

A Guide to Successful Interviewing

An interview is a formal meeting with a view to ascertaining your suitability for the job before entering a contract or agreement. The job interview is a strategic conversation to determine whether a good fit exists between you and the employer. The employer's objective is to find out **What** you are (your skills, ability to do the job, and basic job knowledge), **Who** you are (your personality, character, interests) and **Why** you should be hired. It is like a tape recorder in which your past incidents, feelings and reactions are played back to the living present to be listened to by the interviewer who can then get a glimpse into your inner qualities which otherwise cannot be easily exposed. It is a social process, which involves interaction between two persons – the interviewer and the interviewee. The interviewer tries to expose the inner traits and qualities of the interviewee. Through this method it is possible for a person to come in contact with the other and know his attitudes, characteristics and ideas on a variety of subjects. In an interview, a rapport is established between the interviewer (an individual or an interview board/panel) and the interviewee (the candidate aspiring for the job). On such an occasion, the socio-cultural barrier between the two is removed and a free flow of ideas take place.

The interviewer will try to determine whether you with all of these attributes, will be an asset to the organization. Your goal is to present yourself as the best candidate for the position and also to learn more about the position and the employer. You also want to determine whether the organization and the position is well suited for you and your career goals. Thus, the interview is a two-way discussion rather than an interrogation, as it is often perceived to be.

The interview is your chance to communicate your ability and skills directly to the potential employer. An interview is an opportunity for both parties to get to know each other and to determine if there is potential for a match. Anyone can learn to have a successful interview because interviews are skill-based. Most people find having interviews to be a terrifying prospect. Remember that the key to a successful interview is preparation and careful listening.

The interview is a vital step to getting a career position and consequently deserves more than casual preparation. You need to be ready to answer questions about your career goals and background. You will also want to develop intelligent questions that will help you make an informed job choice decision. Furthermore, preparation helps build your self-confidence in your interview skills. Most importantly, preparation is the key to a successful interview session.

The following information from **TEFL International** will give you an overview of how to prepare for an interview and what to expect during an interview.

Preparing For the Interview

So, you have landed an interview for a seemingly wonderful job! Now what? Successful interviewing will be essential in order for you to lock in an offer. **TEFL International** provides you with the key tips and strategies for having a successful interview from preparation through delivery. Let's start with an overview of the keys to positive interview experience.

Know Yourself

Most interviews include questions regarding your qualifications, education, campus and community activities, prior work experience, personal characteristics, skills, career interests and goals. To prepare for answering questions about yourself, think about the following questions:

- Which skills and personality characteristics do I want to talk about?
- What are my strengths? How did I develop them (in what activities?)
- What are my weaknesses? How am I improving them?
- What job experiences are most relevant to this position?
- What did I gain from my college education and college experience?
- What are my short and long-range career goals? How does this position and employer relate to those goals?

Focus on those experiences that best sell you for the position for which you are being interviewed. If you are unsure or undecided about which jobs or career fields best match your skills, interests and background, take the time NOW to assess yourself and explore various career fields. In addition, identify your key strengths related to the position and be able to cite examples of these strengths.

You also should be prepared to state the reasons why you should be hired, what you have to offer the employer, and your interests in the position. Thus, knowing yourself and how you can relate to the employer's needs will strengthen your interview presentation.

Know Your Career Field and the Specific Position

Before being interviewed for positions, complete thorough research of various career options of interest to you. Gain as much information as possible about the career field(s) including, nature of work, job responsibilities, skills, education and other qualifications required, and entry-level salary ranges.

In addition to researching the career field, you need to analyze the specific job description and how your background, skills and experience apply to each position. Prepare a list of pertinent functions of the position and the skills needed to get the job done. Then make a list of your experiences and accomplishments and assess how you have developed and applied these skills. In addition, evaluate your interest in this position/career field and be able to articulate it.

Know the Employer and Industry

It is also important to learn as much as you can about the employer before your interview. By adequately researching the organization, you will have a much better chance of creating a positive impression. The following questions can help guide your research.

- What is the size and structure of the organization?
- What are the organization's products and services?
- What is the organization known for?
- What are the geographical locations of its plants, divisions, subsidiaries, stores or sales outlets?
- How well is the organization doing? (growth patterns, financial history)
- Who are the organization's clientele or customers, and major competitors?
- What are the organization's entry level positions, career paths?
- What type of training does the organization offer its employees?

To obtain information about the employer, read company annual reports, recruiting literature, promotional materials, organization web page, job descriptions, employer directories, newspaper business sections, trade journals, and other related business publications. However, you will probably also want to use large university libraries, public libraries, the employer's public or investor relations department, local Chambers of Commerce and the Internet to access these information resources. Faculty, alumni, friends and current employees can also be helpful resources for information. Knowing as much as possible about the company can make your interview more interactive and could be just what you need to get ahead in a competitive job market.

A Second look at your First Impression

This single word, meaning, 'outward look' or 'visual impression' has a vital role to play in interviews. Your appearance can make a real impact on others, especially the selection board which happens to look at you from both angles – subjectively and objectively. A lot depends on how you impress the interviewer on your first meeting. It was a wise man who said, "The first impression is the last impression." Appearance includes your overall look, which is the total of the following:

- Clothes
- Hairstyle
- Facial expressions
- Way of walking and entering the interview hall
- Sitting posture before the interviewer
- Way of turning back and leaving the interview hall

A Russian proverb is worth mentioning here:

"When you meet a man, you judge him by his clothes; when you leave, you judge him by his heart."

Dressing for Success

How to Dress for an Interview

A recent article in U.S.A. spoke about candidates for jobs wearing jeans, purple sweat suits, and spiked heels or sneakers. According to the article, the outlandish dress costs some candidates the job.

Does it really make a difference how you dress and act? In many cases, it does.

In the conservative business climate appearances do matter. In other environments it isn't as important. However, it does make sense to dress your best for the interview, regardless of the dress code at the organization. If you're in doubt about how to dress for an interview, it is best to err on the side of conservatism. It is much better to be overdressed than underdressed.

55% of another person's perception of you is based on how you look. We give you some tips on how to look your best, without necessarily spending a lot of money. Here's a quick look at the basics:

Women

- Solid color, conservative suit

- Coordinated blouse
- Moderate shoes
- Limited jewelry
- Neat, professional hairstyle
- Tan or light hosiery
- Sparse make-up & perfume
- Manicured nails
- Portfolio or briefcase

Men

- Solid color, conservative suit
- White long sleeve shirt
- Conservative tie
- Dark socks, professional shoes
- Very limited jewelry
- Neat, professional hairstyle
- Go easy on the aftershave
- Neatly trimmed nails
- Portfolio or briefcase.

Your Facial Expression

It is said, "Your face is the index of your mind." An interview can judge a lot from your facial expressions. Wear a smile when you enter the interview room, and ask politely, "May I come in please?"

The smile should continue once you are in and are greeting the members of the interview board. This indicates the candidate's self-confidence and relaxed attitude and will help to develop a quick rapport with the board members. A long and serious face strains the atmosphere for both you and the interviewers. A ready, pleasant and spontaneous smile creates a favorable impression on the members of the interview board.

However don't continue to smile once the interview gets going, especially if your interviewer means business from the very start. There are chances you could be taken for an idiot if you continue to smile. Keep a well-balanced facial expression during the whole session, changing it suitably with the type of questions you are asked. It would be even better if you could match your facial expressions with that of the members of the board interviewing you. This would create a feeling of mutual agreement between your views and that of the board. In other words, it would mean that the interviewers accept your line of thinking. You are bound to come out successful, if you are able to create the feeling of mutual rapport.

Your Way of Walking

The sum total of your appearance depends to quite an extent on the way you walk and carry yourself. Cultivate a “dashing forward” way of walking with an upright military bearing. Your way of walking depicts your confidence in yourself and your “forward walking” shows fearlessness and ambition to rise in life by overcoming all obstacles. Your way of walking can thus be psychologically analyzed to reveal your character.

Your Way of Sitting

When the chairman asks you to take your seat, pull the chair towards you. Do not sit facing the interviewer directly. Never touch or lean on the interviewer’s desk. Sit back comfortably in a relaxed way. Do not change positions frequently as it will give the interviewer the impression that you are not at ease, and that you probably lack self-confidence and are nervous.

Your posture always plays an important part in many snap personality judgments that other might make about you. A poor posture may give the impression that you are not confident enough and perhaps have an inferiority complex. Therefore sit erect and occupy the complete seat of the chair, that is do not seat on the edge of the seat as normally candidates do to show respect to the interviewer. Poor sitting posture is, in psychological terms, an indication of dependency, inferiority and lack of self-confidence. Feel at ease while sitting before the interview board. You are not yet working under them and as such feel free to air your views on the topics under discussion with self-confidence.

Your Way of Leaving

When you get up and leave the interview hall, you are leaving behind a distinct impression of your personality on the committee members. Convey a feeling of assurance and self confidence in your personality. Just by your manner of turning back and leaving the room, you can completely change the initial impression the interviewers may have formed at the beginning of the interview.

