

Successful Interviewing Strategies

Don't Get Burned On the Hot Seat



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Introduction

You have an interview – Congratulations! Your hard work has paid off. Now you need to show the employer how well you fit the position.

Keep two things in mind before you start to panic. First, you got the interview because you fit the qualifications. Now they want to see if you fit

everything else. Second, an interview is like taking a test when you know all the answers - they are asking questions about **you**.

Take the time to go through this handbook, get some tips and practice. As a Keuka student or alumni, take advantage of a mock interview. Call 315-279-5274 for an appointment.

GOOD LUCK!



Types of Job Interviews

You may experience many different types of job interviews. By understanding the process and being prepared, you can successfully navigate any interview situation. Just remember to be professional throughout the entire process and you'll be successful!

Behavioral Interview

A behavioral interview is designed to provide the employer with an in-depth look at your abilities. Sometimes you can fudge your way through an interview, but this is more difficult to do in a behavioral interview situation. Here, employers are asking for specific examples of how you did things, or handled certain situations. The thought process behind these questions is that past performance is a good predictor of future actions.

The Case Interview

The case interview is employed primarily by management-consulting firms, as well as investment-banking companies, and is increasingly being used by other types of corporations as at least part of the job-interviewing process. During this type of interview, “you are introduced to a business dilemma facing a particular company. You are asked to analyze the situation, identify key business issues, and discuss how you would address the problems involved” (MIT’s Careers Handbook).

Case interviews are designed to scrutinize the skills that are especially important in management consulting and related fields: quantitative skills, analytical skills, problem solving skills, creativity, flexibility, the ability to think quickly under pressure, listening skills, business acumen, keen insight, interpersonal skills, the ability to synthesize findings, professional demeanor, and powers of persuasion.

Committee Interview

In a committee interview you will face several members of the organization who will be actively involved in the hiring decision. When answering questions from several people, speak directly to the person asking the question; it is not always necessary to answer to the entire group. In some committee interviews, you may be asked to demonstrate your problem-solving skills, such as in the case interview (see above). The committee might outline a situation and ask you to formulate a plan that deals with the problem. You need not develop the ultimate solution, the interviewers are simply evaluating how you apply your knowledge and skills to a real-life situation.

Group Interview

The group interview is usually designed to illustrate the leadership potential of prospective managers and employees who will be dealing with the public. Final candidates are gathered together in an informal, discussion-type interview. A subject is introduced and the interviewer will start a discussion. The goal of the group interview is to see how you interact with others and how you use your knowledge and reasoning skills to win over others. If you perform well in the group interview, it is usually followed later by a more extensive interview.

Lunch Interview

The same guidelines apply in lunch interviews as those for typical site interviews. This type of interview may appear to be more casual, but remember it is a business lunch and you are being evaluated carefully. Use this type of interview to develop common ground with the interviewer. Follow the interviewer's lead in both selection of food and in etiquette. Do not order alcoholic drinks or smoke, even if offered by the interviewer.

One-to-One Interview

In a one-to-one interview session, one interviewer is speaking with one candidate. This is the most common type of interview. It has already been established that you have the skills and education necessary for the position. The interviewer wants to see if you will fit in with the company and how your skills will complement the rest of the department or unit. Your goal in a one-to-one interview is to establish rapport with the interviewer and show how your qualifications will benefit the company.

Phone Interview

The phone interview is a screening device meant to eliminate candidates and narrow the pool of applicants for personal interviews. It is useful to have notes nearby. You will sound more prepared if you don't have to search for information. Make sure you also have paper and a pen so that you can take notes and write down any questions you might have. Be prepared to think on your feet. Pauses to think seem longer when the interviewer is not physically in your presence. Since you cannot use body language, it is important to use vocal inflections as a substitute.

Second Interview - Site Visit

In a second interview, you will be invited to visit the actual location of the organization. One purpose of this interview is to provide you with an opportunity to meet other staff members. A second reason is to allow more people to interview you in greater depth to determine if you are a good match. The visit may take part of a day, an entire day, or perhaps even longer. When an organization offers to pay your expenses to travel to the interview, be prudent in submitting costs. Your choice of moderate rather than luxurious accommodations, food, and transportation will reflect your good judgment.

Structured Interview

In a structured interview, all candidates are asked the same questions for the interviewer's ease in evaluating applicants. If there is important information that you have not conveyed by the end of the interview, present your additional qualifications when asked if you have any questions or anything to add. Usually the interviewer will make written notes of your answers.

Video Conferencing

Video conferencing is often used as a more personalized version of the telephone interview. Recruiters conduct live, face-to-face interviews with applicants via personal computers equipped with cameras and speakers. You would use the same strategies as if you were meeting in person. Clothing, body language, and dialogue typically should not differ. Your goal is still an invitation to meet personally for a second interview at the organization's location.

Showcasing Your Job Skills (If you don't do it no one else will)

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

1. Research the Company and the Position

The more you know about the organization and the job for which you are applying, the more prepared you will appear (and feel) during the interview. The recruiter will be impressed by your interest and motivation. You will be able to confidently explain how you can contribute to the organization.

Find out as much key information as you can about the organization, its products, services, and customers. If possible, talk to current employees of the company.

You can locate information by checking the company's website.

Things to research can include the following (depending on your focus):

- ❖ General information about the organization, such as the location of the corporate office, number of plants/stores and their locations, and the names of the parent company and any subsidiaries.
- ❖ Company mission, environment and philosophy.
- ❖ Organizational structure, type of supervision, type of training programs.
- ❖ Philosophy, goals, mission statement, and image.
- ❖ Financial details; including sales volume, stock price, percent of annual growth in earnings per share, and recent profits.
- ❖ The competition in the industry and the organization's place in this industry.
- ❖ The products or services marketed by the organization, including recent media coverage.
- ❖ Career paths in your field.
- ❖ Recent news items regarding the company or industry.
- ❖ The interviewer's name and title.

