pay will not mean much if you end up hating to go to work each day. Now is also the time to ask questions about the job's responsibilities, pay, and benefits.

The salary for a job should be in line with the salaries paid for similar jobs at other companies. If the salary is a lot lower, you should probably consider a job with an employer that pays a more reasonable salary. However, a lower salary is sometimes balanced with excellent opportunities for advancement or very good fringe benefits. Check to see if your employer provides any of the following fringe benefits:

Insurance

Does the company offer group health, dental, and/or life insurance? If so, how much coverage do the policies provide? Does the employer pay all or much of the cost?

Thinking It Through

Why is it important to make notes after each interview about the questions you were asked and how well you answered them?

In the Real World

The Perfect Interview

Sholanda was very pleased when she received an offer to interview for a job as a receptionist in the emergency room at the local hospital. It was a very good job and she knew there were many applicants. In fact, over half of her classmates in health occupations applied for the job.

Sholanda prepared herself well for the interview by finding out as much as she could about the hospital and the position. On the day of the interview she dressed appropriately and followed all the interview tips she had learned in class. The interview went extremely well, and as the interview closed Sholanda felt certain she would be offered the position.

The last step in the interview process was a tour of the emergency room. As they were about to leave, the ambulance arrived with an accident victim. The patient was covered in blood and in very serious condition with deep cuts to the face and neck. When Sholanda saw the victim she almost panicked. She felt faint and sick to her stomach. She quickly looked away and managed to hide her reaction from the personnel director and head nurse who were conducting the tour. However, she knew immediately that she would never be able to work in an emergency room.

They left the emergency room and returned to the personnel director's office. The director asked Sholanda if she had any questions and

still wanted the job. Sholanda said all her questions had been answered and she knew she would be perfect for the job.

A few days later Sholanda received a telephone call from the personnel director. The job was hers if she still wanted it. Sholanda told the director she was very excited and flattered by the offer and was pleased to accept. The director told her to report to the emergency room in two weeks to begin her orientation training.

The next week was very difficult for Sholanda. She knew she didn't want the job and would take another as soon as possible. She couldn't think about anything else and began to lose sleep agonizing over her decision. She finally called the director the day before she was scheduled to start training and declined the offer. When asked why, Sholanda said she had too much schoolwork and couldn't handle both the job and school.

Questions to Discuss

1. What might be some reasons Sholanda accepted the job? What should she have done differently?
2. Do you think Sholanda should have at least tried to do the job?
3. Were her actions fair to the hospital?
4. Why do you suppose she lied to the personnel director? Do you think Sholanda's behavior affected the director's opinion of her classmates who also applied for the job?

Paid Vacation

Will you receive paid vacation time? If so, how many days? Will you receive more paid vacation days after working for a certain number of years? See 18-7.

Sick Pay

Will the company pay for any days you are sick and unable to come to work? How many paid sick days are available per year?

Retirement or Profit-Sharing Plans

Does the company contribute a set amount of money to a retirement plan or a percentage of its profits to a profit-sharing plan for you? Will a portion of your income also be contributed to one of these plans? If so, how much? Must you work for a certain number of years before you are eligible to participate in plans offered by the employer?

Bonuses

Does the company give yearly or holiday bonuses? How are the amounts of bonuses determined? As discussed earlier, pay and fringe benefits are just two factors to consider about a job. Also consider the location of the job, working conditions, work hours, and opportunities for advancement before you make a final decision about a job.

If you do decide to accept a job offer, let the interviewer know. Tell him or her you are glad to accept the offer. Then find out everything you need to know to start your first day of work. Remember to ask when, where, and to whom you should report for work. Also ask whether you need to bring anything with you.

Rejecting a Job Offer

At the end of your interview with an employer you may be offered a job. If you need more time to evaluate the job, you may want to ask the interviewer for a few days to think about it. Most employers will usually agree.