Walk out of the hall with a confident gait leaving behind an impression of alert self-assurance. Maintain the same dynamic posture with which you had entered the room while you are going out.

Points to be noted

- After the interview, when the chairman asks you to leave, get up and thank all the members present.
- If the chairman extends his hand, take the opportunity to shake hands firmly and with confidence. This will prove that you don’t have a complex of any kind.
- Leave the chair calmly and put it back in its proper position. Turn to leave, portraying an upright bearing.
- Walk confidently, giving the impression of having achieved the desired goal.
- Do not forget to close the door.
- While leaving the room, do not look back.

This last leg of the interview procedure can be very paying as there are marks for this as well. Your carelessness here may negatively affect your overall performance during the interview.

Speech Mannerism

The interview is an oral examination to assess your personality; therefore your speech mannerisms assume much importance. They are a medium of communication and denote the cultural and environmental influences on your personality.

Ben Johnson's famous quotation, "Speak that I may judge thee," acquires a special significance in the context of interviews. It is said that a man's linguistic style reflects and reveals his personality.

Self-Confidence

The dictionary defines the term "self-confidence" as having full belief and trust in one's self. It also means self-esteem, self-respect and/or self-belief. Self-confidence is one of the most desirable attributes of a good and strong personality. It generates a feeling in one's self that "I can do it too". It helps you overcome doubts, banish fears and create a healthy attitude towards everything in life.

According to Samuel Johnson, "Self-confidence is thus the supreme guiding force for a person's onward march towards betterment and a successful career. It forms the bedrock of a man's character, and a strong and firm personality. One who possesses self-confidence can speak assertively and do anything with steadfast self-determination, self-assurance and self-assertion.

How should you inculcate it?

Undoubtedly, self-confidence cannot be developed overnight but many psychologists have given elaborate prescriptions for it, which have helped several people to achieve self-confidence. You too can develop self-confidence by following these simple guidelines:

- The antonym of confidence is **Fear**. It robs you of courage and cripples your reasoning power. It adds to tension and leads to a phobia that contributes towards failure. You need courage and confidence to overcome fear. Therefore, remove fear from your personality.
- A positive attitude is a pre-requisite for self-confidence. It can be seen in sentences such as these:
 - “I am sure, sir”.
 - “I feel confident about it, sir”.

“Yes, I am willing to take the risk”.
“I have full confidence in myself”.

- Develop your mental attitude in such a way that you have no fear and you can do it without any problem. The feeling that “I can do it too” stems from a positive attitude to life.
- Try to know your shortcomings and overcome them. If you are shy or suffer from any kind of complexes, you can get rid of these by practicing the very opposite attitudes, that is courage and confidence, and by trying to be social. Try to remove your inferiority complex.

Mental Alertness and Consistency

Mental alertness and consistency are two important attributes for a well balanced and impressive personality.

Alertness means your preparedness and quick understanding. You should be able to understand the questions put to you in the minimum possible time. This includes quickness of thought and observation, grasping the other person’s viewpoint, response by means of readiness with suitable replies and presence of mind. This includes:

- Quickness of thinking
- Quickness in grasping another’s point of view
- Quickness in response
- Quickness in reaching conclusions and taking decisions
- Readiness with suitable answers
- Relaxed attitude and presence of mind
- Mental agility and quickness of observation.

Alertness is an important quality in an individual that enables him/her to control an organization or people. The interview board tests the mental alertness of the candidate through various ways: by asking confusing questions, interrupting when the candidate is trying to impress his point of view so that his chain of thought breaks, or even by asking repetitive questions phrased another way. Alertness here does not mean answering spontaneously and without the application of all of one’s mental faculties. It means quick understanding of the problem or the question being asked and quick responses to the same.

Consistency

Another point closely related to mental alertness is consistency. It involves firmness of opinion, mature thinking and an attitude not guided by emotions or external impressions. Your opinion should not change and you should try to stand firmly by what you have initially expressed till the end of the interview. The interview board tries to judge your consistency by putting a question in the beginning and repeating it later in a different form. You should be consistent throughout not only in your opinion but also in your

temper, actions and thoughts. Do not change your viewpoint just to please the members or the chairman but be firm.

The members of the interview board might try to run rings around you by asking you confusing questions and in the end pose the first question again, worded somewhat differently. Here your mental alertness and consistency of thought are tested. If you change your opinion, it will depict your wavering attitude and lack of maturity and consistency. Therefore, up to the last leg of your interview process, try to firmly adhere to the first opinion expressed by you.

Practice Your Interview Skills

Many interview questions are predictable and can be anticipated prior to the interview. Questions that are frequently asked during most interviews are listed below. You can also predict 'job specific' questions by analyzing the job description (i.e. duties, responsibilities and skills of the position.) Consider the kinds of questions you can expect during the interview and prepare thoroughly and concise answers to each question. Do not memorize your responses, but instead outline the key points that you want to stress.

Get References

Speak directly with the people who you are planning to name as references (prior supervisors, faculty members, etc.) Let them know the kinds of jobs you are applying for and what specific kinds of experience and abilities you hope they can vouch for. Give them a copy of your resume, which they can refer to.

During the Interview

First Impressions/Greeting

First impressions count! The employer begins to evaluate you as soon as you are identified. Arrive 10-15 minutes early and dress professionally. Greet the interviewer by name, with a smile and a firm handshake.

Interview Format

Introduction. The first few minutes of the interview is used to establish rapport and to help the job candidate feel more at ease. The interviewer may engage in small talk or ask questions about your interests. These first few minutes are where you make a first and lasting impression. This is a good opportunity to demonstrate your communication skills.

Information Exchange. The next portion of the interview is spent in an exchange of information to determine whether a good match exists between the employer's needs and your skills and career objectives. The interviewer will ask questions about your qualifications, background and career goals and will present additional information about the position and organization. You will be expected to ask questions about the position and organization that will help you decide whether the opportunity is right for you.

Conclusion. The interviewer will usually close by telling you what the next step will be.

Answering Questions

Listen carefully to the questions and be sure you understand them. Answer the questions thoroughly by backing up your statements with specific examples of your skills, experiences and accomplishments. However, do not give more information than what the interviewer is asking for. In addition, emphasize your strong points at every appropriate opportunity in the interview. Furthermore, you want to avoid negatives/weaknesses and avoid using phrases such as: 'I only' or 'I really don't have much experience in that area.' Show confidence in yourself and your ability to perform the job! Finally, establish good eye contact with the interviewer and take an active part in the interview.

A list of typical questions asked by employers is provided in a section further on.

Be sure to practice answering these questions prior to your interviews.

Asking Questions

At some point in the interview, the interviewer will usually ask if you have any questions. Prepare in advance the questions you want to ask during the interview. Your questions should demonstrate your prior research and interest in the position. Ask questions that

will help you decide whether the organization and position are right for you. Avoid asking questions for which answers you could have obtained in researching the employer and preparing for the interview. Do not ask questions about salary or most benefits during the initial screening interview. Let the interviewer introduce the subject of salary. If salary is discussed, be prepared to indicate a range figure that you would expect to receive.

Concluding the Interview

Towards the end of the interview, the interviewer may ask if you have anything else you would like to say or add. Respond by summarizing your qualifications and reiterate your interest in the position. The employer will typically initiate the end of the interview by explaining the next step in the process. Thank the employer for the opportunity to interview for the position.

Follow-up After the Interview

Take Notes

The first 30 minutes after your interview is a critical time. Before your interview becomes a fuzzy memory, jot down notes about your meeting. This will help you be more prepared for subsequent interviews with the employer, and will force you to reflect on both the positive aspects of the interview, as well as areas for improvement. In your notes, include information about what the employer stressed as important applicant qualifications, any concerns or further questions you have about the position or organization, follow-up steps, and any questions that were unexpected or challenging for you to answer. Keep a log of all your interviews, including interview dates, contacts, addresses, phone numbers, names of referrals, etc.

Thank You Letters

Within 48 hours of the interview, write a thank you letter to the interviewer. Thank you letters are not only common courtesy, but because most people do not write them, your letter will set you apart from most applicants. Tell the interviewer you appreciate him/her taking time to meet with you and restate your interest in the position.

Follow-up Phone Calls

If you do not hear from the employer within the specified time period, follow-up with a phone call. Remind the employer who you are and the position for which you interviewed. Reinforce the positive aspects of your candidacy for the position by talking about your qualifications; accomplishments and background that will help solve the employer's problems. Arrange the next step in the selection process.

Types of Interviews/Interview Styles

Phone Screening

Many employers use phone interviews for their initial screening of job applicants who do not live within a close geographical range of their organization's facilities. Your voice quality and choice of words will be especially important during this type of interview. If you are successful in your phone interview, the employer will normally invite you to visit their facilities for more in-depth interview(s).

Structured and Non-Structured Interviews

Many interviewers are well trained to interview prospective employees, and others are not very skilled. Regardless of the interviewer's skills and experience, always remain professional and use effective interview techniques to positively present yourself as a candidate. Interviewers adopt different techniques or styles for interviewing for different positions. Some interviewers use a structured approach where the interviewer has a definite agenda and a list of specific questions.