2. Prepare for the Actual Interview

- ❖ Know the position for which you are interviewing. Obtain a job description if possible.
- ❖ Ask for the interview schedule in advance, as well as the names and positions of those interviewing you.
- ❖ Consider your strengths and examples that will support your statements. Answers should be between 30 seconds and a minute and a half.
- ❖ Prepare a list of questions you want to ask the interviewer, but make sure they cannot be answered on the website.
- ❖ Rehearse your interview with a friend, or participate in a mock interview with Career Services.
- ❖ Prepare your materials before you leave for your interview. Bring several copies of your résumé, a list of your references, and your portfolio (if you have one prepared). Make sure all materials are up-to-date.
- ❖ Know the location of the interview. Drive to the interview site in advance of the actual interview to determine how long it will take to travel there and the best route. Remember, take traffic delays and parking into consideration.
- ❖ Find out if you will need parking money and make sure to bring it with you!

3. Preparation Exercises

1. Describe five ideas, accomplishments, strengths, skills, or personal qualities you think would best sell you to an employer.
2. Describe what you know about the organization and the position. Why are you interested?
3. Describe your educational background. How is it relevant to your desired job?
4. What is your employment background? How is your experience relevant?
5. What skills and abilities have you used in previous positions that are relevant?
6. What are your career goals? How do they relate to this organization?
7. What are your personal skills and abilities? How do they relate to this job? Describe some specific examples of how you have used them.
8. What are your weaknesses? What steps are you taking to improve them?
9. What additional information do you want the recruiter to know about you?
10. What questions do you want to ask the recruiter?
11. Practice shaking hands.

4. Relax

- ❖ Get a good night's sleep the night before the interview.
- ❖ Don't over-prepare. Allow yourself some time to relax.
- ❖ Let your enthusiasm for the position and the organization show. After all, you chose to interview with this organization; let them know why you made that decision.

5. Dress for the Job

- ❖ Dress to your advantage.
- ❖ Dress to suit the interviewer.
- ❖ Dress for the position for which you are interviewing.
- ❖ Your colors and patterns should coordinate.
- ❖ Dress conservatively; consider the effect your choice of colors will have.
- ❖ Don't use too much perfume or aftershave.
- ❖ Your fingernails should be clean and properly cut.
- ❖ Your hair should be neat and combed.
- ❖ Check out your appearance in a mirror before entering the interview.
- ❖ Your clothes should be clean and pressed.
- ❖ Your shoes should be polished.
- ❖ Your jewelry and makeup should be sparse.
- ❖ Don't eat foods that will leave an odor on your breath before an interview.
- ❖ Wear clothes in which you feel comfortable and confident.
- ❖ Don't smoke or drink alcohol before the interview.

DURING THE INTERVIEW

- Make sure you arrive at least five minutes early. This allows you to familiarize yourself with the company environment. How are people treating each other? Are they chained to their desks? Do they appear to enjoy what they are doing?
- Greet the interviewer by his or her prefix and last name (ex: "Hello, Mr. Smith").

- Offer a firm handshake and a warm smile.
- Be confident, alert, and enthusiastic. Show self-confidence. Make eye contact with the interviewer and answer questions in a clear voice.
- Work to establish a rapport with the interviewer. Listen closely for cues on how you should act. Is he/she being formal or informal? How loudly is he/she speaking? What sort of information is he/she trying to solicit: general, professional, or personal? Try to speak with the same rhythm and tone of voice.
- Be specific, concrete, and detailed in your answers. The more accurate information you provide, the better the employer is able to get to know you.
- Remember to listen. Communication is a two-way street. If you are talking too much, you may miss cues concerning what the employer feels is important.
- Take time to reflect before answering a difficult question. If you are unsure how to answer a question, you might reply with another question. For example, if the recruiter asks what your salary expectations are, you might answer by saying, "What are you planning to pay your best candidate?"
- Answer questions as truthfully and as frankly as you can. The interviewer may steer the interview into difficult questions. Answer honestly, trying not to say more than necessary.
- Avoid criticizing past employers- even when you feel that the criticism is deserved.
- Do not lead with salary or benefit questions. If your main motivation is money it will turn off most interviewers. Convince them you can do the job and want the job before discussing money and benefits.
- Show that you want the job. Display initiative by discussing how your skills can benefit the organization. Give details related to how you helped past employers.
- You may want to ask about specific details about the position, such as functions, responsibilities, who you would work with, and who you would report to.
- If going to lunch with an employer, decline alcoholic beverages even if the recruiter orders a cocktail with his or her meal. If you are a smoker, don't smoke, even if the recruiter does.
- Ask questions about the interviewer and the company. You should be interviewing them as much as you are being interviewed. Is this the position you want? Is this an environment in which you want to work? Do your values and goals match?
- Avoid negative body language. The interviewer wants to see how you react under pressure. Try to avoid these signs of nervousness and tension:
 - Frequently touching your mouth

- Faking a cough to think about the answer to a question
- Gnawing on your lip
- Tight or forced smiles
- Swinging your foot or leg
- Folding or crossing your arms
- Slouching
- Avoiding eye contact
- Picking at invisible bits of lint
- Nervous laughter

At the conclusion of your interview, ask when a hiring decision will be made, and thank the interviewer for his or her time, restating your interest in the position.


If you are positive that you are not interested in the position, say so, but remain professional by thanking the interviewer for his or her time. If you are not sure, take some time to think about it before you tell the employer.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

- Take notes on what you feel you could improve for your next interview.
- Write or type a thank-you letter to the interviewer(s) indicating your interest in the position and thanking him/her for his/her time. This should be mailed within 24 hours of your interview. Send a thank you letter even if you aren't interested. This professionalism will set you apart from most other job seekers.



Interview Tips and Strategies

- Establish natural, relaxed, personal rapport at the start of the interview. ("Chemistry" is the key to success)
- Maintain good eye contact and positive body language (smile, lean slightly forward, look interested).
-  Find out as much as possible from the interviewer. Establish what he/she is looking for, then integrate this information into your responses.

