



INTERVIEWING GUIDE

SVA CAREER DEVELOPMENT

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WHAT IS AN INTERVIEW

Your role during the interview is to promote yourself and gain more knowledge about the organization and the position, while the interviewer's job is to learn more about you. Although the interviewing process can be an anxiety provoking experience for many people, it is actually nothing more than a mutual exchange of information. View the interview as a conversation, rather than as an interrogation, to help put you at ease.

Preparing carefully for the interview will generally increase your confidence level and, as a result, make it easier for you to relax. It is important to keep in mind that the purposes of interviewing are:

- To provide the interviewer with information about your background and qualifications
- To discover the needs of the interviewer, company, department
- To learn more about the job, position, company, interviewer
- To get another interview... and eventually get the job

PREPARING FOR AN INTERVIEW

Self-assessment and employer research are two very important steps in preparing for your interview:

1. **SELF-ASSESSMENT:** You must know yourself: your strengths, weaknesses and career goals. Make some notes to yourself beforehand so you will be able to communicate these clearly to the interviewer.
2. **EMPLOYER RESEARCH:** Learn as much as possible about the organization with which you are interviewing, as well as the position for which you are interviewing. Perform an internet search, obtain company promotional materials and identify recent newspaper and magazine articles written about the organization.

PREPARATION TIPS

- Find out the exact time and location of the interview. Write down the full name, address and phone number of the company and keep it with you
- Be certain you have your interviewer's full name and title and be sure of the pronunciation
- Learn all you can about the industry, company, position and person who will be interviewing you
- When researching the firm or company, be sure to find out: type of business and clients, size, standing in field, position(s) available, what their recent productions have been, if applicable
- Think about questions that the interviewer may ask you. In order to establish ready answers, take the time to write out brief answers to questions you anticipate being asked
- Be prepared to ask several questions of your own during the interview in order to show your interest and because the interviewer often asks you if you have any questions

PREPARATION TIPS CONTINUED

- Know why you want to work for the company/organization, what you have to offer and why you are the best fit for the position
- Plan what to wear in advance – don't wait until the morning of the interview
- Be able to discuss from memory everything that is on your resume
- Assemble in easily available order all of the items you must take with you:
 - + at least one form of government-issued identification
 - + extra copies of your resume on heavy bond "resume paper"
 - + your portfolio or demo reel
 - + a list of three references including addresses, emails and phone numbers, also on heavy bond resume paper
- Establish your own requirements such as: salary range needed, availability for travel, work hours, etc.
- Review your course curriculum to refresh your memory of some of your past course work
- Allow more than enough travel time to be punctual for the interview. If you find yourself at all detained en route, stop and notify the interviewer of your delay

PROPER ATTIRE FOR THE INTERVIEW

Depending on the organization you are interviewing with, you should be prepared to wear professional business clothes or business casual attire.

- Do not wear a suit (unless it's a position in which you'd be expected to wear a suit to work every day, or it's a conservative company)
- Dress in business casual:
 - **Women:** Wear a blouse or nice top with nice pants or dark jeans and a blazer, or a nice dress Check out ideas at <http://bit.ly/1T5XsJB>.
 - **Men:** Wear a button down shirt with nice pants or dark or black jeans with a jacket or blazer, with or without a tie. Check out ideas at <http://bit.ly/1sdl1TR>.
- Be neat and coordinated in appearance. While your clothing choices should reflect your personality, remember that you want your interviewer(s) to feel like you would fit in as one of their team members.
- Be conservative with makeup and jewelry; don't distract from your experience as the focus.
- Bring a presentable bag, not a worn-out backpack or bulky bag. Don't bring shopping bags or extra bulky items with you.

DAY OF YOUR INTERVIEW

First impressions are extremely important. When the interviewer calls your name, stand up, establish eye contact, smile and shake his/her hand firmly (but don't break it!). Remember to smile, be enthusiastic and show your self-confidence. You want to leave the interviewer with a positive impression. Most importantly, be yourself! Let your own personality shine through and show enthusiasm and interest in the job for which you are applying.