On the other hand, some interviewers may ask broad general questions and may not take charge of the interview. In non-structured interviews, job candidates are often indirectly encouraged to present their qualifications.

Group Interview

A group interview occurs when several job candidates are interviewed at the same time. This style is often used to determine how candidates interact as team members, or may be used if the employer needs to hire in large numbers.

Panel Interview

A panel interview consists of more than one interviewer questioning a candidate. During panel interviews it is important to establish eye contact and rapport with each interviewer.

Behavioral Interviews

Behavioral interviewing, a relatively new style of interviewing is based on the premise that, *The most accurate predictor of future performance is past performance in similar situations*. Typically, employers predetermine which skills are necessary for the available position and ask the candidates to describe particular situations that relate to those skill areas. To prepare for this type of interview, you need to assess which skills the employer is seeking, as well as be able to describe situations or tell stories illustrating examples of how you successfully used these desired skills/behaviors. A sample format for answering these questions might be as follows: 1) briefly describe a situation, 2) give examples of the action taken, and 3) describe the positive result or outcome.

In a traditional interview, you will be asked a series of questions, which typically have straightforward answers like, "What are your strengths and weaknesses?" or "What major challenges and problems did you face? How did you handle them?" or "Describe a typical work week."

In a behavioral interview, an employer has decided what skills are needed in the person they hire and will ask questions to find out if the candidate has those skills. Instead of asking how you would behave, they will ask how you did behave. The interviewer will want to know how you handled a situation, instead of what you might do in the future.

Behavioral interview questions will be more pointed, more probing and more specific. For example:

- Give an example of an occasion when you used logic to solve a problem.
- Give an example of a goal you reached and tell me how you achieved it.
- Describe a decision you made that was unpopular and how you handled implementing it.
- Have you gone above and beyond the call of duty? If so, how?
- What do you do when your schedule is interrupted? Give an example of how you handle it.
- Have you had to convince a team to work on a project they weren't thrilled about? How did you do it?
- Have you handled a difficult situation with a co-worker? How?
- Tell me about how you worked effectively under pressure.

Follow-up questions will also be detailed. You may be asked what you did, what you said, how you reacted or how you felt.

What's the best way to prepare? It's important to remember that you won't know what type of interview will take place until you are sitting in the interview room. So, prepare answers to traditional interview questions. Then, since you don't know exactly what situations you will be asked about if it's a behavioral interview, refresh your memory and consider some special situations you have dealt with or projects you have worked on. You may be able to use them to help frame responses. Review the job description. You may be able to get a sense of what skills will be required or an asset from reading the job description and position requirements.

During the interview, if you are not sure how to answer the question, ask for clarification. Then be sure to include these points in your answer:

- A specific situation
- The tasks that needed to be done
- The action you took
- The results i.e. what happened

It's important to keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers. The interviewer is simply trying to understand how you behaved in a given situation. How you respond will determine if there is a match between your skills and the position the company is seeking to fill. So, listen carefully, be clear and detailed when you respond and, most importantly, be honest. If your answers aren't what the interviewer is looking for, this position may not be the best job for you anyway.

Behavioral interview questions are often difficult to answer without careful preparation. Some examples of behavioral interview questions include:

- Describe a situation in which you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.
- Tell me about a time when you were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to accept your ideas.
- Give me some examples that demonstrate that you can adapt to a wide variety of people, situations and environments.
- Provide me with an example of an important goal, which you set and tell me about your success in reaching it.

Stress Interview

A stress-styled interview is not very common. It is used to determine how a job candidate handles pressure. Stress interviews may include questions that attack your weak areas, or may involve timed and problem solving tasks.

Handling stress is an important part of any job. Call center jobs are very stressful so the employers aim to test the interviewees stress levels by making them go through stress interviews. These interviews test your stress taking capacity. The individual who performs better in a stress interview is likely to handle the live stress situations effectively at workplace. These interviews also try to evaluate the true personality of the candidate. The different ways in which stress interviews are conducted are:

- Create the unexpected situations to see how people react. For example, when you go for an interview there won't be any chair. This can cause a stressful situation.
- There can be times when you are surrounded by a panel of interviewers, who shoot questions one after the other and don't give enough time to speak.
- The interviewers may try to make some personal remarks or accusing statements.

Questions Usually Asked in Interviews

Questions asked during interviews are tools used by interviewers to try to penetrate the candidate's personality and analyze their psychological traits and behaviour, knowledge about their area of specialization and its applicability, and the level of their general awareness in order to determine suitability for the job.

Although it is not possible to compile an exhaustive list of questions that are usually asked in interviews, an earnest effort has been made to generalize some of the most commonly asked questions in order to enable you to prepare beforehand.

36 Frequently Asked Interview Questions

1. What are your long-range and short-range goals and objectives, when and why did you establish these goals, and how are you preparing yourself to achieve them?
2. What do you see yourself doing five years from now?
3. What do you really want to do in life?
4. What are the most important rewards you expect in your career?
5. What do you expect to be earning in five years?
6. Why did you choose the career for which you are preparing?
7. Which is more important to you, the money or the type of job?
8. What do you consider to be your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
9. How would you describe yourself?
10. How do you think a friend or professor who knows you would describe you?
11. How has your college experience prepared you for a career?
12. Why should I hire you?
13. What qualifications do you have that make you think you will be successful?
14. How do you determine or evaluate success?
15. What do you think it takes to be successful in a company like ours?
16. In what ways do you think you can make a contribution to our company?
17. Describe the relationship that should exist between a supervisor and those reporting to him or her.
18. What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction? Why?
19. If you were hiring a graduate for this position, what qualities would you look for?
20. Why did you select your college or university?
21. What led you to choose your field or major study?
22. What college subjects did you like most? Why?
23. What college subjects did you like least? Why?
24. If you could do so, how would you plan your academic study differently? Why?
25. What changes would you make in your college or university? Why?
26. Do you have plans for continued study?
27. What have you learned from participation in extra-curricular activities?
28. In what kind of a work environment are you most comfortable?
29. How do you work under pressure?
30. How would you describe the ideal job for you following graduation?
31. Why did you decide to seek a position with this company?
32. What do you know about our company?

33. What two or three things are most important to you in your job?
34. What criteria are you using to evaluate the company for which you hope to work?
35. What major problem have you encountered and how did you deal with it?
36. What have you learned from your mistakes?

Answers for Interview Questions

We have provided you with some example interview answers which will help you prepare some of your own answers for your interview.

What did you like best and least about your previous job?

DISCUSSION: This question reveals a lot about you. You want to indicate that what you liked best about your last job are things that will appeal to the Hiring Manager. Show that your last job allowed you to demonstrate many of the desirable Behavioral Competencies that are discussed at the beginning of this Guide. Give specific examples of how your last job allowed you to flex your skills and show your maturity. Never make statements like "I like that my last company gave me a lot of vacation days," or something similar. When answering about what you liked least, keep it short, do not be negative, and relate your answer to how your last job limited you in your ability to exhibit positive Behavioral Competencies.

"What I liked about my last job was the fact that there was good on the job training. I was able to really develop my "X" skills, which I know will help me succeed here if I am fortunate enough to be able to join your team. What are the qualities and skills of the people who have been most successful at this company?"

"One thing I liked about my last job was that it allowed me to develop my leadership skills. FOR EXAMPLE, I was put in charge of a project where I had to earn the "buy-in" of people from multiple different departments -- including Marketing, IT, Product Development, and even HR. I held all the responsibility for getting this project completed on time, even though I had no real authority over my teammates since they did not report to me. I was able to create a project vision that the team agreed on, and then day-to-day I made sure that each team member completed his or her work on time. I did this in most cases by appealing to my teammates' own self-interests. FOR EXAMPLE ... "

"What I liked least about my last job was that the management style was pretty hands off, and this was fine for me because I am self-motivated and work hard to achieve. But the lack of structure sometimes allowed some of my teammates to slack off from time to time -- and I often ended up having to pick up the

extra work. I would not mind that SOMETIMES, but it got old after a while. I had to constructively approach my manager and let her know what was going on WITHOUT creating any friction between me and the slacker teammates, who I actually liked as people. In the end, it worked out well, because I was proactive.

What have you learned from your mistakes?

DISCUSSION: Show that you are able to learn from your mistakes, but don't offer up any negative examples concerning your past performance. Show that you have been successful, but that you have the maturity it takes to examine your own behavior so that you can learn and grow and be a better employee. Be brief.

"Good question. Well, I have been successful at every job I have had, but I have had the normal ups and downs. I'd say that I do actively try to monitor my work habits and the quality of my work so that I can constantly be improving myself. FOR EXAMPLE, I have had one or two hiccups with customers where their satisfaction was not where I thought it was. I learned that I have to really monitor certain difficult customers closely and "take their temperature" so I can keep their satisfaction level as high as possible.

Give me an example of a problem you faced on the job, and tell me how you solved it.

DISCUSSION: This is a problem-solving question that tests your critical thinking skills. This is a great question for showing that you are a creative and capable problem solver. The problem you select to use as an example should be as similar as possible to a problem that you are likely to face at the job you are interviewing for.