- Know as much as possible in advance about the position and the organization. Research the organization in the library, online, or through contacts.
- Have a clear idea of the key points you want to make which will convey a potential benefit to the employer - and then make them.
- Anticipate possible negatives and address them early in the interview.
- Deal directly with problems and attempt to turn them into possible advantages.
- If appropriate, bring examples of your work to demonstrate your accomplishments and talents related to the job.
- Discuss possible problems that might face the organization and suggest ways in which you might contribute to the solution.
- Be prepared to answer tough questions such as why you left your last job. Some possible answers to that question might be:
 - Desire to have more responsibility
 - Limited opportunity
 - Changes in management/corporate restructuring/downsizing
- Never apologize, speak poorly of former employers, or bring up negative points that can be used against you.
- Watch for nonverbal cues (finger tapping, eyes wandering) to check how you are viewed. To recoup, change the subject or ask a question.
- At the closing, make sure that you ask when a decision will be made so that you are not stuck sitting at home waiting for the phone to ring.
- Immediately after the interview, write a “thank you” letter to everyone with whom you interviewed.

Interviewing Dos and Don't's

Do's

- ✓ Enjoy meeting the interviewer(s) and the actual interview
- ✓ Express enthusiasm and optimism
- ✓ Be clear and concise - answer factual questions as succinctly as possible
- ✓ Remain professional at all times
- ✓ Listen carefully and try to respond to what you have heard
- ✓ If you don't know an answer, say so. Then indicate you will seek the answer
- ✓ Emphasize accomplishments, stress achievements

- ✓ Be modestly confident, dwell on the positive
- ✓ Pick up clues and react
- ✓ Be flexible
- ✓ Be natural, sincere, and straightforward
- ✓ Stop yourself from rambling by asking if you have answered the question

Don'ts

- ✓ Smoke - even if the interviewer offers
- ✓ Chew gum, candy, or a toothpick
- ✓ Freeze or become tense
- ✓ Deadpan
- ✓ Seem overly eager or desperate
- ✓ Talk too much or too little
- ✓ Interrupt
- ✓ Bluff your way through an answer
- ✓ Attempt to draw out the interview
- ✓ Try to be funny or cute
- ✓ Bring up race, religion, or politics
- ✓ Provide negative information about yourself or anyone else
- ✓ Be overconfident or overbearing
- ✓ Be coy or subservient
- ✓ Be rigid
- ✓ Be vague
- ✓ Fall into the TMI (too much information) trap - only provide what is applicable to your ability to do the job

Some Actual Don'ts from Employers

- ❖ “She wore a Walkman and said she could listen to me and the music at the same time.”
- ❖ “A balding candidate abruptly excused himself. Returned to the office a few minutes later wearing a hairpiece.”
- ❖ “Asked to see interviewer’s resume to see if the personnel executive was qualified to judge the candidate.”

- ❖ “Announced she hadn’t eaten lunch and proceeded to eat a hamburger and French fries in the interviewer’s office – wiping the ketchup on her sleeve.”
- ❖ “Stated that if he were hired, he would demonstrate his loyalty by having the corporate logo tattooed on his forearm.”
- ❖ “During the interview, an alarm clock went off from the candidate’s briefcase. He took it out, shut it off, apologized and said he had to leave for another interview.”
- ❖ “Candidate was applying for a teaching position. When asked his weakness, he said ‘Anger’.”
- ❖ “When I asked him about his hobbies, he stood up and started to tap dancing around my office.”
- ❖ “At the interview, while I stood there dumbstruck, went through my purse, took out a brush, brushed his hair, and left.”
- ❖ “...pulled out a Polaroid camera and snapped a flash picture of me. Said he collected photos of everyone who interviewed him.”
- ❖ “Said he wasn’t interested because the position paid too much.”
- ❖ “A telephone call came in for the job applicant. It was from his wife. His side of the conversation went like this: “Which company? When do I start? What’s the salary?’ I said, ‘I assume you’re not interested in conducting the interview any further.’ He promptly responded, ‘I am as long as you’ll pay me more.’ I didn’t hire him, but later found out there was no other job offer. It was a scam to get a higher offer.”
- ❖ “Candidate said he really didn’t want to get a job, but the unemployment office needed proof that he was looking for one.”

Answering Questions the 1+ Way

Using the **1+** method to answer questions will generate excitement and enthusiasm. The **1+** way turns features/skills into benefits. By answering questions in such a way, the interviewer will want to hear more about you. Do your answers create an **OK**, a **MMMMM...** Or a **WOW**?

(Here’s a hint: This is what Behavioral Interviews are all about)

OK The answer is just OK, it doesn’t excite me or get me to want to hear more.

MMMMM... The answer is starting to interest me, I'm a little bit impressed, and I want to hear more (the carrot).

WOW This is an answer that really makes an impact. It doesn't seem as though anyone else can shine like you do.

In answering the question, give complete answers with an example. This is the "carrot." A good answer should take between 30 seconds and 1 ½ minute to explain. Any more or less is too long or short. Remember that the interview should be a 50:50 conversation with real communication. Here are a few examples:

"I am very reliable."

OK, Yea, yea, yea, that's what everyone says....

"I am very reliable. I really enjoy my work. I have only missed 3 days of work in the last 5 years."

MMMMM...I am a little bit more interested in this candidate.

"I handled many delicate customer service calls."

Sounds OK

"I handled many delicate customer service calls." I was promoted to handle all the customer service calls for the President of the company. I handled all the problem calls and even earned an award for customer satisfaction."

WOW! Now I'm becoming impressed.

"I increased the number of accounts in my division."

OK, I'm a bit impressed, but I need to hear more.

"When I came on board, I found a way to make the system more productive. I more than tripled the number of accounts in my division, from 42 to 132."

WOW! Sounds more impressive.

Sample Interview Questions

1. Questions to learn how the applicant regards current or past positions.

- Would you tell me about your present (last) positions?
- How would you describe a typical work day?
- What activities did you enjoy most/least in your last job?
- What do you consider the most critical elements in the successful performance of your present or past position?
- What do you feel you do best? Why?
- What problems do you encounter on the job? Which frustrates you the most? How do you deal with them?

- What was your greatest contribution in your present or past job?
- What specific things did you do in your last job to improve your effectiveness?
- What is your opinion of the organization you currently (or previously) worked for?
- What do you consider the single most important accomplishment in your present job?
- How have you improved your position from the one you originally accepted?
- How have your previous jobs prepared you for more responsibility?
- Tell me about the environment you work in currently. Why do you like/dislike it?
- What are the reasons you left your last job?
- To what extent do you feel your job progress in the past has been in keeping with your abilities?
- Let's talk about standards of performance. How would you describe your own? What would your peers say? What would your boss say?

