

INTERVIEWING

Interviewing provides an employer with the ability to formally assess a job seeker's skills, personality and interests; it provides the job seeker with the ability to assess the employer, position and the organization. For most job seekers, interviewing will be your first opportunity to meet an employer face-to-face. Therefore, it is essential that you make a good impression; preparation is key to making a good impression.

General Interviewing Tips

- Research, research, research the organization before you go to the interview.
- Bring extra copies of your resume and a list of your references in a portfolio or professional folder.
- Allow plenty of driving time, confirm directions and know where to park.
- Turn off your cell phone before leaving the car. Better yet, leave the phone in the car.
- Make eye contact and offer a firm handshake.
- Be courteous and professional with everyone you meet during the interview day.
- Focus on what you can bring to benefit the organization.
- Prepare a list of questions to ask the employer.
- Always follow-up with a thank you letter.

Prepare for your interview

There are some standard interview questions job seekers can anticipate. These questions tend to be straightforward and focus specifically on your skills, interests and abilities in relation to the position and employer. The following is a list of typical interview questions; although this is not all inclusive, it does provide the job seeker with an idea of what to expect and can be used to prepare for interviews. Review these questions, practice speaking your answers *out loud* so you become accustomed to hearing the confidence in your voice as you answer.

Questions Asked By Employers

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Why do you want to work for us?
3. Why did you select Maryville University?
4. What did you learn from working at XYZ organization?
5. Describe two of your strengths and a weakness.
6. How do you think a friend or professor who knows you would describe you?
7. How will your experience with (student group or campus activity) help you in this position?
8. What qualifications will make you successful in this field/position?
9. What kind of management style do you prefer?
10. Describe the relationship that you would like to have between your supervisor and co-workers.
11. Do you think that your grades are a good indication of your academic achievement?
12. What accomplishment (honor or award) has given you the most satisfaction? Why?
13. What have you learned from your mistakes?
14. What do you like to do in your free time? How do you relax?
15. We are meeting with several candidates today. What makes you the best candidate for this position?
16. What specific goals have you established for yourself over the next 3-5 years?

Questions you should be prepared to ask.

1. What qualities describe a successful employee in this organization?
2. What are some of the aspects of your job that you find most enjoyable? Most challenging?
3. Describe the office culture here? Formal, casual, creative, fun, stressful?
4. What are the overall goals for this department?
5. Is there a formalized training program?
6. What opportunities exist to bring about changes in this position?
7. What are the future challenges for this organization?
8. Is your organization involved in community service activities?
9. How are employees encouraged to keep current with professional developments in the field?
10. How will I be evaluated in my job?
11. How frequently is this position evaluated?
12. What characteristics does a successful employee at your organization possess?
13. Why is this position open?
14. Are there any plans for future growth or expansion of your organization?
15. Why do you like working here? Why did you join this company?

Behavioral Interviewing

Behavioral interviewing is a method of interviewing that allows an employer to assess your behaviors, skills and experiences to determine your potential for success in the position of interest to you. The premise behind behavioral interviewing is that the most accurate predictor of future performance is past performance

Employers predetermine the skills that are necessary for positions and ask very specific question to determine if the job seeker possesses those skills.

- Your response should be specific and detailed. Use the STAR process:
 1. **Situation:** Describe the situation.
 2. **Task:** Identify the tasks required to address the situation.
 3. **Action:** Describe the action you took to accomplish the task.
 4. **Result:** Describe the result or final outcome.
- Always listen carefully to the questions being asked by the interviewer so that you have a clear understanding of what behaviors/skills the interviewer is asking about. If necessary, ask for clarification.
- Demonstration of your behaviors may be proven in many ways. You can provide examples from a variety of areas such as previous employment experiences, internships, co-ops, activities, community service, class activities and projects, etc.

Sample Behavioral Questions

1. Give one example of a goal that you set in the past and talk about your success in reaching the goal.
2. Describe the most significant or creative presentation you have had to complete.
3. Tell me about a time when you interacted with a particular challenging individual in work or classroom setting. What was this situation and how did you handle it?
4. Describe a project that you had to complete which required a great deal of organizational ability.
5. Explain a situation where you jumped in and immediately made a contribution.
6. Describe a time when you recognized an opportunity to sell a classmate, professor or supervisor on an idea. How did you come up with this idea and sell it? What was the outcome?
7. Give an example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.
8. Tell me about a mistake you made. How did you solve the problem?
9. Talk about a time that you worked on a team project. What was the project and what particular role did you play in the team?
10. Describe a situation when you had multiple projects or tasks. How did you prioritize?

Dress appropriately

First impressions are critical in an interview. Plan ahead and buy an interview suit. Consider the purchase an investment in your future career. In general, it is better to be too dressed up rather than too casual for the interview.

1. Make sure you have clean teeth, fresh breath (no smoking prior to the interview) and your hair is clean and neatly trimmed.
2. Avoid wearing cologne or perfume.
3. Men: A solid, conservative suit in navy, gray or black and a white shirt with simple patterned tie.
4. Women: Conservative suit with pants or knee-length skirt and a blouse. Avoid clothing that is too tight, too short and too low-cut.
5. Shoes: Polished, solid color to coordinate with the suit. Women's shoes should be closed-toe.
6. Wear pantyhose or dark socks.
7. Wear minimal jewelry and cover tattoos.

Final tip: Practice!

The best way to prepare is to practice answering questions - out loud. Ask friends or family to help you practice. Sign up for a mock interview held several times each semester through the Career Education office.

Career Education Office, located in the University Library, 314-529-9375
career@maryville.edu and www.maryville.edu/careered