"I try to take a systematic approach to problem solving where I take the time to gather the relevant data, clearly define the problem or goal, and then come up with possible solutions. I think it is important to get the information and clarify the problem first before you start coming up with possible solutions, or wasting other people's time.

Describe a situation when working with a team produced more successful results than if you had completed the project on your own.

DISCUSSION: This is a "behavioral interviewing" style of question. The Hiring Manager wants to learn more about your thought process, and how well you can form examples to answer this teamwork related question. You will want to show your ability to solicit ideas from others, listen carefully, and persuade people to your point of view.

"Well, I have worked both independently and as a member of team, throughout my career. I enjoy both, and can do both equally well. I will have to say, though, that working with others has often yielded great results for projects I have worked on -- specifically when it comes to brainstorming. I try to get everyone involved in coming up with new solutions by making time for sessions where "there are no wrong ideas or answers." The creativity of a group of people is always going to be greater than that of one person, and thus the results will be more successful. I did that a lot a Job "Y". FOR EXAMPLE..."

"Working with others allows you determine other people's skills and experiences, get perspectives and ideas that you would not have on your own, and check the quality of your own work before it goes out the door. FOR EXAMPLE, at Job "X" I worked with many great people. I was able to "pick their brains" -- so to speak -- about the effectiveness of various techniques, estimates on how long it would take to get various things done, etc. I would not have been able to do my job as effectively with out them."

Describe a time when you were faced with problems or stresses at work that tested your coping skills. What did you do?

DISCUSSION: Workplace stress is an issue for everyone. Don't pretend that you never get stressed out. You want to show that you can deal with stress and cope with difficult situations. Show that you are calm under pressure, and know how to avoid stress in the first place through planning and time management.

"Well I think it is important to remember that stress affects everyone, and it is inevitable that sometimes people are going to have bad days. That is why I try to give people the benefit of the doubt when they seem to have a short fuse. What I do personally is try to control my response to a situation. You can't necessarily control what happens to you, but you can control your response. What I try to do is lengthen the time between the stressful situation and my response -- so that I can identify the cause of the stress and decide what I can do about it. FOR EXAMPLE, on several occasions I have had to deal with very irate customers who actually yelled at me. What I did was stayed calm and did not let them get under my skin. I really tried to listen and decide exactly what it was that was at the root of their problem. Then I provided solutions that could be completed within a specific time-frame. I always find that it is best to face those types of situations head-on and be objective about them. I do my best to be professional and not get my

emotions involved. Also, I try to avoid stress in the first place by tackling difficult tasks or conversations sooner rather than later."

What was your role in your department's most recent success?

DISCUSSION: You'll want to be very specific here, and frame your answer in terms of how you saved time and money. The Hiring Manager is looking for a pattern of success, and you need to describe recent successes in detail. Use the S.T.A.R. Statement formula for your examples. Be prepared with at least three examples concerning your recent successes, and make sure at least one of them relates to teamwork and something you accomplished as part of a group. Make sure you address how your work made other people FEEL, as well as the time you saved and the revenue or cost-savings you generated.

"I guess that would be a recent project for client "X." I handled all of the communication with the client for our last project. It was a three month long project where my team had to build a custom package based on the needs of client. I was instrumental in translating the client's business needs into detailed product features. I had to make sure that my team understood what the client wanted, and then check the quality to make sure that we were delivering a quality product with the features that the client was expecting. This was an ongoing process that required a lot of communication and teamwork with my team as well as the client. I think my role really was to clarify the scope of the project, and then "manage the client's expectations." We were able to deliver on time, and the client was thrilled! I was able to make sure no time was wasted on adding unnecessary features, and since we were working on a fixed bid price, we saved my company time and money. My manager and everybody on my team felt great because the project went so smoothly."

Salary Negotiation

How to Negotiate a Compensation Package

Before you start talking pay (and salary negotiations) with a prospective employer, you need to find out how much the job (and you) is worth. You will need to take the time to research salaries so you are prepared to get what you're worth and a job offer that's realistic and reasonable.

How Much Are You Worth?

Americans say that the most important factor in considering a job opportunity is salary. 89% of the respondents in a recent Job Satisfaction Survey rated salary as being as most important when deciding whether to accept a job offer. In addition, more than 50% of the survey respondents believe they are underpaid.

So, what to do? How can you tell if the job you've just been offered pays enough or if your current salary compares to the market rate? It's going to take some time and some research to equip yourself with the information you'll need to successfully negotiate the salary or raise you deserve.

So while you're conducting your job search, research salaries for the career field and the geographic area you're interested in. It's important to be prepared when a prospective employer asks you your salary expectations or makes you an offer. Even if you are contentedly employed, it makes sense to know what you should (or could) be earning.

Start by reviewing salary survey information. The Bureau of Labor Statistics is a good place to start. Focused **salary survey** information delineated by industry and job function is available online. Review several surveys to get an overall perspective of the career field you're interested in. Keep in mind that the cost-of-living varies widely throughout the country. It's important to know what you need to make in order to pay your bills every month. Use this salary calculator, online cost-of-living analyses, and other compensation tools to determine how much that offer is actual worth. Then prepare to negotiate a salary both you, and your employer, will be comfortable with.

Salary Negotiations

Once you know what you *should* be earning, how do you go about getting it? Start by being very patient. When interviewing for a new position, do your best not to bring up compensation until the employer makes you an offer. If you're asked what your salary requirements are, say that they are open based upon the position and the overall compensation package. Or tell the employer you'd like to know more about the responsibilities and the challenges of the job prior to discussing salary.

Another option is to give the employer a salary range based upon the salary research you've done up front. Once you've received the offer you don't need to accept (or reject) it right away. A simple "I need to think it over" can get you an increase in the original offer.

And if you're ambivalent about the position a "no" can bring you a better offer too. Be careful though, if you do definitely need that new job there's a risk that the employer may accept you're declining the position and move on to the next candidate.

If you are found good enough and the employer wants you strongly enough, he may be willing to pay even a higher salary than what you expected. In view of this justification, it is recommended to leave the salary option open for the negotiation during the final interview. Therefore, it is better just to say: "Salary expected- Negotiable".

Writing Thank You Letters

Writing a thank you note after an employment interview is a must.

In fact, some employers think less of those interviewees who fail to follow-up promptly. Plan to send out your thank you letters as soon as possible (preferably within twenty-four hours, no later than a week) after your interview.

Like any piece of writing, it is best to keep your audience in mind.

Address their issues and concerns. In general, typed letters are recommended. Consider the "personality" of the organization and the rapport you felt during your interviews. If your interview was a fairly informal process and or you achieved an immediate rapport with your interviewer, a handwritten note might be fine.

In addition to thanking the person you talked with, the thank you note reinforces the fact that you want the job.

Note: Even if you do not want the job, write a thank you note respectfully withdrawing your application, because you never know what the future holds so why burn your bridges?

You may also view the thank you as a follow-up "sales" letter.

In other words, you can restate why you want the job, what your qualifications are, how you might make significant contributions, and so on. This letter is also the perfect opportunity to discuss anything of importance that your interviewer neglected to ask or that you neglected to answer as thoroughly, or as well, as you would have liked.

What if you spent an entire day being interviewed (and taken to lunch) with several people?

Are individual notes appropriate or should you write a "group" letter? Choose your approach based on what you think will be most in keeping with the "personality" of the organization. Also, consider whether the interviews had very much in common with one another. If there was a great deal of similarity (i.e., shared concerns mutually voiced by your interviewers), perhaps a "group" letter will suffice. If so, address all the people on a master letter, have the letter reproduced on your own stationery and add a personal note to each.

What if you suffer from writer's cramp?

Time takes precedence - get a simple, appreciative note in the mail or send a thank you by email without delay; save your creative efforts for another time.

Remember to proof read.

Check spelling, grammar, typos, etc. If in doubt about the correct names, spellings or titles of your interviewers, call the office or switchboard. Your efforts will be worth it!

The Bottom Line - It is always appropriate to say thank you! If you are not sure whether you should thank someone, think positively and spend a few minutes saying thank you.

Sample Thank You Letter

Your Name
Your Address
Your City, State, Zip Code
Your Phone Number
Your Email
Date

Name
Title
Organization
Address
City, State, Zip Code

Dear Mr/Ms. Last Name,

It was very enjoyable to speak with you about the assistant account executive position at the Smith Agency. The job, as you presented it, seems to be a very good match for my skills and interests. The creative approach to account management that you described confirmed my desire to work with you.

In addition to my enthusiasm, I will bring to the position strong writing skills, assertiveness and the ability to encourage others to work cooperatively with the department. My artistic background will help me to work with artists on staff and provide me with an understanding of the visual aspects of our work.

I understand your need for administrative support. My detail orientation and organizational skills will help to free you to deal with larger issues. I neglected to mention during my interview that I had worked for two summers as a temporary office worker. This experience helped me to develop my secretarial and clerical skills.

I appreciate the time you took to interview me. I am very interested in working for you and look forward to hearing from you about this position.

Sincerely,

Your Signature

Your Typed Name.