2. Questions to probe the applicants relationship with people.

- How would you describe your supervisor?
- How did previous employers treat you?
- What do you feel are your supervisor's greatest strengths? Why? Greatest weaknesses? Why?
- In what ways has your supervisor supported you?
- For what kinds of things have you been praised? Criticized?
- Give an example of how you might not have been particularly effective in relating to others.
- What kind of boss do you prefer?
- How would you characterize your co-workers?
- What disagreements have you had with your co-workers?
- What will your former employers (or references) say about you?
- What kind of people do you enjoy working with? What kind do you find difficult?
- What kind of committees have you worked on? What did you contribute?
- Describe your relationships with people in other departments.
- How do you handle yourself when you have a conflict with someone? Are you confrontational? Do you avoid that person? Why? How do you think you'll behave when you have a problem with a co-worker?

3. Questions to explore aspirations.

- What is important to you in a job? What would you like to avoid?
- What do you expect from this job? What do you expect from this job that is lacking in your present job?
- What positions do you expect to hold five years from now?
- What do you think determines a person's progress in a good company?
- What are you doing to achieve your career goals?
- What do you know about the opportunities in the field in which you are trained?
- What are your salary expectations? On what do you base them?
- What are your goals?
- Where do you want to be professionally in ten years?
- How long do you expect to work?

4. Questions to stimulate self-assessment.

- As an employee, what do you consider your greatest strength? Greatest weakness? In what areas would you most like to improve? Why?
- What motivates you?
- Define cooperation.
- What about the position under discussion interests you the least? The most?
- How long do you think it would take you to make a positive contribution to our organization?
- What do you find most satisfying about this kind of work?
- What job in our company would you choose if you were entirely free to do so?
- Describe an accomplishment of which you are particularly proud.
- Most of us improve our decision-making ability as we get greater experience. In what respects do you feel you have improved your decision-making?
- What decisions are easiest for you and which ones are more difficult?
- Can you take instructions without feeling upset?
- Describe your ideal job.
- What does success mean to you?
- How did you decide on your particular field of training?
- Why did you select this particular field of training?
- What have you learned from some of the jobs you have held?
- In what community and/or college activities have you been involved?
- Do you feel you have done the best work of which you are capable?
- Why did you decide to go back to school? What did you like most about it? What did you dislike about it?
- What causes you to lose your temper?
- Have you ever had a weakness in the past that you've been able to overcome? How did you accomplish this?
- When you're faced with a particularly tough decision, how do you go about making it? Can you give me an example?
- Do you think you'll prefer to work with others or by yourself? Are there experiences you have had in school or in the workplace to support that?

5. Questions to determine how the applicant would apply skills, experience, and knowledge to the vacant position.

- What attracts you to the job for which you are applying?
- What do you believe qualifies you for this position?
- What are your opinions about some of the changes facing our company and our profession?
- What elements of this job would be new to you?
- What additional training do you feel is required to achieve full proficiency?
- Why do you think you might like to work for our company?
- What do you see as the direction of this company?
- What do you know about our company?
- How will you help our company?
- See this pen I'm holding? Sell it to me.

- How do you work under pressure?
- Aren't you overqualified?
- Why have you been out of work for so long?
- Will you relocate or travel?
- How would you evaluate me as an interviewer?
- Why should I hire you?
- What makes you unique?
- Your experience doesn't exactly match our needs right now, does it?
- How many hours a week do you normally work?
- What qualifications do you have that make you feel that you will be successful in your field?
- What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction? Why?
- What do you think you can contribute to our company that would influence us to hire you?
- Tell me about yourself (free form-your chance to talk about things that an employer may not get around to asking you, talk about your accomplishments, etc.).
- What is your energy level like? Describe a typical day.
- Do you manage your time well?
- How do you organize and plan for major projects?
- Are you an organized person?

6. Questions regarding your internship/extracurricular activities

- What extracurricular activities were you involved in? What made you choose those? Which did you most enjoy? Why?
- What did you learn from (or why don't I see any) internships on your résumé?
- How did you get those internships? What was the most valuable thing you learned from each?
- Tell me about a typical day at _____ organization.
- Did you hold any leadership positions in any organization?
- What functions did you enjoy most? Least?
- What supervisor did you like best? Why?
- What supervisor did you like least? Why?
- Your lack of experience bothers me. Why do *you* think I should hire someone just out of school, like you?

7. Questions regarding career/job expectations

- What most influenced you to choose the career you're ready to begin?
- What are you looking for in a job?
- Why are you interested in this position?
- What do you know about our organization? How did you find this out?
- Is there anything about this company or job that makes you apprehensive? Why?
- What aspects of this job do you think you'll find most interesting?
- How will you react to doing the least interesting or least pleasant parts of this job?
- How do you think this job will help you achieve your long-term career objectives?
- Let's say your supervisor gave you an assignment that you didn't understand and then left town for a week. Assume he/she is unreachable. What would you do?

- This is a large (or small) company. Do you think you'd like this sort of environment? Why? What do you think you might not like about it?
- What do you know about the financial aspects of this business? Have any of your studies or readings helped you know how we budget, what affects our bottom line?
- What kind of salary are you looking for?

8. Questions regarding education

- Why did you choose Keuka College?
- What courses did you like most? Least? Why? What were the factors influencing your choice of major?
- In what courses did you get your best grades? Why?
- In what courses did you get your worst grades? Why? How do you think that will affect your performance on the job?
- If you were to start over again tomorrow, what courses would you take? Why?
- Were there any unusual difficulties you had to overcome to do well at Keuka?
- Did you do the best job you could while in school? If not, why not?
- How was your education financed? What percent did you pay for yourself?
- Do you have any plans for further education?

Most Frequently Asked Interview Questions

1. Why don't you tell me about yourself?
2. Why should I hire you?
3. What are your major strengths?
4. What is your greatest weakness?
5. What sort of pay do you expect to receive?
6. How does your previous experience relate to this job?

7. What are your plans for the future?
8. What will your former employers (or references) say about you?
- 9 Why are you looking for this sort of position and why here?
10. Why did you leave your last job or why did your last job end?

