

Michigan Alliance for Families

Preparing for Work: About Interview Handout

Some of this information was discussed in our class, but there is more here for you to look at and learn!

What is an interview?

- Conversation where you and an employer exchange information and includes:
 - Two-way conversations (with you and interviewer)
 - One-way conversation (by interviewer)
 - Responses by the person interviewing
- Your goal: get the job you want
- Employer goal:
 - Find out what you can offer for the open job (skills, abilities, knowledge)
 - Find out about you (your personality, character, interests)
 - Find out if you have what they need to fill the job

Preparing for the Interview

- Review skills and requirements of the job
 - Look at the job description
 - Interview questions usually are about skills needed for the job (in the job description)
- Know about the company
 - Go to company website
 - Review their mission and history; where they are located (just locally or other areas); how many they employ; when they came to the area, etc.
- Decide what to wear 2-3 days ahead of time
 - Clean, pressed, fits well, appropriate for the job
 - Give yourself some extra time if you need to buy something for the interview
 - Better to overdress than underdress if you are not sure
- Decide on 2-3 questions for the interviewer
 - If your questions are answered during interview, don't ask again
 - Questions may change for each employer or job
- Practice with parents, siblings, peers, teachers, others with them being the interviewer

Do's of Interviewing

- Make a good first impression
- Be 10 minutes early
- Take a folder with 3 *extra* copies of your resume and references
- Make periodic eye contact (look toward them)
- Watch your volume and body boundaries
- Listen, stay seated, sit up straight, and face the interviewer
- Practice good hygiene (bathed, shaven, hair combed, deodorant)
- Over-dress versus under-dress
- Be positive and focus on your strengths
- Answer questions and make answers brief
- Be flexible—you don't have to take the job
- Ask at least one question at the end of the interview
- Say thank you when the interview is over
- Wait for them to ask you (or motion you) to sit down
- Go in for the interview alone
- Talk about neutral topics (small talk)

Interview Handshake

- Politely ask to speak to the person you have been in contact with about the job, say:
 - *Hello, I am _____, I am here to see _____.*
- Shake their hand if they offer a handshake
- If they do not reach out their hand, reach out your right hand and smile slightly, make eye contact/ and say one of these greetings:
 - *Hi, I am _____, thank you for seeing me*
 - *Hi, I am _____, it's good to meet you*

When You Arrive for the Interview

- Politely ask to speak to the person you have been in contact with about the job, say:
 - Hello, I am _____, I am here to see _____.
- This is usually where you shake hands. If they introduce you to someone else, shake their hand too.

Types of Interview Questions

- Verification questions
 - Fact based questions—may be on your resume (e.g., time at your last job)
- Behavioral
 - Sometimes called STAR interviews (Situation, Task, Action, Result)
 - You give example of time you did a certain skill (i.e., solved a problem)

- Questions are related to skills in job description
- Example: tell me about a time when you showed commitment to a job
- Situational
 - Interviewer describes a situation, and the candidate explains how they handled a similar situation in the past
 - Questions are usually related to skills in job description

Inappropriate Interview Questions by Employer

- Related to "protected categories" (like sex, gender, race, ethnicity, disabilities, etc.)
 - Race, color, national origin
 - Religion
 - Sex, gender identity, sexual orientation
 - Pregnancy status
 - Disability (physical or mental health questions)
 - Age or genetic information
 - Citizenship
 - Marital status or number of children

Practice (Mock) Interview

- Interviewing Self-Assessment (documents provided)
- Have others practice and rate your questions-you can rate yourself if you video the practice interview. (Handout—You do the rating!)
- Practice in a mirror

Interview Questions by Employer

- You (your background, experience, interests, accomplishments)
- Skills needed for the job
- Current or expected salary
- Your interest in the job
- How you can benefit the company
- Work ethic
- Strengths and areas that are harder
- Current employment

When they say "Tell me about yourself..." (see the provided script and example)

- Usually first question in an interview and first impression
- Say something personal (but not too personal)
- Should be 1-3 minutes
- Talk about previous experience or jobs, school, volunteer experience, your skills, relate your skills to the job
- Example:
 - *Well, I'm currently a student at East Lansing High School. I grew up in this area and enjoy gaming on YouTube and camping with my family. I have made money in the past mowing lawns and volunteered at after school events. In looking at this job, it looks like you need someone who will be responsible and willing to learn shipping and receiving at your warehouse. I am excited to talk to you more about the job.*

After the Job interview

- Sample e-mail thank you letter, or you can send a letter through the mail

Common Interview Questions

- Examples relate to interviewing for a job at a fitness center/gym:
- Tell me about yourself
 - Summarize in 1-3 minutes and don't talk about personal information
- What interests you about this job?
 - Example: I value fitness and have worked in a fitness facility in the past; I enjoy working with the public so this seemed to match my skills and interests
 - Don't talk about pay, the drive to the interview, or anything NOT related to the work
- Why did you leave your last job?
 - Do NOT discuss conflicts with past co-workers or bosses
 - Do not complain or be negative
 - Say (example): previous company is going through a lot of changes and it was time for a change. I am looking for a job that will allow opportunities for growth
- Why would you do well at this job (or excel at this job)?
 - Example: I have worked in a similar business before and am used to the environment and enjoy working with people
- What do you know about our company so far?
 - Example: I know that you recently opened in Mason and have an excellent reputation. I did some research on Google and learned that Forbes Magazine ranked Planet Fitness one of the best franchises in America.
 - Example: Your business' Mission Statement focuses on a "judgement free zone"...so anyone should feel comfortable here

- Tell me about a time when....
 - Example: Tell me about a time when you had a tough customer, or things did not go your way, or there was a conflict
 - Answer within 1-2 minutes; focus on the positive not the negative and how it came out positive
- What would you do in your first few days of the job?
 - Example: I would work on learning my job and getting to know my co-workers while focusing on doing the best I can at my job
- What's most important to you in a job?
 - Example: To always meet the requirements of the job and meet the expectations of my employer
- Do you have an expectation for a wage? (Be realistic—about minimum wage)
 - Example: I would like to be paid \$_____
 - I think that would be fair given my skills and abilities
- What do you think you are really good at?
 - Consider skills that relate to the job or job description
 - Say the skill and briefly talk about it, for example: "I'm really organized, making sure things are organized as they should be keeps things more efficient"
- What are challenges for you, or areas you think you can improve?
 - Talk about something you can make stronger vs. a weakness
- What questions do you have for me?
 - Think of 1-2 questions beforehand, if they don't answer them.
 - If they did answer them, try to think of one other question related to the job.
 - Examples:
 - How many cardio machines do you have?
 - How often do you replace your cardio machines?
 - How many others work on the cardio machines?
 - If I get my work done, are there other activities I can work on?

Resources for practicing and more information

- Do2Learn JobTIPS: <http://do2learn.com/JobTIPS/index.html>
- Example 1 of good and bad interview: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dWodxAdsGvY>
- Example 2 of good and bad interview: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GmzYrjAsDng>
- Example 3 of good and bad interview (this says to wear a suit, but that is not necessary for some jobs)—the rest of it is very good: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S1ucmfPOBV8>
- Example 4 on body language and interviews:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VV1cMmCKxmY>