Your Name

Your Address

Your City, State, Zip Code

Your Phone Number

Your Email

Date

Name
Title
Organization
Address
City, State, Zip Code

Dear Mr. Last name

Thank you for taking the time to discuss the insurance broker position at Priya Investments Inc. with me. After meeting with you and observing the company's operations, I am further convinced that my background and skills coincide well with your needs.

I really appreciate that you took so much time to acquaint me with the company. It is no wonder that Priya Investments retains its employees for so long. I feel I could learn a great deal from you and would certainly enjoy working with you.

In addition to my qualifications and experience, I will bring excellent work habits and judgment to this position. With the countless demands on your time, I am sure that you require people who can be trusted to carry out their responsibilities with minimal supervision.

I look forward, Mr. Xxxxx to hearing from you concerning your hiring decision. Again, thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Your Typed Name

Additional Interview Tips

- **Arrive early.** Plan to arrive for your interview 10-15 minutes early. If you arrive earlier than that, go for a walk, get a cup of coffee, or sit in the lobby. Arriving too early may create an awkward situation and arriving late definitely creates a bad first impression. Be sure to ask for directions when making arrangements for the interview and always allow enough time for bad traffic.
- **Dress professionally.** Your interview attire should be appropriate for the position for which you are applying. If you are unsure, choose conservative dress. In most cases, business suits are appropriate for both men and women.

Carry a briefcase, portfolio notepad or manila folder. Bring extra resumes, list of references and a list of questions you need to ask.

- **Be yourself.** Your personality and background may appeal to some employers and not to others. It is to your advantage to be yourself, rather than try to mold yourself to fit an image you think will appeal to an employer. After all, you want to find a position and employer that is compatible with 'who you are' and your career objectives.
- **Sell yourself!** Six out of ten people don't get the job they want because they don't sell themselves. Be prepared to market your skills and experiences as they relate to the job described. Be self-confident and positive in describing your abilities to do the job. Convince the employer that you are the right person for the job and that you can help the employer solve some of their problems.
- **Answering the *Tell me about yourself* question.** Eight out of ten interviews begin with this question. Respond by illustrating how your interests and skills relate to the position and how your experiences and background would enable you to contribute to the position and organization. Spend about 90 seconds to two minutes highlighting your experiences while providing a focused answer. You may want to start out with personal information, then focus on academic experiences and professional experiences, and conclude with the reasons why you are interested in the position.
- **Use examples whenever possible.** Just stating your skills and strengths is not enough. You must demonstrate how you have successfully applied them. Be sure to give complete answers to questions. A typical answer may take 30 seconds to two minutes to explain.
- **Communicate effectively.** Speak clearly and enthusiastically about your experiences. Listen carefully in order to effectively and appropriately answer the questions being asked and to learn as much as possible about the position. Be positive about prior experiences, employers, former supervisors, college experiences, even your weaknesses. When describing a bad experience focus on the facts (not your feelings) and be brief.
- **Silence is okay.** Those pauses may seem longer to you than to the interviewer. A pause before answering a question enables you to organize your thoughts and present a concise answer. If you are unsure about a question, always ask for clarification before answering the question. When you have finished answering a question, stop, don't ramble on endlessly.
- **Watch your body language and nonverbal communication.** Maintain good eye contact, don't slouch, appear interested--not bored and control any nervous habits (fidgeting, drumming fingers, etc.) Your voice quality also demonstrates your confidence--speak clearly. Have good personal hygiene, do not wear too much make-up, jewelry or cologne/perfume. Pay attention to the details--polished shoes, professional hairstyle, clean nails, fresh breath, etc.
- **Social etiquette and small talk skills are important.** Be prepared to engage in small talk at the beginning of the interview. Your conversational skills are part of that first impression. Also, you may be invited to lunch or dinner as part of the interview. The meal is a significant part of the interview especially if your social skills are being evaluated as part of the hiring decision.
- **Expect the unexpected.** During the interview, you may be asked some unusual questions. Often times the employer is simply seeing how you react to the question.
- **Qualities Employers Seek in Job Candidates.** Employers typically are looking for individuals who possess a pattern of success (academic accomplishments,

leadership qualities, activities;) strong grades, written and oral communication skills; related work experience; interpersonal skills; leadership potential; decision making and problem solving skills; creativity and intelligence; flexibility; initiative/innovation; enthusiasm and positive outlook; self-confidence; polished personal style, honesty and integrity; ability to get along with others--a team player; and a good work ethic.

Interview Blunders

How Not to Interview

What shouldn't you do when interviewing? Here is a selection of blunders, mistakes and errors a candidate for employment can make. Spend time preparing to interview so these don't happen to you!

Don't Prepare

Not being able to answer the question "What do you know about this company?" might just end your quest for employment, at least with this employer. Background information including company history, locations, divisions, and a mission statement are available in an "About Us" section on most company web sites. Review it ahead of time, then print it out and read it over just before your interview to refresh your memory.

Dress Inappropriately

Dressing inappropriately can work both ways. You will certainly want to wear a suit if you are interviewing for professional position. If you aren't sure what to wear, visit the organization and watch employees coming in and out of the office to see what they are wearing.

Poor Communication Skills

It's important to communicate well with everyone you meet in your search for employment. It is, however, most important to positively connect with the person who might hire you. Shake hands, make eye contact, exude confidence, engage the person you are speaking with, and you will let the interviewer know that you are an excellent candidate for this position - before you even answer an interview question.

Too Much Communication

Believe it or not, at times candidates for employment, who, by the way didn't get the job, didn't hesitate to answer his cell phone when it rang during an interview. Leave the phone behind or at least turn it off before you enter the building. Same goes for coffee, food and anything else other than you, your resume, your job application, and your list of references. Anything else does not belong at an interview.

Talk Too Much

There is nothing much worse than interviewing someone who goes on and on and on...The interviewer really doesn't need to know your whole life story. Keep your answers succinct, to-the-point, focused and don't ramble - simply answer the question.

Don't Talk Enough

It's really hard to communicate with someone who answers a question with a word or two. In a couple of interviews it has been felt as if the interviewer was pulling teeth to get any answers from the candidate. It wasn't pleasant. So, even though you shouldn't talk too much, you do want to be responsive and fully answer the question as best you can.

Fuzzy Facts

Even if you have submitted a resume when you applied for the job, you may also be asked to fill out a job application. Make sure you know the information you will need to complete an application including dates of prior employment, graduation dates, and employer contact information.

Badmouthing Past Employers

Your last boss was an idiot? Everyone in the company was a jerk? You hated your job and couldn't wait to leave? Even if it's true don't say so.

It's sometimes a smaller world than you think and you don't know who your interviewer might know, including that boss who is an idiot. You also don't want the interviewer to think that you might speak that way about his or her company if you leave on terms that aren't the best.

Forget to Follow Up

Afraid you didn't make the best impression? Are you sure that you aced the interview? Either way, be sure to follow up with a thank you note reiterating your interest in the position and the company.

Don't Take it to Heart

Finally, even if you do flub the interview, don't take it to heart. If it happens, look at it like it just wasn't meant to be, learn from your mistakes and move on to the next opportunity.

How to Remedy Interview Blunders

Ever come away from an interview knowing that you could have done better? Maybe you think you don't have any recourse or way to remedy a misstep. But you do, depending on the type of blunder, here are some ways to backtrack and try to your chances.

Cheryl Gomes, a senior scientist at a biotech company, remembers one extreme and embarrassing example of what could safely be assumed to be an interviewee's worst nightmare. A candidate for an academic faculty position, where she once worked, fainted right after the lunchtime seminar. "It was just one of those unfortunate things," she remarks. "Some people, even though they're very comfortable with what they're talking about, and even though they have given talks many times before, still get very anxious and nervous."

He immediately regained consciousness, and fortunately there was a medical doctor in the crowd. But how do you recover from this? Gomes says that this candidate was actually a good example of how you can salvage an interview that has taken a wrong turn, in the sense that once he came to, he was quite articulate and apologetic, picking right up where he had left off in answering questions. "I was very impressed," she says. (She doesn't remember whether he got the job or not.)

This particular example does draw attention to one piece of advice for remedying a mistake: "We look for someone who doesn't dwell on any problem that may come up," says Gomes. "The ability to recover from a false step, that's what you look for, even in less dramatic situations." So try not to freeze up if you fail to answer some question properly or if you don't have the answer on the tip of your tongue.

Supplementary Information

What if you completely forget to provide a piece of information and think of it post-interview? "I've had examples where candidates have sent me preprints later," says Gomes. "They want to give me more supportive evidence about what they're trained in and what they know how to do." She says that candidates might send more references or they might write in a cover letter accompany supporting material: 'I've done x, y, and z, and it didn't come up during the interview, but in hindsight, it's relevant to my application.'

Adding more detail and evidence of how you're the right match for a certain position is perfectly fine, say hiring managers. It's not considered a strike against you. It usually takes a little time between the day of the interview and when the position is filled, so you probably have some leeway. However, do act quickly and respectfully.

Trying to provide the most complete picture of yourself during and post-interview can also make you stand out. "We're always trying to differentiate between candidates, so the more information we have the better," says Gomes.