10 Major Fears Behind Interview Questions

1. You lack the skills to do the job.
2. You won't put in a full working day.
3. You'll be out sick or absent a lot.
4. You won't stay with the company very long.
5. It will take you too long to learn the job and cost the company money.
6. You won't get along with other co-workers or your boss.
7. You will not work hard and do only the minimum job requirements.
8. You will not show initiative and have to be told what to do all the time.
9. You will have a work-disrupting character flaw.
10. You will bring discredit upon the company, department, or supervisor.

Address the Fear Behind the Question...

1. Understand what really is being asked.
2. Answer the questions briefly.
3. Address the hidden concern by presenting your skills. Focus on your key skills and give examples.

Illegal Questions

Subject of Inquiry	Legal Question	Illegal or Potentially Illegal Questions
Applicant's name	First and last names	Maiden name
Civil and family status	Can applicant meet specified work hours	Is applicant single, married, divorced, etc., Number of children, childcare arrangements. Is applicant pregnant or does she

		contemplate pregnancy.
Address	Current address and length of time at current address	Foreign addresses which would indicate applicant's national origin
Birthplace		Birthplace of applicant, applicant's spouse, or parents. Lineage, ancestry, or nationality
Birth date	Can be asked after hire	What is your age, how old you were when you graduated from high school
Race or color		Any question that would indicate applicant's race or color
Citizenship	Is applicant a U.S. citizen? If not a U.S. citizen, does applicant have a work-permit visa Proof of citizenship may be required	Country of citizenship, if NOT U.S. Does applicant intend to become a U.S. citizen Citizenship of spouse or parents
Photographs	After hiring , may be required	Any request for applicant's photograph
Religion	Can applicant meet normal working schedule	Religious denomination or customs Pastor's recommendation or reference. Identification of employee's religious affiliation may not be made
Arrests and Convictions	<u>Actual convictions</u> that relate reasonably to ability to perform job	Numbers and kinds of arrests
Education	Academic, professional or vocational schools attended Foreign language skills, if any	Nationality, race, or religious affiliations of schools attended Mother tongue, or how foreign language skills were acquired
Organizations	Is applicant a member of any union and/or professional or trade organization	Is applicant a member of any association other than unions, professional or trade organizations
Military Experience	Has applicant served with the US Armed Forces	Type of discharge from US Armed Services. Did the applicant have military experience with governments other than US
Relatives	Names of relatives already employed by employer. <i>After hiring</i> , name and address of person to be notified in an emergency	Names or addresses of any relatives

Touchy Questions

What do you do when you are asked troublesome questions on a job interview? It is best to be prepared in advance if you feel that you have some problem areas in your background. Keep in mind several points:

- Be direct and honest in your reply. Evasive answers will only make the interviewer suspicious.
- Emphasize your good points so that the focus is on what you can offer the company. Be polite at all times.

- Reassure the interviewer that potential “problem” areas will be taken care of or are of no issues, i.e. babysitting arrangements, health concerns, travel means.
- Give well-thought out answers if you are questioned about gaps in your employment history or if you had a series of jobs over a short time.
- Questions not directly related to job performance (for example, age, marital status, children, religion) are illegal. If you are asked such questions, you can politely suggest that they are not relevant. You can also change the subject, asking questions about the nature of the work, whether you will be part of a team, who you will report to, etc.
- Failing all else, you might suggest, as tactfully as possible, that you will refrain from answering because of the irrelevancy of the question. The Labor Department, The Civil Liberties Union, and Human Rights Commission can answer questions about the legality of employment questions. Remember there is no single solution to handling touchy situations gracefully. The case will depend upon how badly you want the job and how offensive you find the questions.

Courtesy of the New York State Adult Career Counseling Manual

Phone Interviews

The phone interview is a common interview technique. In years past, the common hiring procedure involved flying in candidates with promising resumes who would then undergo intensive interviewing. Today, however, it is simply too expensive to carry out a face-to-face interview without prior rigorous screening to determine whether it might be worthwhile. The average cost of a typical face-to-face interview on a corporate site is \$16,000. It isn't economical to perform such an interview without first conducting at least two phone interviews, one for which the candidate is usually prepared, the other for which he or she is not.

A telephone interview is a lot less time consuming than a live interview. It allows a different, and often more revealing assessment of the quality of the candidate. The company screens out many candidates with “good” resumes within the first 15 minutes of a phone interview.

Whereas most people are fairly well prepared for a face-to-face interview, the interviewers really get a much better picture of job candidates by catching them unprepared. It is easy then to determine if they are genuinely interested in the company or are simply throwing darts at a board.

In a phone interview, it’s easy to determine how quickly candidates think and process information. An unannounced phone interview gives a clear picture of the candidate’s communication skills and allows a realistic analysis of the candidate’s potential for future success.

Prepare for a phone interview as you would for a face-to-face meeting. Dress professionally and have your resume and questions with you.

Imagine you are addressing your interviewer(s) face-to-face. If interviewing with several people draw a chart of who you are “meeting” and turn toward each person when answering his/her question. Make sure to smile and not slouch. Employers can “hear” body language. Set yourself apart by preparing yourself and being professional at all times.

Behavioral Interviewing

Tell me about yourself. What are your strengths? What are your weaknesses? Where do you see yourself in five years? How do you deal with stress? What salary do you expect? What kind of supervisor do you prefer? Why should we hire you?

These are just a few of the typical interview questions you may face. Are you equipped to answer them? Have you practiced how you would respond when asked these types of questions? If you feel comfortable answering these questions, great! However, there is a new type of interview for which you may need to prepare.

Employer Fears Behind Interview Questions

Believe it or not, employers don't like interviews any more than you do. In a small amount of time they are expected to make an accurate determination of a candidate's ability to work well within a certain framework. Do you lack the skills to do the job? Will you put in a full working day? Will you be absent or sick a lot? Will you only stay with the company a short time? Will you take too long to train at the company's expense? Will you get along with your co-workers and boss? Will you work hard or only do the bare minimum? Will you show initiative or need constant direction? Do you have a work-disrupting character flaw? Will you bring discredit upon the company, department, or supervisor? These are difficult to ascertain in a day, let alone in an hour or so.