DO:

- Bring with you the name, address and phone number of the person with whom you have the interview and clean copies of your resume

- Show confidence, positive body language and maintain eye contact
- Be 10-15 minutes early. Plan for building security and long elevator waits. If you arrive more than 15 minutes early, walk around the block before going in. It is an inconvenience for employers to deal with very early appointments.
- Be kind and courteous to any receptionist or front-desk staff –the impression you make on this person will impact your chances at landing the job!
- Make a good first impression: firm handshake, eye contact and a smile
- Be attentive, alert and courteous
- Answer all questions if they ask you to fill out an application, even if they have your resume
- Be a good listener (don't interrupt) & think about the their questions before you respond
- Remember you are having a CONVERSATION with the interviewer...relax and take your time
- Emphasize your qualifications (without exaggeration) and how they apply to this job
- Be positive, respond with specific examples and turn negatives into positives
- Ask for more details on what your specific duties will be as well, as what opportunities exist for advancement
- Be prepared to discuss the salary range you want if the employer introduces the subject
- Be polite, thank the interviewer and ask about next steps and when/how to follow-up
- Set a reminder for yourself if the employer asks you to call or return for another interview
- Prepare a set of questions to ask the interviewer, when given the opportunity
- Send a thank you letter to the interviewer (*a sample is attached*) within 24 hours

DON'T:

- Be too quick to give an obvious answer (think all answers through)
- Use slang, complain or divulge your personal life
- Be critical of or speak negatively about anyone (including previous employers, teachers, co-workers, etc.)
- Interrupt or think ahead of the conversation
- Try to "hard-sell" yourself or act as if you know more than the interviewer
- Offer unfavorable information about yourself
- Bring up controversial subjects for discussion
- Criticize the interviewer, the company's clients or products

QUESTIONS FREQUENTLY ASKED DURING AN INTERVIEW

Be able to effectively respond to the following questions and to always support your responses with **specific examples**.

- Tell me about yourself.
- Tell me about this specific work in your portfolio.
- Do you see your work as a fit for our company's clientele?
- Why did you decide to become a _____?
- Why do you feel you are qualified for this job?
- Why did you specialize in _____?
- Where do you see yourself in five years?
- What do you want from this job?
- Why should I hire you?
- When are you available to start working?
- What are your salary requirements?
- Why did you leave your last position?
- Have you ever supervised anyone?
- What are your strengths? Your weaknesses?
- Are you free to travel?
- How do you feel about working overtime?
- What did you like most (least) about your previous jobs?
- Do you work well under pressure?
- How do you motivate yourself?
- What other positions are you considering?
- Which of your accomplishments are you proudest of?
- What factors are most important to you personally in job satisfaction?
- Do you have any questions?

POTENTIAL QUESTIONS TO ASK THE INTERVIEWER

Since an interview is an exchange of information, you should have questions formulated to ask an interviewer in order to demonstrate that you have taken an active role in approaching your interview. The questions you ask will vary from one organization to another, but be sure to ask questions that focus on the job, its responsibilities and opportunities. Most often, questions about salary, fringe benefits, vacation days and health insurance should be saved for when you receive the job offer. **NEVER tell them you have no questions. ALWAYS ask something, so have several questions planned in advance in case they answer them during the interview.**

- What specific responsibilities of the position do you regard as most important? What are the other responsibilities?
- What would a typical workday be like for a person in this position?
- What do you hope I would accomplish in three months, six months, three years, five years, ten years?
- Is there anything else on my resume that you have questions about that I could address?
- What are the major challenges, rewards and stimulations of this job?
- What kind of evaluation process do you have in place for an employee's performance?

- What are some of the responsibilities of the people I would be working most closely with?
- When do you expect to make a decision on selecting a person for this position? May I contact you or will you contact me within a certain period of time?

FOLLOW-UP

- Send a thank you note (email or hard copy) within 24 hours
- Follow-up per instructions given by interviewer
- If you don't get the job, send another note thanking interviewer for the opportunity. You might be the second choice, and you never know what might happen
- If you have accepted another position, notify other companies where you have interviewed

TOP TIPS FOR A TERRIFIC INTERVIEW

- 1) Prepare through **research** (Both of the company and interviewer, if possible)
- 2) Express yourself **clearly** and with **specific** examples
- 3) Show **confidence**, enthusiasm and be tactful
- 4) Be clear on your career **goals** and your **current skills**
- 5) **Listen** and **think** before responding (and remember to **breathe**)

WRITING A THANK YOU NOTE

SAMPLE THANK YOU LETTER

Ms. Victoria Starr, Vice President
Broadway Designs
1033 Charles Boulevard
New York, NY 10036

[Today's Date]

Dear Ms. Starr,

I would like to thank you very much for meeting with me yesterday to discuss the Associate Designer position. I enjoyed speaking with you and learning more about your research and design work.

My enthusiasm for the position and interest in working for Broadway Designs were strengthened as a result of our interview. I am confident that my academic background and work experience provide an excellent fit with the requirements of the job. If given the opportunity, I look forward to making a positive contribution to your team.

Please feel free to contact me at [phone number] or [email address] if I can provide you with any additional information. Thank you again for the interview and your consideration.

Sincerely,
[Your name]