**THE 5-PART INTERVIEW**

The interview is the final hurdle most people have to cross in getting a job. Some colleges and scholarship committees also require interviews. Being chosen for an interview means someone is interested in your skills, knowledge and experience. However, a great application or resume can quickly find its way into the garbage if you do not come across well in an interview. You now must become a sales person. The interviewer is the buyer. They want to see if your talents meet their needs for the job or for admission to the college. Sell yourself!

The interview is when you want to tell the employer or admissions representative about your strengths, skills, education, and work experience. Knowing yourself - positively selling your strong points - is what is going to get you the job or admission to the college.

The easiest way to learn something is to break it down into parts. The interview process has five distinct parts.

### 1. BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

1. Do your homework! Learn as much as you can about the company or college before the interview. Do some research: ask people who work there, go to the library, look on the internet, make an anonymous call to the secretary. Find out what services/products the company provides, how long they have been in business, whether the company is growing or downsizing, the company’s reputation, etc. An interviewer will be impressed that you have made an effort to learn about the company or college. Read any material they send you!
2. Know where you are going. Drive by the site of the interview a day or two before the interview.
3. Arrive 5 - 15 minutes early.
4. Be prepared when you go to the interview. Bring extra copies of your resume, your portfolio, a notepad with some questions prepared for the interview, and a pen.
5. Dress for Success! Hair should be clean and combed. Fingernails must be clean with no gaudy polish. Keep perfume, cologne and aftershave to a minimum. Brush your teeth and don’t forget deodorant.

Women: dress, skirt (not too short), or dress pants with a nice blouse or blazer. No excessive jewelry, make-up, or “big hair.”

Men: pants (not jeans!), collared shirt, tie, sport coat and shoes. A suit is not always necessary.

### Do not wear loud clothes! Be conservative!

**2. THE START OF THE INTERVIEW (BEGINNING)**

1. Inform the secretary/receptionist that you have an interview, whom it is with, and the time of the interview.
2. When you meet the interviewer, look straight into his/her eyes, shake hands firmly, introduce yourself, smile, be confident and wait until you are offered a seat.
3. Be positive in your communication (Remember: You’re selling yourself!!), don’t slouch, try not to be too bold or too shy. Let the interviewer lead the interview. Express that you are happy to have the opportunity to interview.
4. When all else fails: SMILE!!
5. DON’T:

Smoke, chew gum, curse, slouch, put your hands on items on the interviewer’s desk, fidget with rings, pens, ties, change, or other things in your reach.

### 3. THE INTERVIEW (MIDDLE)

1. Always face the interviewer with good posture and body language.
2. Stay positive with your attitude and your answers. Let the interviewer know about the skills, knowledge and experience that make you a qualified candidate.

# THE 5-PART INTERVIEW

1. Know your resume and portfolio well and be prepared to answer questions about them.
2. Don’t be a know-it-all! Express your willingness to learn!
3. Be honest with all answers. Experienced interviewers can see right through “little white lies.”
4. Be thorough with your answers. Never answer with just a “yes” or “no.” Always provide explanations and examples.
5. If you don’t understand the question, ask the interviewer to explain.
6. Pay close attention to what the interviewer is saying.
7. Organize your thoughts before speaking. Feel free to think for a moment about tough questions. Silence is not a bad thing as long as you do not take an excessive amount of time.
8. Watch for illegal questions, such as information about your age, religion, race, ethnicity or marital status.
9. DON’T:

Emphasize your weaknesses.

Draw attention to negative attributes such as poor attendance, grades, being fired, etc. Criticize former employers, co-workers, or school personnel.

Discuss personal issues, good or bad, which are irrelevant. Discuss salary or benefits unless the interviewer brings it up first.

1. Remember that you represent a risk to the employer. A hiring mistake is expensive. Show you are highly motivated and energetic.

### 4. THE INTERVIEW (END)

1. Ask the job-related questions you prepared for the interview.
2. You may be offered the job immediately. In that case, you should ask about specific salary, benefits, and work hours. You do not have to give them an immediate answer. Ask for a day to think about it.
3. If you are told you will be contacted, ask about how long it will be. Offer to call in a few days to find out the decision. This shows your continued interest.
4. Make sure the interviewer knows how best to contact you and that you are available for any additional information that may be needed.
5. Thank the person for the interview and their interest in you as a potential employee or student. Shake hands firmly on the way out.

### 5. THE FOLLOW-UP

1. Send the interviewer a thank-you letter soon after the interview.
2. Call the company or college about a week after the interview to find out if they have made a decision. If they have not, find out when they expect to have a decision.