Past Performance, Future Predictor

To find the answers to these questions, employers are trying a new tactic to learn about potential employees. The "Behavioral Interview" is designed to provide the employer with another glimpse of your ability. Sometimes you can fudge your way through an interview- it is more difficult to do so in a behavioral interview situation. Here, employers are asking for specific examples of how you did things, or handled certain situations. The thought process behind these questions is that past performance is a good predictor of future actions.

Great, Now What?

Now that we've thrown another wrench into the already stressful workings of an interview, you are probably wondering how in the world to handle this. Don't panic! Preparation is 9/10ths of the battle. Think of this as an opportunity for you to really showcase your talents. Instead of questions that have you answering like everyone else, these will help you make a definite impression on the employer (make sure that it's a positive one, though!).

Use the STAR Method

STAR is an acronym for **S**ituation, **T**ask, **A**ction, **R**esult.

Remembering this acronym can be helpful in organizing your thoughts when describing a specific experience.

Q. Tell me about a time that you have gone beyond what was required in your job.

A. "In my current position, I supervise 20 employees in the accounting department [SITUATION]. As manager, I am in charge of training all employees [TASK]. Although it wasn't required, I created a training manual to ensure consistency when training all employees [ACTION]. As a result, training new employees is more efficient and thorough [RESULT]."

Behavioral Interview Questions

A behavioral question asks how you have handled things in real life. It requires you to answer from your own experiences, with examples of what actually happened and what you did. Behavioral questions assess your experience, knowledge, and performance. To do well in these interviews, you need to have thought carefully about yourself.

Interpersonal

- We have all had to work with someone who is very difficult to get along with.
- Give me some examples of when this happened to you. Why was that person difficult? How did you handle that person?

- What are some of the best ideas you have ever sold to a superior? What was your approach?
- I am interested in your day-to-day experience with customers in your present job. Can you pick a recent customer interaction you've had and tell me about it?
- Can you think of a time when you have had to deal with the concerns of a particularly challenging customer?
- What aspects of your present job have involved the most verbal communication with other people?
- In what areas in your present job has good verbal communication been most important?
- What has been the nature of the writing you have done in your present position? Can you tell me about a recent example of _____?
- We all have had to work with people who see things differently from us. Can you think of a person or group you have worked with who saw things quite differently from you? How about an example of when they didn't agree with what you were doing?

Decision Making

- Have you ever recognized a problem before your boss or others in the organization? Explain.
- Describe any significant project ideas, etc. you have initiated or thought of in the past year. How did you know they were needed and would work? Where they used? Do they work?
- What were the most difficult decisions you made in the last six months? How did you formulate these decisions?
- Can you think of a particularly challenging decision you have had to make? We have all made some decisions or recommendations we wish we could do over again. Please give an example of when this happened to you.

Knowledge/Skills

- What are the steps you use in performing _____ (job related task, assignment etc.)
- What has been one of the most challenging situations which required your analysis?
- Have you ever been in a situation where there has been a recurring problem at work? Tell me about it. What did you do in this situation?

Personal / Motivational

- Give me an example of when you have worked the hardest and felt the greatest sense of achievement.
- All jobs have their frustrations and problems. Describe some examples of specific job conditions, tasks, or assignments that have been dissatisfying to you.
- What are your standards of success in your job/at school? What have you done to meet these standards?
- In your position, how do you define doing a good job?
- Tell me about some projects you generated on your own. What prompted you to begin them?
- Under what conditions do you work best?

- What kinds of pressures did you feel in your job at _____? Tell me about them. How did you deal with them?
- We have all had occasions when we were working on something that just “slipped through the cracks.” Can you give me some examples of when this happened to you? What were the results?
- In order to survive in the world, people have to bend a little bit. What is the farthest you have had to bend your standards in order to succeed?
- What do you do to manage stress?
- What were your objectives for last year? Were they achieved? How?
- How has your job changed since you started? Who initiated each of these changes? How was each one initiated?
- Have you done some things in your job beyond what has been required? Tell me about some things which you’ve done to exceed expectations.
- Have you ever been in a situation where you have had to take on new tasks or roles? Describe this situation and how you handled it.
- In going from ____ to ____, what did you find to be the most difficult? What did you do to make the transition? (This question will focus on a major transition, such as from one organization to another, or from undergraduate to graduate school.)

Career Ambition

- How do you feel about working for a company of this size? What do you see as the benefits and drawbacks?
- How long would you plan to stay with this company?
- What are your salary expectations?
- Why should we hire you?
- Why did you choose this particular career?
- Where would you like to be in five years? Ten?
- What are your long range goals?
- Who is the greatest influence in your self development?
- Describe the ideal organization that you would like to work for.
- What do you know about our organization, including its history?
- What do you know about our products and services?

Management Skills

- Are you able to schedule your time? How far ahead can you schedule? Can you walk me through last week and tell me how you planned the week’s activities and how the schedule worked out?
- How do you schedule your time? Set priorities?
- How do you manage the performance of those who report to you?
- Can you tell me about a situation in which you attempted to raise an individual’s (or group’s) level of performance?

Behavioral Questions

- Tell me about a situation where you had to make a decision without all the information you required
- Tell me about a situation where you had to work with a difficult co-worker.
- Tell me about the most stressful situation that you have been involved with.
- Did you ever take charge of a project from start to finish? What happened?
- How do you deal with pressure? Give me an example.
- What is the accomplishment of which you are most proud?
- Have you ever failed at something important? How did you handle that?
- Tell me about a situation where you didn't get along with your supervisor.
- Tell me about a time when you were highly motivated.

Situational Questions

- You are faced with a situation where you have been approached by a supervisor and asked to assist her with a special project that is due the next morning. You also have a major client's project due the next morning, and this project can't be delayed. You don't have enough time to complete both projects. What would you do?

Tips for Case Interviews

The case interview is employed primarily by management-consulting firms, as well as investment-banking companies, and is increasingly being used by other types of corporations as at least part of the job-interviewing process. Some firms use case

interviews only for MBA-level job candidates, while others use them for undergraduates, as well. *by Katharine Hansen, Ph.D.*

We want you to do your best in the case interview. Here are a few tips that may make a difference for you!