Blowing a Question

Filling in extra facts is one thing. Another is a misunderstood question or realizing after the fact that the interviewer might have interpreted a remark you uttered in the wrong way. This is a different issue entirely. It needs to be handled with another approach, but could be trickier.

In supplying more information there's already a supposition that you're a candidate in contention. If that first blunder is serious enough you may have removed yourself from contention, so how you address the person in the follow-up is very important. Also, do you want to bring additional attention to a mistake? The answer depends on the nature of the oversight and how much you want the job.

If you feel you really must correct a mistake, a phone call is recommended over e-mail. There's something facile about e-mail where a phone call would be better. The immediacy and less of a chance of being misinterpreted a second time are two good reasons for a follow-up phone call versus e-mail. You might say something like this: 'This morning when we were talking about issue x, y, z, I think I left you with an impression that is really the not the way I feel, or the answer I gave you does not fully reflect my views on this topic. I'm concerned that it materially affects my chances in the interview process and I would really welcome the opportunity to talk to you again about this issue.'

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Take-Home Message

Avoiding these mishaps in the first place is the best advice they have to give. Come to the interview as prepared as possible to minimize the need to back pedal. For example, research the company or institution to which you're applying and match your experience to the position. Have questions of your own prepared. And, have answers prepared to such commonly asked questions as "Tell me about yourself."

One part of the process that many interviewees forget is to follow-up. "If the interviewer was lukewarm about a candidate to begin with, one way to help your chances, whether you botched up or not is to write a thank-you letter." In addition to demonstrating your polite and professional manner and reiterating your interest and fit for the job in the letter, it's also a chance to correct mistakes and give additional information.

"The whole process starts when a jobseeker sees an advertisement," says Gomes. "There's information there. Then there's a phone interview where they can ask questions to get more details on the position, and if they're called for an interview there's more interaction." So there are plenty of opportunities to exchange information.

It has been seen in interviews with many candidates that their interest level just isn't there, which is very disappointing. So when an interviewee comes back with supplemental information or a clarification, that kind of interest is usually appreciated.

The problem is that you have only one chance to show what you're about in an interview setting, and if you come across as dull and uninterested in the position, it's hard to remedy. But, if it's something as seemingly innocuous as filling in supplemental information or correcting a misinterpretation, then go for it.

Interview Checklist: Some Do's and Don'ts

After having understood the meaning and purpose behind interviews, the process involved and the methodology employed by the interviewers to analyze your personality traits and assess your suitability, we now go on to a checklist, which will help to prepare yourself for the interview and be successful.

Some Do's

- Select the dress you are going to wear and make sure that it is clean, well ironed and without any missing buttons. Make sure that your outfit suits the post for which you are being interviewed.
- Ensure that your shoes are well polished and that you have a matching pair of socks.
- Collect all your certificates, mark-sheets and other relevant papers and file them in chronological order to a neat folder.
- Go through your bio-data, mark-sheets and certificates and mentally prepare yourself to answer questions on your bio-data.
- Brush up your general knowledge, and collect important facts on current events, especially those about your own state.
- Ensure that you have a pocket comb and your wrist watch is showing the correct time.
- Take out your interview-call letter and put it on the top of your folder containing your mark-sheets and certificates. Note the time of interview once again to make sure that you are not late for the interview.
- Hear the late night news bulletin and take note of any important items.

On the Day of the interview

- Read the morning newspapers and note important headlines.
- If there is time, try to hear the latest news bulletin.
- Get ready a little before time so that you have sufficient time available for collecting your folder and other things to avoid a last minute panic.
- Try to reach the venue of the interview at least half-an-hour early. While starting from your house, keep a margin for unforeseen traffic jams or any other factor that may delay you.
- While you are waiting to be called in, talk to other candidates and discuss with them important current affairs and news items of the day.

During the interview

- Make sure that you are courteous throughout. Remember to say "Please", "Thank you", etc as often as you can.
- Be comfortable and relaxed. You have no reason to suffer from an inferiority complex. You want to be selected and the interviewers before you have the task of finding a suitable candidate. Therefore, you must meet as equals.
- If confronted with an odd or confusing question, don't become nervous. Instead, try to answer with clarity and confidence.
- Be attentive and alert throughout the interview.

- Speak in a clear voice and make sure each word is audible to the interviewers.
- Be good listener so that you know what is being asked. If you are unable to understand any question, request the interviewer to repeat it saying, "I beg your pardon." Don't start your answer until you have understood what is being asked.
- Give well-thought out and balanced answers but be prompt so that the interviewers are able to ask as many questions as they like. You have to help them make a proper judgment. You can do that only by giving your best.
- Be relaxed throughout, without showing any sign of anxiety. Try to give the impression of being an "ambitious young individual willing to take on any challenge".
- Look at all the interviewers one by one while addressing your answers and do not concentrate all the time on any particular member of the board.
- When you are replying to a question asked by any particular interviewer, look at them directly and address your answer to him/her.
- Maintain a pleasant expression throughout. You should not look ill at ease, anxious or bored.
- If you are discussing a serious problem, you should adopt a serious expression. You cannot continue to smile when a grave or tragic situation is being discussed.
- If an interviewer appreciates your discussion or the point you have made, take the opportunity to immediately thank them for the compliment.

After the interview

- Keep sitting. Get up only when the chairman asks you to do so.
- Thank the interviewers while getting up.
- After the interview, if the interviewers extend their hands, shake hands with them confidently and thank them. Don't take a feeble grip as it shows that you have inferiority complex and lack self-confidence. A firm grip, on the other hand, indicates you have confidence.
- Put your chair in its proper place with grace and confidence.

Some Don'ts

Here are some things, which must be avoided. Many of these points have been discussed in detail in earlier chapters but to help you to recapitulate them; they are being repeated briefly in the form of a checklist.

On the day of the interview

- Don't study late in the night before the interview. A full night's sleep is a must before the interview to remain fit and fresh during the course of the day.
- Don't eat an exceptionally heavy breakfast on the day of your interview as it might make you feel uncomfortable or heavy.

During the interview

- Don't forget to close the door after you have entered the interview hall.
- Don't forget to ask permission before coming in. Ask, "May I come in, please".
- Don't forget timely salutation when you have reached near the table of the interviewers. Greet them according to the time.
- Don't sit down on your own. Wait for their instructions to take a seat.
- Don't start off on your own. Let the interviewers initiate the proceeding.
- Don't speak too fast. Let every word you speak be clear and audible to all the panel.
- Don't make artificial or excessive gesticulation. Try to be as normal and relaxed as possible.
- Don't be emotional on any particular point just to win the favor of the interview board.
- Don't interrupt the others. Let the panel complete their question. Only after he/she has finished speaking, in case you have not followed, you may request him to repeat.
- Don't enter into any arguments with the interviewers.
- Don't try to avoid questions. If consecutively two or more interviewers have put their questions, reply to each one in the same order.
- Don't give evasive or confusing answers. If you are not sure of something be frank and politely say, "Sir, I am not aware of such thing" or "Sir, I am sorry I do not know".
- Don't fiddle around with your buttons, your hair or anything else as it shows your nervousness.
- Don't change your stand. Be consistent in the line of argument you have chosen. Do not give self-contradictory or conflicting answers.
- Don't readily agree with everything the interviewer says if you have valid arguments to support your point of view. In case of disagreement be polite and say, "I beg to differ, sir because..." and try to convince them of your own point of view.
- Don't try to gain the favor of the interviewers by giving a biased opinion, which you think might please them. This will not show your maturity or integrity.
- Don't enter into any political controversy. Never try to gain the favor of the interviewers by speaking against or in favor of any particular community.
- Don't give up. While arguing a point, don't give up until the interviewer changes the topic.
- Don't miss the opportunity to compliment the interviewer.

After the interview

- Don't extend your hand for a handshake with the interviewers. Let them offer their hands first if they want to.
- While leaving the room, don't turn back to look at the panel. Don't forget the interview board is observing your manner of leaving the hall.
- Don't forget to close the door after you.

The Group Discussion

It is said that a man's life is to an enormous extent a group life. He lives in groups and is influenced by the members of that group. The essence of a group is inter-stimulation and response or communication with one another. The behavior of a person in a group is obviously different from his individual behavior. In everyday life one has to interact in a group and, therefore, the group behavior of a person matters a lot. Therefore, "discussion" or "communication" with one another is an essential characteristic of a group. This feature is clearly evident in a group discussion where each member of the group has his own viewpoint and has to listen to the viewpoints of the others in the group. It is, therefore, essential that a person who participates in a group discussion should share a similarity of background with the other members of the group.

What is a group discussion?

Group Discussion is an important part of the selection process where employers evaluate the candidates' potential to be a leader and also the ability to work in teams.

The group discussion, of late, has become very common for personality testing. Through a group discussion, a candidate's ability to express himself coherently, systematically, logically, and at the same time his leadership qualities are evaluated by the selection board. The objective is to test the candidate's knowledge of the subject, his ability to express himself in a clear, concise and effective manner, and his behavior in the group. The group discussion is, therefore, a selection aid like the selection interview.