### WHY PEOPLE AREN’T HIRED

|  |
| --- |
| * Poor personal appearance |
| * Inability to communicate clearly, poor voice, and grammar |
| * Lack of planning for a career...no purpose or goals |
| * Lack of enthusiasm and confidence in the interview |
| * Condemning past employers |
| * Failure to look the interviewer in the eye |
| * Limp handshake |
| * Late to the interview |
| * Does not thank the interviewer for his/her time |
| * Asks no questions |
| * Lack of knowledge about the business or the position |

**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Questions Often Asked By Employers** | | **Questions Often Asked By Applicants** | |
| 1. | Tell me about yourself. | 1. | What are the strengths of the organization or department? |
| 2. | What are your short-range and long-range career goals, and how are you preparing to achieve them? | 2. | What are the career opportunities for someone entering this position? |
| 3. | Why did you choose this career? | 3. | What kind of orientation and training is available to new employees? |
| 4. | What do you consider to be your greatest strengths? Weaknesses? | 4. | How large is the company/college? How large is this particular department/major? |
| 5. | How would you describe yourself? How would a friend or professor describe you? | 5. | To whom would I be reporting and what kind of communication channels are there? |
| 6. | How has your college experience prepared you for your career? | 6. | What are the long-range plans for this organization? |
| 7. | Why should I hire you? | 7. | How long was my predecessor in this position? Why did he/she leave? |
| 8. | How do you determine or evaluate success? | 8. | How will I be evaluated? How often? |
| 9. | In what ways do you think you can make a contribution to our company? | 9. | Is there an opportunity to transfer from one division to another? |
| 10. | Describe the relationship that should exist between a supervisor and those reporting to him/her. | 10. | What are the prospects for promotion in the future? What are some of the qualities or accomplishments you would consider important for promotion? |
| 11. | Describe your most rewarding high school/college experience. | 11. | What is the management philosophy of this organization? What is the general philosophy? |
| 12. | If you were hiring for this position, what qualities would you look for? | 12. | In what areas of the organization do you expect growth? |
| 13. | What led you to choose your field or major? | 13. | Is continuing education encouraged? Is tuition reimbursement offered? |
| 14. | What have you learned from participation in extracurricular activities? | 14. | Can you tell me about the history of this position, and changes anticipated? |
| 15. | How do you work under pressure? | 15. | What are your expectations of the person in this position? |
| 16. | Describe the ideal job/college. | 16. | Is overtime the norm in this office? |
| 17. | Why did you decide to seek a position with this organization and what do you know about us? | 17. | What kind of support staff is available? What is the ratio of support staff to professionals, and how is work distributed? |
| 18. | What major problems have you encountered and how did you deal with it? | 18. | Generally, what percentage of time will be devoted to each of my responsibilities? |
| 19. | What criteria are you using to evaluate the company/college for which you hope to work/attend? | 19. | Do you work with daily, weekly, monthly, or annual deadlines? |
| 20. | What salary do you want? | 20. | Does the organization have a process for sharing creative ideas? |

**Ten questions you are sure to be asked in every job interview (and how to answer them)**

Can you imagine how much easier school would have been if you’d had a copy of your exams in advance so you could come up with the answers and memorize them? Similarly, wouldn’t it be great if you knew precisely what potential employers were going to ask you in job interviews?

You could craft interesting and insightful responses about your experiences, accomplishments and goals, and practice relating them in a friendly, conversational manner.

The thing is, for the most part, you actually *do* know. There will likely be some industry or job specific questions, or requests for further detail about some of the info on your resume. However, there is a fairly standard set of questions, some variation of which you are almost certain to be asked in every job interview.

**The questions that you will always be asked in job interviews:**

**Is that what you’re wearing?**

Okay, they won’t actually ask this out loud, but you better believe interviewers are thinking it the moment they lay eyes on you. If you are dressed too casually, you may appear unprofessional or not serious about the role. If the company culture or the hiring manager specifically, has issues with multiple piercings, visible tattoos or odd facial hair, these may cost you the gig. It’s also possible to dress too formally or conservatively for a company’s culture.

Do your homework. Wear clothes that are just a touch more formal than required on the day-to-day of the job. The key message is that you take the job – and the opportunity to interview for it – seriously, so you took the time to dress for it.