Structure

- Follow a logical structure. We suggest you approach the case by following these five steps to generate a hypothesis and supporting arguments.
 1. Listen closely to the situation and to the questions you'll be asked
 2. Firmly establish your understanding of the case
 3. Create an approach that focuses on critical issues and guides your analysis
 4. Analyze the problem. Ask the interviewer focused questions and evaluate the situation
 5. Clearly summarize your final analysis and conclusions
- Think out loud so that the interviewer understands the direction of your thinking. You may also want to write down your findings and assumptions.
- Remember, there is no "right" way of doing a case; nor is there a single answer. If you have demonstrated the way you think, you have done all you can to "crack the case."

Attitude

- Interact with the interviewer. The case should be a dialogue, not a monologue.
- Pace yourself. It's important to not rush to conclusions.
- And perhaps most important, relax and have fun.

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Sample Case Interview Scenarios

By the time you've gone through the case interview example and the interactive case you probably will have developed a good idea of what a case interview is all about. The best way to prepare for a case interview is to practice a few. Ask a friend or career counselor to give you a case using the sample business problems below.

1. A German luxury car manufacturer is interested in entering the sport-utility vehicle market (for example, Jeep Cherokee) after noticing that the market has grown dramatically worldwide in the past two years. How would you advise the manufacturer? What does it need to know before making an entry decision? If it chooses to enter, what might a viable strategy be?
2. A North American manufacturer/retailer of high-end glassware experienced a dramatic decline in same-store sales at its retail outlets last year. How would you begin to assess the reasons for the decline? Using your analysis as a basis, what strategy would you recommend for the manufacturer?
3. A large public utility formerly had a monopoly in the British electricity market. Now that the market has been deregulated, small power-generation companies have already captured a five percent share from the utility by offering to provide large businesses in the U.K. with their own in-house power-generation capabilities. The CEO of the utility wants to understand whether this trend will continue and how she can prevent further loss of share. How would you answer her question?
4. A U.S.-based pharmaceutical company that focuses on discovering, developing, and selling drugs for the treatment of cancer has been experiencing flat growth and is interested in expanding into new businesses. In view of the growth and profitability of stand-alone cancer treatment centers in the U.S., the company is considering establishing and operating similar centers in China. This would be the company's first foray into the cancer treatment center business. How would you evaluate the attractiveness of the opportunity?
5. The Swiss Ski Association has been petitioned by an international snowboarding club to permit snowboarding on the ski slopes within its jurisdiction. (Assume that the association currently forbids snowboarding on all Swiss ski slopes.) If the association is interested in maximizing profits, how should it respond to the petition? What factors would the answer depend upon?

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Questions to Ask the Interviewer

When interviewing, you'll be nervous, and you may forget what you want to ask. It is perfectly acceptable to bring a list of questions with you. In fact, this shows that you are prepared and have thought about this position. Just make sure they are on a clean piece of paper, instead of on a napkin or the back of a receipt!

1. How many people have held this position in the last few years? What happened to them?
2. How does this position and the department contribute to the overall mission and philosophy of the organization?
3. What characteristics best describe individuals who are successful in this position?
4. In 6 months, how will you know you hired the right person?
5. Why did you (the interviewer) join the company? How long have you been here? What is it about the company that keeps you here?
6. Does this position offer exposure to other facets of your organization?
7. What other positions and/or departments will I interact with the most?
8. To whom does this position report? Will I get an opportunity to meet him/her?
9. How will my performance be evaluated?
10. How often are performance reviews given? What model do they follow?
11. What are the realistic chances for growth in this job? Where are the opportunities for growth within the organization?
12. Does your organization encourage its employees to pursue additional education?
13. How would you describe the organization's work environment?
14. What distinguishes your organization from its competitors?
15. What industry-wide trends are likely to affect your organization's strengths and weaknesses?
16. How would you describe your organization's management style?
17. How is the work environment affected by the organization's management style?
18. What do you like about working here?
19. May I have a tour?
20. May I meet the people I would be working with?
21. What is this company's culture? (Is it rigid and formal or relaxed and flexible?)
22. What are the current problems facing the company (or my department)?
23. What do you like the most about working for this company? The least?
24. What is the philosophy of the company?
25. What do you consider to be the company's strengths and weaknesses?
26. What are the company's long and short term goals?
27. What attracted you (the interviewer) to this organization?
28. Describe the typical responsibilities of the position.
29. What are the most challenging aspects of the position?
30. Describe the opportunities for training and professional development.
31. Will I receive any formal training?
32. What is the company's promotional policy?
33. What are the greatest challenges in this position?
34. How do you think I fit the position?
35. What is the next step? When can I expect to hear from you?

Closing and Follow Up

In summary, you should close the interview as follows:

1. Tell the interviewer(s) how excited you are about the position and the company.

2. Ask when he/she expects to make the hiring decision. Ask him/her if and when you can follow-up with a phone call.

Important Final Advice

1. Don't forget to smile and show enthusiasm. Attitude is EVERYTHING!!!! Employers hire people they like, trust, enjoy, and have confidence in.
2. Six out of ten people don't get the job they want because they don't sell themselves. Remember to sell yourself – show that you have the personality AND the skills.
3. Toot your horn. Eight out of ten interviews begin with the question "Tell me about yourself".
4. Show what you can do for the company. You should know what skills the manager is looking for, so offer examples using features to benefits and the 1 + strategy (pg.11) to show that you can fill her/his needs.
5. Prove that you are a team player. Avoid using wording such as "I did this and I did that." Use words like "we" or "our team" or "our staff".

Job Outlook 2005 - **National Association of Colleges and Employers** Annual Survey



Employers Rank Communication Skills First Among Job Candidate Skills and Qualities

Employers look for their job candidates to exhibit strong communication skills, according to a recent survey conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE).

Employers taking part in NACE's *Job Outlook 2010* survey, ranked communication skills at the top of the skills they seek in potential employees. Rounding out the top five were analytical skills, the ability to work in a team, technical skills, and a strong work ethic. (See Figure 1.)

"These are the skills that employers believe are important to on-the-job success," says Marilyn Mackes, NACE executive director.

But employers have a fairly extensive roster of skills, qualities, and attributes they consider when making hiring decisions, says Mackes, and evidence that the candidate can perform the job is key.

