

Interviewing 101

PRE-INTERROGATION TIPS FOR SUCCESS IN YOUR NEXT JOB OR SCHOLARSHIP INTERVIEW

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW:

- **Do your research.** First, research yourself and know why you're a good candidate for the position or scholarship. Second, research the company and position for which you're applying—knowing what tasks the job requires and what the company expects of you will help you articulate why you're a good candidate.
- **Know thy materials.** Be familiar with the materials you have submitted to your interviewers. There's a good chance they will refer to the essays or question responses you have submitted.
- **Know what scares you.** Think of the interview question that scares you the most, and think through how you will respond. This way, you're prepared if they throw that question (or one like it) your way.
- **Know thyself.** Make a list of relevant experiences, qualifications, or personal traits that you want to bring up in the interview. This way, you will have a stockpile of relevant anecdotes to plug into your answers in the interview, and you won't be left speechless.
- **Prepare to turn the tables.** Think of a few thoughtful questions that you want to ask your interviewers. That way, if they give you a chance to ask them a question or two at the end of your interview, you'll be prepared and can show them you've done your research and are very interested in the position. A good example is: Can you describe recent projects someone in this position has worked on? What attracted you to this organization and has kept you here? (But don't ask a question you should already know the answer to. This is also not the time to ask about salary, benefits, etc.)
- **Practice.** Go over some mock interview questions and practice responding to each. Say your answers aloud to yourself or to someone who will listen, such as an Oral Communication Tutor (OCT) or one of our experienced Oral Communication staff members. Constructive feedback is key!

DURING THE INTERVIEW:

- **First impressions matter.** Dress appropriately -- it's always better to be conservatively over-dressed than under-dressed. Give a firm handshake, and be relaxed and polite in the opening atmosphere of the interview.
- **Relax and slow down.** Take your time to speak clearly and comfortably, and take a moment to collect your thoughts before you answer a question, especially if it's a difficult question.
- **Connect with your interviewers.** When answering a question, use good eye contact. If you're being interviewed by a panel, start by looking at the questioner, then scan the panel of interviewers, and return finally to the questioner.

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(see the other side for other helpful tips!)

- **Speak like a STAR.** When telling a story or anecdote in an interview, use the STAR format: state the **S**ituation, the **T**ask, the **A**ction you took, and the **R**esult of your action. This creates a clear, rounded narrative.
- **Clarify vague questions.** Ask your interviewers to rephrase questions that are not completely clear to you. They may ask deliberately vague questions and force you to interpret them. In this case, restate what you believe they are asking you, then answer appropriately.
- **Take lemons and make lemonade.** If you're thrown an inherently negative question, such as "What is your biggest weakness?" or "Describe a time that you failed," answer it honestly, but be clear in your answer what you have learned from your mistakes or how you are working to improve that weak or unpleasant aspect of your personality. This shows that you are dedicated to growing as a person and learning from your blunders and failures.
- **Don't let poorly answered questions drag you down.** If you get a question that you can't answer well, just answer it, move on, and recover. Often, that great recovery is what your interviewer will remember about you.
- **Front-load your answers.** Get the most relevant information out there first. This way, you will get right to the point and avoid having your interviewers interrupt you before you get to the real point of your answer.
- **Shed a positive light on your past.** Always try to speak positively about your experiences with past employers and job positions. This shows you respect people you've worked with.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW:

- **Send a thank you letter.** Do so promptly, and send it to the person who interviewed you or who coordinated the interview. This will give you a chance to reiterate anything you really want to make sure your interviewer knows about you, and to show them how interested you are in the job or scholarship.
- **Learn from your experience.** Every interview we complete helps us become better at the process. Pat yourself on the back for getting through it. Then think through what you did well and what you could have done better so that you can learn from this particular interview.