Normally group discussions are used in the selection process for management trainees and executive positions. The objective of a group discussion is to mainly check your team playing skills because as a manager, you will be working in organizations with people. Employers are looking for candidates who have potential to be executives and to lead teams of people.

The group discussion is a test of your interactive skills and how good you are at communicating with other people. You'll have to be able to understand the other person's point of view while making your point and ensure that your team as a whole reaches a win-win situation; in other words a solution/agreement which is both feasible and accepted by all members of the team. A group discussion, to that extent, is a simulated managerial setting.

- Groups of 8-10 candidates are formed into a leaderless group, and are given a specific situation to analyze and discuss within a given time limit, which may vary between twenty minutes and forty-five minutes.
- They may be given a case study and asked to come out with a solution for a problem.
- They may be given a topic and are asked to discuss the same.

Skills assessed during a Group Discussion:

Leadership Skills - Ability to take leadership roles and be able to lead, inspire and carry the team along to help them achieve the group's objectives.

Communication Skills - Candidates will be assessed in terms of clarity of thought, expression and aptness of language. One key aspect is listening. It indicates a willingness to accommodate others views.

Interpersonal Skills - People skills are an important aspect of any job. They are reflected in the ability to interact with other members of the group in a brief situation. Emotional maturity and balance promotes good interpersonal relationships. The person has to be more people centric and less self-centered.

Persuasive Skills - The ability to analyze and persuade others to see the problem from multiple perspectives.

Essentially, the group discussion is a test of your ability to think on your feet, your analytical prowess and your ability to make your point in a team-based environment.

Tips for the Group Discussion

- A good level of general awareness will come in handy so that you aren't at a loss of words on certain issues.
- Topics can be from a wide range of issues. It could be a topic on current events, business news, sports or anything very general. The wider your reading interests, the better prepared you will be.
- Take time to think of what you are going to say. Always enter the room with a piece of paper and a pen. In the first two minutes jot down as many ideas as you can before verbalizing them.
- Work out various strategies to help you enter the discussion - initiate the discussion or agree with someone else's point and then move onto express your views.
- Starting the discussion is considered to be good however it isn't that important; what is important is that you speak for a period long enough for you to be able to communicate your viewpoint.
- Be patient; don't lose your cool if anyone says anything you object to. The key is to stay objective: Don't take the discussion personally.
- Remember the six C's of effective communication - Clarity, Completeness, Conciseness, Confidence, Correctness and Courtesy.
- Be responsive to ideas from other people and very receptive and open-minded but don't allow others to change your own viewpoint.
- Employers are looking for a range of different skills and although you may think that leadership is the key factor, and want to demonstrate this in a discussion, you need to be careful that you don't dominate the discussion as this may come across as aggressive.
- Quality and NOT QUANTITY: Often, participants think that success in group discussions depends on their decibel levels – i.e. how much they speak and how loud they speak. Ironically, it's the opposite.
- Rounding the discussion off - when about 2-3 minutes are left, someone in the group must take the initiative and summarize all the issues discussed.

Do's and Don'ts

- Keep the point.
- Give valid reasons if you disagree.
- Look at all the members of the group while making your comments.
- Make proper gesticulation.
- Speak with clarity so that everyone can hear you and understand you.
- Listen to other participants patiently.
- Don't interrupt a participant until he has finished his argument.
- Don't be shy or nervous. A group discussion is a meeting of equals.

- Don't become emotional and start criticizing other participants without first offering valid arguments to support your viewpoint.
- Try to convince as many participants as possible to your line of argument.
- Don't make fun of any participant even if his argument is wrong.
- Be polite and courteous throughout and say, "You are welcome", "Thank you for your comments", "Please go ahead", etc.
- Don't be frivolous. Be serious.
- Readily accept the good points of an argument put forward by the other participants. If you find that the other person has a good point, say so and accept it.
- Give others a chance to speak too; otherwise the discussion will become meaningless.
- Don't change your stand until the other participants are able to convince you. Once you are convinced, give in gracefully.
- Be friendly. Keep cool and accept criticism with a smile.

Preparation of your Resume

What is a Resume?

A resume is an advertisement of who you are, your abilities and accomplishments. It emphasizes your skills, personal attributes, education, experience and other background information which demonstrates your qualifications for the type of position and industry sought.

The resume attempts to answer the prospective employer's question: "What can this candidate do for our organization?" The resume should also clearly differentiate you from everyone else applying for the job.

Although there is no one right formula for writing a resume, the following guidelines and suggestions are designed to assist you in preparing and writing a resume that best reflects your potential

Steps to Writing a Resume

1. Identify and make a list of the position/functional area(s) and industries that interest you. Research the position areas to determine the skills and other qualifications required for the type of position you seek. Based on the skills, personality traits and specific knowledge identified assess and record which of these qualifications you possess.
2. List your different work experiences (paid and unpaid). Review each experience, to identify possible accomplishments.

Ask yourself what you did above and beyond the minimum requirements for each work experience (e.g. problems you solved, special projects, special assignments, training, commendations, awards and honors.)

Determine which of these accomplishments are related to your job target, are of interest to the reader of your resume and illustrate important transferable skills. Also consider your participation in activities and your education for possible relevant accomplishments. Accomplishments for resumes should be written in short, measurable and results-oriented statements.

Use numbers, percentages, statistics and superlatives (i.e. first, only, most, best, top) when appropriate:

- a. Managed student phone-a-thon, raising \$100,000 (89% of goal).
 - b. Consistently exceeded weekly and monthly advertising sales quotas for student newspaper.
 - c. Financed 80% of my college expenses through part-time and summer employment.
3. Choose an appropriate **Resume Format** for your situation and job objective.

Chronological Resume

This is the most common format used by college students and recent college graduates. It is an historical time line presentation of your education and experience, in reverse chronological order with most recent events listed first. This format allows you to emphasize job titles and places of employment, and to elaborate on your accomplishments, duties and responsibilities for each position.

Skills/Functional Resume

This format is advantageous, if your prior experience is unrelated to your career objective, but you have performed the skills or functions related to your objective. This format allows you to emphasize experience relevant to the position you are pursuing and place less emphasis on dates, job titles and responsibilities.

Combination Resume

This format begins as a functional resume by listing significant skills, which are pertinent to the position you desire. The second section lists the positions and the employers for which you have worked in reverse chronological order. Job responsibilities and achievements are listed for each position. This format is a good choice for professionals who can demonstrate both relevant skills and a successful career track. This format is generally not used by those having less than 12-15 years in the workforce.

4. Review the Resume Categories listed below to determine which areas are appropriate for your resume. Organize the information in each category to effectively illustrate your key accomplishments, skills and other qualifications. The categories on the resume should be listed in order of importance.
5. After you have completed a rough draft, review the 'final edit' section of this guide and have your resume critiqued

Resume Categories

Heading. Include your name, address, zip code, telephone number and possibly your e-mail address. If you cannot always be reached during the daytime hours at your home phone number, add an alternative or message phone number.

Profile/Summary. (optional section) This section summarizes your ~ 4 - 8 key qualifications for the position you are seeking. It can reference education, knowledge, related experience, accomplishments, skills, personal qualities, etc. The purpose of this section is to grab the reader's attention and answer the all-important question, "what can this candidate do for me?" Thus, an effective profile requires you to know as much as possible about your targeted job and the targeted reader. Other title headings for this section include: strengths, highlights of qualifications, key accomplishments, and expertise.

Objective. (Optional) Use your cover letter to convey a focused objective that relates your specific skills and experience to the job you are seeking. You can include an objective in your resume, especially if your major and work experiences are not directly related to your job goals. However do not include a vague, unrealistic or self-serving objective in your resume.

Education. Recent college graduates and current students typically place more emphasis on their education section which should include school's name, degree, major, credentials, location and graduation date. This section may also include minor, selected classes, professional training, honors, awards, study abroad, research or special projects. Your education is listed in reverse chronological order (e.g. most recent degree first.) Generally, college students do not include their high school, unless their high school accomplishments help sell them.

Experience. This section includes part-time and full-time jobs, temporary positions, self-employment, unstructured work, internships, volunteer or community service experience,

work for a faculty member, and military experience. When describing your experience, you need to stress accomplishments, not simply restating your prior job descriptions or responsibilities. When writing your accomplishments and responsibilities, carefully select action verbs and phrases that will advertise your key skills and illustrate your potential. For some experiences you may also want to emphasize what you learned as evidence of your additional skills. Each experience should include position title, name of employer, dates of employment and geographic location.

Activities, Community Service or Affiliations. In this section you can list your involvement in clubs, organizations, committees, sports, community service, professional associations and other affiliations related to your job objective or industry. List and emphasize those activities in which you utilized leadership, organizational, teamwork and other skills relevant for the employer. If you held an office, list the outcome or benefits of your efforts, as well as the position held. You may want to avoid listing organizations that reveal your religion, political preferences, and possibly your race. Hobby-type activities are usually not included on your resume.

Languages. In today's global economy language skills are a marketable asset. Different approaches to presenting these skills include: fully bilingual/bicultural in ...; speak, read, write, translate, interpret ... documents; conversationally fluent in ...; knowledge of Asian business protocol.

