



INTERVIEWS

The key to successful interviewing is **preparation**. First, prepare your “pitch.” Do some careful self-evaluation to organize your thoughts. Seriously consider your intended career trajectory and how this position aligns within that vision. Determine how your strengths, experiences, education, skills and knowledge will ensure success in the position and company. Most importantly, think of examples from your past that illustrate your skills and abilities. Effective interviewees show their qualifications rather than tell about them. Use the “**STAR**” approach in which you think of a **S**ituation or **T**ask you faced, describe the **A**ction you took and the **R**esults you achieved.

Interview preparation is less effective when you attempt it yourself. Career Services can help you evaluate your skills and strengths and refine your pitch through videotaped mock interviews with a career counselor.

Before the Interview

- Build upon your “pitch” by targeting it to the company with which you are interviewing. Answer the following typical questions with the company’s interest in mind:
 - Why do you want to work here?
 - What are your greatest strengths?
 - Why did you leave your last job?
 - Describe a problem and how you solved it.
 - What accomplishments are you most proud of?
- Conduct extensive research about the company and industry so that you are as knowledgeable as possible on the company’s market segments, growth areas, geographic locations, finances, etc. Adjust these criteria as needed for schools or non-profits. CSO can give you direction on how to research.
- If possible, conduct a practice run to the interview location so you know exactly where it is and how long it takes to get there. Alternatively, make sure you know exactly where it is.
- Prepare extra copies of your resume, a listing of references and their contact information, a portfolio of work samples (if appropriate) and any other information that would help you fill out a job application or solidify your candidacy.

During the Interview

- Dress appropriately and professionally.
- Arrive 10-15 minutes early. If you are late due to circumstances out of your control, call the company.
- Be courteous and respectful to the receptionist, who may inform your interviewer if you were rude or if you acted unprofessionally while waiting for your interview. Your interaction with the receptionist is the unofficial start of your interview.
- Similarly, make a good first impression with the interviewer through your smiling demeanor, confident voice, appearance and punctuality. Interviewers make snap judgments on a candidate’s suitability in the first 20 seconds through verbal and non-verbal cues.
- Make sure your handshake is firm and strong, not limp.
- Listen carefully to the interviewer to try to determine what s/he is looking for and tailor your pitch accordingly.
- Avoid using verbal ticks such as “umm”. Practice describing success stories beforehand so that you can speak with confidence.
- Maintain good eye contact. Practice this with a career coach during a mock interview.
- Show enthusiasm for the position and company and speak with confidence and energy – without seeming arrogant.
- Answer questions truthfully and succinctly – do not over-explain or talk too much.

- Avoid saying anything negative about former companies and colleagues.
- If your interviewer falls silent, don't panic by talking simply to fill up the time. Remain quiet for a bit, then say, "Is there anything else you'd like to hear on that point?"
- Always ask questions – not asking questions signifies a lack of interest. Have a minimum of 3 prepared – on the industry, the organization and a personal question.
- As the interview is ending, reiterate your interest in the position by claiming you want the job and ask about the **next step in the hiring process and the timing of those steps.**
- Do not ask about salary. Wait for the interviewer to do so. If s/he mentions salary up front, turn the question around by asking, "Based on my qualifications, what were you thinking for this position?"

Interview Questions

- If asked about weaknesses, talk about an area that you worked to improve and how that process contributed to your professional development and increasing skill set. Alternatively, address any obvious weaknesses immediately and discuss how you can transcend them.
- Avoid speaking negatively about your current or previous employer if asked why you are leaving your job. Speak positively about them and simply state that you believe you advanced as far as you could in your current role and are ready for new challenges.
- Emphasize your interest in staying with and growing in the company with which you are interviewing when asked about your future career plans.
- Be ready for behavioral or situational interviews in which you are asked to recount how you solved a problem or would handle a potential situation by practicing the "STAR" approach mentioned above.
- Prepare for stress interviews, which are sometimes used for positions that are highly stress-filled. Interviewers may try to stress you in several ways but always remain calm, have a sense of humor and keep reiterating your pitch.

After the Interview

- Take notes immediately after the interview to accurately record your impressions.
- Send thank you notes within 24 hours to your interviewers that state again your interest and underscore how your qualifications match the company's needs.

Typical interview questions lists:

http://www.quintcareers.com/interview_question_collections.html

http://www.quintcareers.com/asking_interview_questions.html

<p>For more information, contact Career Services - 617.495.3427 cso@gse.harvard.edu http://www.gse.harvard.edu/about/administration/careers/ 025 Longfellow Hall</p>
--