On the other hand, you may be asked to decide immediately whether to accept the offer. If you have evaluated the job and decided it is not what you really want, you will probably choose not to accept the offer. At this point, politely thank the interviewer. Explain briefly why you feel you are not the right person for the job. The interviewer will appreciate your direct, honest answer.

Many jobs are not offered at the end of the interview. You may receive a job offer later, either by telephone or by mail. In either case, let the employer know right away via phone that you will not accept the offer. Thank the employer and give a brief explanation for your decision. When rejecting a job offer made by mail, immediately send a short follow-up letter thanking the interviewer for the offer. Include a statement explaining why you are not interested in the job.



18-7

Paid vacation time is a fringe benefit of many full-time jobs.

Summary

A personal interview with an employer is an important step in getting a job. Prepare for it carefully by learning all you can about the employer and the job. Think about the questions you may be asked during the interview. Be prepared to answer those questions before the interview.

Making a good impression on the interviewer is important. Be on time for the interview and go by yourself. During the interview, listen to the questions asked. Respond positively and honestly about yourself. Ask your questions about the company and the job after the interviewer finishes. After the interview, send a follow-up letter. Thank the interviewer and let him or her know of your interest in the job. If the interviewer does not contact you by the date promised, you may follow up with a phone call. If you do not get the job, take time to evaluate what happened during the interview and learn from your experience.

Before accepting or rejecting a job offer, carefully evaluate the job and the company. Consider several factors in making your final decision. In either case, let the interviewer know your decision right away.

Facts in Review

1. What is the purpose of the interview for the employer? for the job seeker?
2. List five ways to prepare for an interview.
3. What information about an employer should a job seeker try to learn before the interview?
4. Why is it important to have some knowledge of a company before an interview?
5. Why is it important to prepare a list of questions to ask the interviewer?
6. What items should be taken to an interview?
7. What is a good guideline to follow to help decide what to wear to an interview?
8. What information should be included in your record of each interview?
9. Why should a job seeker go alone to an interview?
10. If an interviewer does not mention when a hiring decision will be made, what can a job applicant do?
11. How can an individual evaluate his or her interviewing skills?
12. What topics should a job seeker who receives a job offer discuss thoroughly with the employer?
13. Give examples of four fringe benefits.

Developing Your Academic Skills

1. **English.** Write responses for typical interview questions. Trade papers with another student and critique each other's responses for appropriate expression of thoughts. Give suggestions for how your classmate might improve his or her responses.
2. **Speech.** Choose a partner and role-play an interview. The "employer" should prepare interview questions to ask. When the interview is finished, the "employer" should give the "applicant" feedback on his or her interview. Then switch roles.

Information Technology Applications

1. Choose a company for which you might be interested in working. Search the Internet for the company's history, products, and employment needs.
2. Participate in a mock interview using standard interview questions. Have your "interview" video recorded. Watch the video and critique your interview.

Applying Your Knowledge and Skills

1. **Problem Solving and Critical Thinking.** Assume you will be interviewed for the future job of your dreams. Prepare for the interview by doing the following:
 - A. On a note card, record the important information about the interview.
 - B. List three questions to ask the interviewer.
 - C. List five questions that the interviewer is likely to ask you.
 - D. Decide what is appropriate to wear.
2. **Communications.** Role-play the interview described in Item 1. Have a classmate interview you for the job. Be sure to give the interviewer a copy of your résumé. Discuss the interview in class.
3. **Academic Foundations.** Research proper dinner etiquette. Share your findings in an oral class presentation.
4. **Employability and Career Development.** Role-play appropriate and inappropriate ways to dress for the interview.
5. **Communications.** Write a follow-up letter for the interview described in Item 1.
6. **Employability and Career Development.** Conduct an informational interview. Share your experience with the class.

Developing Workplace Skills

Select three or four companies that interest you and research them. Search for information through your school library and the Internet. Develop a list of the strengths and weaknesses of each employer as they relate to your interests and abilities. Then rank the companies in terms of how well they suit you. Justify your rankings. Finally, write down your reply to this interviewer comment: "Tell me about yourself."