"Many employers use GPA to gauge ability, and look at work experience for evidence that the candidate can do the job. For a new college graduate, that's typically gained through an internship," she says.

Consequently, good communication skills or a strong work ethic are not likely to make up for a poor GPA or lack of experience with many employers.

Given equally qualified candidates, however, prized "soft skills" can tip the scales toward one candidate over the other.

"Not surprisingly, our research shows that employers are looking for well-rounded candidates," says Mackes. "In a tight job market, the candidate who can offer that bit more has the advantage."

Figure 1: Employers Rank Top 5 Candidate Skills/Qualities

1. Communication Skills
2. Analytical Skills
3. Teamwork Skills
4. Technical Skills
5. Strong Work Ethic

Source: Job Outlook 2010, National Association of Colleges and Employers.

Reasons Candidates are Rejected

1. Poor personal appearance
2. Overbearing - overaggressive - conceited - "superiority complex" - "know-it-all"
3. Inability to express himself/herself clearly - poor voice diction, grammar

4. Lack of planning for career - no purpose and goals
5. Lack of interest and enthusiasm - passive, indifferent
6. Lack of confidence and poise - nervousness, ill-at-ease
7. Failure to participate in activities
8. Overemphasis on money - interested only in best dollar offer
9. Poor scholastic record
10. Unwilling to start at the bottom - expects too much too soon
11. Makes excuses - evasiveness - hedges on unfavorable factors in record
12. Lack of tact
13. Lack of maturity
14. Lack of courtesy - ill mannered
15. Condemnation of past employers
16. Lack of social graces
17. Marked dislike for school work
18. Lack of vitality
19. Fails to maintain eye contact with the interviewer
20. Limp, fishy handshake
21. Indecision
22. Sloppy application blank
23. Merely shopping around
24. Wants job only for short time
25. Little sense of humor
26. Lack of knowledge in field of specialization
27. No interest in the organization or field
28. Emphasis on whom he/she knows - name dropping
29. Unwillingness to go where the assignment is located
30. Cynical
31. Low standards
32. Lazy
33. Intolerant - strong prejudices
34. Narrow interests
35. Poor handling of personal finances
36. No interest in community activities
37. Inability to take criticism
38. Lack of appreciation of the value of experience
39. Radical ideas
40. Late to interview without good reason
41. Failure to express appreciation for interviewer's time
42. Asks no questions about the job
43. High pressure type
44. Indefinite response to questions

Adapted from a handout prepared by the University of Nebraska at Lincoln

Characteristics of a Good Salesperson

- Believes in the product (convincing)
- Knows the product (key skills, translates features into benefits for the employer)
- Positive, can do, upbeat attitude (handles rejection, doesn't take it personally)
- Professional appearance

- Well mannered
- Natural and sincere
- Good communication skills (clear, concise)
- Enthusiastic, eager, creates excitement
- Paints a picture (show the vision)
- Professional appearance
- Knows that sales is a number game, knows how to find his/her market
- Self confident (believes in self)
- Self motivated, hard working, persistent
- Organized, uses time wisely (has tools, paperwork in order)
- Prepared to make the sale (research)
- Dependable – delivers the goods (keeping the job)
- Personable, friendly, likeable, smiles a lot
- Uses psychology (Calls customer by name repeatedly – our favorite word is our name)
- Good listener
- Asks probing questions to determine the customer's needs (open and closed, uncover hidden fears, objections)
- Uses supporting statements (empathy, acknowledges need, and introduces benefits)
- Differentiates self from the competition
- Good eye contact and body language
- Closes the sale (summarizes the benefits and asks for the order)
- Good follow-up after the sale (thank you note, call back)

**The interview is your sales call.
Remember . . . usually the best salesperson
gets the job!**

Your Marketing Foundation: The 30 Basic Principles

From Dorothy Leeds' Marketing Yourself: The Ultimate Job Seeker's Guide

The future is yours for the taking. Marketing yourself is a process fueled by your dreams and accomplished by solid sales and marketing techniques. The thirty basic principles behind this process are the foundation for your lifetime career

planning success:

1. Marketing success depends on the quality of the product and the ability of the salesperson.
2. Attitude is more important than aptitude for sales and marketing success.
3. If you don't believe in the value of your product, no one else will either.
4. An effective marketer isn't resistant to change, but views it as a challenge and an opportunity.
5. With so many similar products and services today competing for the same markets, the commitment of the salesperson is often the deciding factor.
6. Increase your selling power by improving your communication. Be sure that your message is received the way that you sent it and meant it.
7. Selling is creative problem solving; how best to get what you want while giving the customer what he or she needs.
8. Marketing often requires quick and confident decisions. That doesn't mean you have to be right all the time we learn from all our choices
9. The best sales question you can ask yourself is, "How can I do it better next time?"
10. Marketing must be consistently future oriented for a product or service to survive in a rapidly changing world.
11. The more we rely on our own sales and marketing abilities, the more self-assured we become.
12. Interdependence and trust are the essential relationship builders.
13. The success of value added marketing lies in knowing what people want and giving them more than they expect.
14. The more you know about your product, the easier it is to sell.
15. Success comes from building on your strengths, not from correcting your weaknesses.
16. People want to know the features, but they buy for the benefits.
17. You sell a product best by selectively emphasizing features and customizing benefits.
18. Effective marketing is the result of careful planning.
19. A successful marketing plan is based on an understanding of current economic trends.
20. You increase the odds of making a sale by knowing what the buying public wants and needs.
21. The odds continue to increase by knowing specifically where your buyers are located.
22. The art of closing a sale is the ability to sell to the right person in the right way at the right time.
23. The secret desire of every prospective buyer is, "Make me an offer I can't refuse!"
24. In the age of customer service, mass marketing is not as effective as an individually customized sales approach.
25. Packaging has a major impact on why a customer purchases a product or service.
26. The only way to close a sale is to get to the real decision maker.
27. A sale is a series of planned questions to uncover needs, build trust, answer objections, and gain commitment.
28. The person who asks the questions controls the sale.
29. A successful negotiation is a win win situation but the person who asks for more usually gets it.
30. Marketing yourself is a lifelong process; use it well and enjoy your success.