INTERVIEW PREPARATION

THE INTERVIEW IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO...
- showcase your skills, abilities, and personality
- express your genuineness and interest
- provide examples of the relevancy of your studies and experiences
- see if the position and the company is a good fit for you

INTERVIEW PREPARATION

Before:
OBTAIN KEY INFORMATION:
- Date, time, location, parking, interview format (screening, one-on-one, panel, peer group, luncheon), length of interview, number of interviewers and their names (if possible).

RESEARCHING THE EMPLOYER IS KEY:
- Use the following questions to guide you:
  - What is the mission/vision/philosophy of this company?
  - What are the primary services/functions/products of this company?
  - Who are its customers/clients? Competitors?
  - What are the responsibilities for this position?
  - Where does this position fit in the overall structure of the company?
  - What are the names and job titles of key contacts in the company?
  - How many employees are in the company?
- Review company literature, web sites, and annual reports and talk to people who know about the company.

KNOW YOURSELF:
- Be prepared to identify your career and life goals, accomplishments, skills, abilities, strengths, weaknesses, interests, and activities.

PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE:
- Prepare 2 to 3 sentences to introduce yourself: major of study, career related interests, and goals or areas you would like to explore.
- Practice responding to questions (see list of frequently asked and behavioral-based interview questions); schedule a mock interview with a Center’s career counselor.

PREPARE MATERIALS:
- Prepare and bring professional materials (extra resumes, list of references, notepad, pen, and career portfolio with samples of your work, if applicable).

DRESS FOR SUCCESS:
- Determine your interview attire in advance to ensure it is clean and pressed. (See Interview Attire Tips)

BE PROMPT:
- Arrive 10-15 minutes prior to the appointment time. Allow time for traffic and parking. Turn off your cell phone.
During:
• Upon being introduced, use a firm handshake, smile, and make good eye contact.
• Be aware of your non-verbal communication (posture, eye-contact, facial expressions, gestures).
• Listen carefully and allow yourself time to think before you answer questions. Rephrase a question or ask the interviewer to repeat a question if appropriate.
• Keep your answers brief and concise (approximately 1-2 minutes per question).
• Use specific examples, comparisons and/or descriptions to support your answers.
  o Reflect on your college study, interests, abilities, and experiences and their relatedness to the position
• Maintain a conversational flow to your responses (dialogue versus monologue - do not sound rehearsed).
• Be honest, positive, enthusiastic, and confident.
• Share your time and start date availability.
• Ask questions (see “Questions You May Ask the Employer” section) to gather enough information to make a decision if an offer is made.

After:
• Immediately write down your impression of the interview. What questions were asked? What did you do well or what might you want to change next time?
• Also, promptly write and send a thank-you letter to restate your interest in the company and position while re-stating your strengths and skills. Address your thank you letters specifically to the people who interviewed you.

QUESTIONS ASKED BY EMPLOYERS

Frequently Asked Questions:
• Tell me about yourself?
• Why did you choose your major?
• Why did you choose to attend your college or university?
• Do your grades accurately reflect your ability? Why or why not?
• In which campus activities did you participate?
• What do you know about this company?
• Why are you interested in this position? This company/department?
• What skills or abilities do you possess that will make you successful in this position?
• What kind of experience are you looking for?
• What are your major strengths/weaknesses?
• Define success/failure.
• What motivates you most in a job?
• What are your short and long-term goals?
• Why should we hire you rather than another candidate?
• What has been your greatest accomplishment?
• What did you think of your previous employment?
• Have you ever quit a job? Why?
• What would a former supervisor say about your work? Attendance? Punctuality?
• How do you feel about working overtime? Traveling? Relocating?
• What is your ideal work environment?
• How would you describe your personality?
• Why should we hire you?

BEHAVIOR-BASED QUESTIONS

• Give an example in which you provided a solution for an employer.
• Tell me about a time when you worked effectively under pressure.
• Describe a time when you had to make an unpopular decision.
• Give an example of an important goal that you had and how you achieved it.
• Describe a time when you acted as a leader to complete a team project.
• Tell me about a time you had a problem with a co-worker and how you dealt with it.
• Give an example of when you were creative in solving a problem.
• Describe a time when you disagreed with your boss and how you handled it.
• Describe a time when you were given a challenging goal and saw it to the end.
• Describe a technical skill you acquired and how you converted it into a practical application.
• Describe a creative idea that you had and the significant contribution it made to the success of an activity or project.
• Give an example of how you worked effectively with people to reach a goal.

Behavior-based questions are asked by employers to find out about your past performance which is a good predictor of your future performance.

To prepare for these questions, think about past experiences using **S.T.A.R.**

- **Situation** = describe a situation that occurred during a past experience, activity or classwork
- **Task** = describe the task that was involved
- **Action** = describe the action that you took
- **Result** = describe what resulted from the action you took

**QUESTIONS TO ASK THE EMPLOYERS**

• How would you describe a typical day on the job?
• What are some of the duties/responsibilities of this position?
• Who will be my direct supervisor?
• What are some recent changes or accomplishments have occurred in the company?
• Where is the company going in the next three to five years?
• What education or training programs does the company provide?
• How, when, and by whom will I be evaluated in this position? What are the performance criteria?
• When will you be making the hiring decision?

Tips to develop questions:
• Show your interest in the position and the work
• Should be well thought out
• Should be about the company, position, or work that cannot be found on the web site or company literature
• Do not ask about the pay/salary and benefits; wait until you receive the job offer.
• What are the short-term and long-term strategic directions for the company?
INTERVIEW ATTIRE TIPS

Wear attire based on the profession and company’s regional location. If unsure, choose a conservative outfit.

Men:

Formal
• Two-piece suit in navy or charcoal grey (subtle stripes are acceptable)
  - Dress shirt: white or light colored, long sleeved
  - Tie that complements suit and dress shirt

Business Casual
• Slacks, navy or charcoal grey
• Business or sports jacket (optional)
• Shirt: collared, button down (tucked in)
  - Solid colored or vertical stripes
  - Short or long sleeves
  - Aloha shirt (acceptable in Hawai‘i)

Shoes
• Covered: black or dark brown
• Socks: dark colored dress socks

Women:

Formal
• Suit: skirt (at least knee length) or pants in navy blue or black, dark grey
• Jacket, coordinated with skirt or pants
• Blouse, white or complementary solid colored

Business Casual
• Skirt (at least knee length) or pants in navy blue, black or dark grey
• Blouse or sweater
  - White or neutral colored
  - Sleeved
  - No spaghetti straps
• Blazer or vest (optional)
• One piece dress

Shoes
• Low heels with covered toe
• Worn with hosiery (sheer, neutral color)

ACCESSORIES
• Limit jewelry to 3 items and refrain from dangling, large pieces
• Remove all body piercing jewelry (pierced earrings okay for women)
• Cover visible tattoo(s)