Special Skills/Technical Skills. This section may include computer skills, lab techniques and the use of specialized equipment, and other specific knowledge skills related to your career field.

References. (Optional) Employers assume you will be able to furnish reference contact information on request, and thus this section may waste space better used in other sections. If you choose to include this category, usually the statement "References available on request." is used. You should have in mind the names of three or four people who know you well enough to positively appraise your abilities and who have agreed to in advance to act as references on your behalf. Never include the names and contact information of your references on the resume since this information does not help sell you and is considered extraneous.

Additional. This section may include: foreign language skills, research, projects, travel, living abroad, credits (theatre/film,) publications, or any loose items that you feel are important to convey to a potential employer.

Other Category Headings. The following resume headings may also help present your relevant skills or special knowledge: professional affiliations, technical skills, accomplishments, honors, travel, international experience, leadership activities, volunteer activities, training, publications, and presentations.

Personal Data. Information regarding your age, height, weight, and marital status is not salable and should be omitted from your resume.

Electronic Resume

Many large size organizations and some small and medium size organizations scan applicants' resumes into a database retrieval system. When employers have a job opening, they identify possible candidates by searching for specific skills and qualifications of applicants in their resume database. Resumes prepared to be read by computers rather than humans must be prepared with *key words*. Avoid using underlines, italics, fancy fonts and other characters that are not accurately read by many scanners.

Additional Resume Writing and Format Tips

- Resumes should be truthful and accurate without exaggeration or distortion.
- Resumes must be word processed, typed or typeset.
- Resumes should be short and concise, preferably 1 page.
- Carefully manipulate font size, margins, line spacing and design to make your resume presentation look balanced, easy to read and professional.
- Use caps, underlining, boldface and positioning to help emphasize or de-emphasize information.
- Choose a font that is big enough and is easy to read or scan. Avoid using italics, except for book titles, foreign words or special cases.
- Do not over use the bullet.
- Do not have a block of text more than 5 lines. (too much to read, not easy to scan)
- Paper selection. Have your resume professionally photocopied on white, off-white, or light grey heavy weight, quality paper. Do not use regular Xerox or copying paper. For most positions you want to make a conservative presentation. Highly creative or artistic positions may require a less conservative choice of lines. If possible, use the same paper for your resumes and your cover letters.
- Include a [Cover Letter](#) when your resume is mailed.

Final Edit and Critique

- Evaluate your résumé's ability to make your key selling points stand out.
- Organize your resume categories as they relate to your job target, and place the most important sections first. Most recent college graduates list their education before their experience.
- Use the jargon of your desired job target and industry. Use 'insiders' language to indicate that you are knowledgeable about current trends. Use abbreviations and acronyms, only if the reader will understand them.
- Review your resume and assess whether or not all extraneous words and materials have been omitted.
- Carefully proof read your resume for spelling, grammar, punctuation and typographical errors. Do not rely on spell-checkers to catch all errors.

- Always tailor your resume to the type of position you want. Prepare a different version of your resume for each career/job objective.
- Have your resume edited by one or two individuals who can be objective and can point out unclear or awkward areas. If possible, have someone who is familiar with your desired career field critique your resume. The Career Office also provides content and format resume critiques for students and recent graduates.

Additional Resume Resources

Resume Workshops. Throughout the academic year, the Career Office offers resume workshops, which introduce students to resumes and provide an opportunity to begin constructing and critiquing your resume draft.

Resume Critiques. Students can have their resume draft critiqued by a member of the Career Services staff.

Avoiding Résumé Blunders

Tips to help job seekers avoid common mistakes on their résumés.

1. Have a "normal" e-mail name, NOT blondie@aol.com or hotstud@yahoo.com.
2. Why have your middle name on a résumé? Middle names are just an unnecessary distraction. The exception to this rule is women who have hyphenated their maiden and married names.
3. Have more than one résumé. Change objectives and skills to reflect qualifications that are used in the job you are applying for.
4. Use a font size that can be read by someone over the age of 40. Remember: faxed résumés shrink.
5. White paper only, nothing fancy.
6. I advise that you mail, in addition to e-mail, your résumé, and always bring several extra copies when going in person.
7. Rarely leave anything off your résumé. Companies generally will check backgrounds (only after you start). Your résumé should match what they will find out.
8. Preferably no pictures on a résumé.
9. Never mail résumés in your boss's envelopes or using your boss's e-mail.
10. Have someone else proof your résumé - don't rely solely on a computer's spell-check program.

11. Do not include the actual names and telephone numbers of references on a résumé. They are distracting and do nothing but take up space. Including "References available upon request" at the bottom of your résumé is more than enough.

12. When looking for a job, you need to send out a minimum of 100 résumés. Yes, 100. Send half of those to companies not looking. Just like every company that has an employee that hates their boss, every boss has an employee they'd love to get rid of. Send résumés to places you want to work regardless of whether or not you heard of an opening.

13. Always visit the company's Website.

14. Always send a follow-up letter.

15. If you have a mobile, add it to the résumé so that a prospective employer can reach you easily and quickly.

What to Include in a Cover Letter

Effective cover letters should explain the reasons for your interest in the organization and in the job you are applying for. A well-written cover letter will identify your most relevant skills and/or experiences. It should express a high level of interest and knowledge about the position you are interested in.

Review a Professional Cover Letter Sample

Don't just borrow cover letter samples and edit them. Rather, take the time to make sure the cover letter explains how your skills relate to the criteria listed in the job posting. Your cover letter is your first, and best, chance to sell the hiring manager on your candidacy for employment so make sure it's perfect!

Here are some sample cover letters to give you an idea of what effective cover letters should look like. Again, don't limit yourself to the ideas presented in these cover letter samples, but, do review these examples for ideas and suggestions and use them as a guide when writing job search correspondence.

ACTIVITIES:

Session
Duration 1 hr

Interviewing

Objectives

- To develop the skills needed to face interviews confidently
- Identify areas of improvement to perform well in interviews

Exercise 14.2- Role –plays

The role plays should be similar to mock interviews. Our aim is to give participants a first hand understanding of some of the positive and negative aspects of an interview. The trainer has to first observe what happens in the interview and then help participants refine and improve on the areas where they need to be polished. The activity can be performed in front of the whole class. Given below are a few scenarios, which can be used for the role plays for the whole class. Ask relevant questions to the participant. You can also pick questions from the frequently asked questions list enclosed. Make each participant go through this mock interview session and discuss the strong and weak points of their performance. This interactive session will help identify various viewpoints and expectations of questions raised

Give feedback to the participants on the following parameters.

- Confidence- Speak with conviction, maintains eye contact, is body language confident? Etc.
- Communication- Mumbling and fumbling. Clarity of speech, unnecessary pauses, usage of precise words.
- Content- Repetitive, verbosity (usage of too many words or sentences). Logical flow
- Grammar- language usage
- Handling stress- Ability to handle situation that causes nervousness and tension
- Listening skills- The easiest way to test listening skills is by asking the interviewee a question in the middle of his conversation or answer to some other question.

Scenario 1

You are a fresh graduate, looking for job options when you receive an interview call from a MNC which is Call Center dealing with client's abroad. You fulfill their criteria of fresh graduates with good communication skills. You arrive for the interview but are fifteen minutes late. The manager interviewing you is already annoyed because of your being late. How do you handle the interview now?

Scenario 2

You are a fresh graduate, looking for job options when you receive an interview call from a MNC which is Call Center dealing with client's abroad. You fulfill their criteria of fresh graduates with good communication skills. You arrive for the interview at the scheduled time. To your surprise there are three people on the interview panel who appear to be ready to fire questions at you. You are slightly nervous and as you enter the room you drop the folder containing your resume. How would you then handle the interview?

Scenario 3

You have two years of experience with a software company. You now plan to change your line completely to a call center. You have no idea about the working of a call center and have been called for an interview. Because of your lack of knowledge you seem to be stressed, hence you are afraid to face the interview. You still take it up as a challenge since you specialize in your area of work. How would you then face the interview?

Scenario 4

You have already had two rounds of an interview, where you have sailed through. Now you have to undergo the final round of interview with the vice president of the company. You enter the room and get to know that the vice president has a very casual attitude towards you and therefore puts across irrelevant questions, which are not related to your field. You start losing hope and are stressed. How would you then cope with the situation?

Scenario 5

You have to face an interview where their General Manager who is related to you, has asked the HR people to take extra interest in your case. You have a good knowledge about your field however the person who is interviewing you is not on good terms with your uncle therefore is trying to make the scene awkward for you by asking very irrelevant and demeaning personal questions, which is testing your patience. How would you take control of the situation?

Session

Interviewing

Duration –1hr

Objectives

- To be able to face interviews confidently
- Identify areas of improvement to perform well in interviews

Exercise 14.2 –Role –Plays

Continue with the role-play activity. After conducting the interviews, discuss with the participants their areas of improvement. Provide them with the feedback form. As trainer

help, participants refine and improve on the areas where they need to be polished. This interactive session will help to know various viewpoints and expectations of questions raised in an interview.