**Don’t say:** *I’m going to wear my Crocs, I’ll be comfortable, and they can take it or leave it.*

See: [What to wear to a job interview by industry](http://www.workopolis.com/content/advice/article/job-interview-attire-insiders-reveal-what-to-wear-for-jobs-in-their-industry)

**Tell me about yourself?**

Just about every job interview kicks off with some kind of conversational ice breaker where the employer offers you the chance to introduce yourself. Bear in mind that it’s not really yourself that you’re introducing. It’s your candidacy. Talk about how your professional interests make you the right candidate for the role. Here’s [how I answered that question](http://www.workopolis.com/content/advice/article/the-biggest-mistake-at-a-job-interview-and-the-one-question-you-will-always-be-asked/) when I interviewed with the VP of HR for Workopolis.

**Don’t say:** *I’m actually an aspiring romance novelist. I just need this gig until the royalty cheques start rolling in.*

**What makes you interested in this job?**

Employers are always more impressed with candidates who are passionate about working for them specifically – over someone who is just looking for a new gig. Explain what you think is great about the company or the role, and how the job excites you.

**Don’t say:***Because I need the money.*

**What do you know about our company?**

As I said, companies prefer candidates who want to work for them, so they look for candidates who have done their research. Talk about the company’s brand, mission, products or services and how you’d like to contribute.

**Don’t say:** *Well, I hear that you’re hiring!*

**What would you say your greatest strengths are?**

This seems like an easy question – you know what you’re good at right? But don’t take this question strictly at face value. Read the job description carefully, and describe an ability of yours that would lend itself to being particularly successful on the job. Just make sure that they’re true strengths. You don’t want to claim to be good at something you don’t actually know how to do. Think up a relatable anecdote in advance that demonstrates how you have used these strengths on the job.

**Don’t say:** *There’s too many to count. Really, I’m great at everything.*

**What do you think are your biggest weaknesses?**

It feels like a trap. If you answer honestly, you’re admitting to something that could potentially turn off an employer. If you say “I have no weaknesses. I am perfect,” the employer will know you are either a liar or totally lacking in self-awareness, and dismiss you outright. You have to say something.

Think of an actual weakness, something that isn’t an essential requirement for the job, and explain how you became aware of it and are working on improving upon it. This shows that you are reflective, willing to learn, and striving to get better.

The team discusses [how to answer the ‘weakness question’](http://www.workopolis.com/content/advice/article/what-is-your-greatest-weakness/) in this Workopolis 180 video.

**Don’t say:** *I’m a workaholic and/or a perfectionist.*

**Tell me about a challenging situation you encountered at work and how you handled it?**

It’s easy to seem positive and confident when everything is going well. With this question, the employer wants to know how you measure up when things get challenging. Talk about a conflict or setback at work, how you dealt with it professionally, and what you learned from it.

The key things to get across are that you can think on your feet to problem-solve, remain calm and good-natured in the face of a challenge, and that you can think strategically and act decisively.

**Don’t say:** *Someone got in my face, so I punched him,* or *my boss was a jerk, so I quit.*

**Why did you leave your last job?**

If you are currently employed, this question becomes, ‘Why do you want to change jobs?’ Explain that the job you’re interviewing for is just the career move that you’re looking for. It’s not that you’re moving away from a negative, but towards a positive. You’re looking to grow your career in the direction this new position can take you.

If you were fired or let go from your previous job, be honest about what happened, but don’t offer up any negative details. Most people lose jobs at some point in their careers. You pick yourself up, learn what you can from the experience, and move on.

**Don’t say:** *Because my jerk of an ex-boss had it in for me.*

**Where do you see yourself in five years?**

Depending on the role and the level of the job, you don’t have to pretend that you want to still be in it in five years. Most people want to grow in their careers, and five years has become a long time to stay in one position. (See: [Job hopping is the new normal](http://www.workopolis.com/content/advice/article/job-hopping-is-the-new-normal/).)

Instead explain how the job is the right move for your career growth at this time – and how your excelling at it would make both you and the employer more successful. Show how what you can accomplish, demonstrate and learn in this job takes you closer to where you want to go.

**Don’t say:** *In your job* – Or – *Successfully running my own (insert unrelated field) start-up company.*

**Why should we hire you?**

This is an easy one. It’s not a trick question – employers are offering you the chance to sell yourself. Simply explain why you are enthusiastic for the job and how the accomplishments you’ve achieved in the past demonstrate your ability to be great at it. Be confident, but not cocky.

**Don’t say:** *Because I need the job.*

**Do you have any questions for me?**

This is your chance to take control of the interview. You can often convey your competence and confidence, your job-readiness to an employer more impressively with the questions you ask than the ones you answer.

Asking smart questions can demonstrate that you have some knowledge of the industry, and that you’re already thinking about how you can contribute to it.

Here’s an example of  [how a woman landed the job with just one question](http://www.workopolis.com/content/advice/article/the-best-thing-you-can-say-in-a-job-interview-7252014/).

**Don’t say:***No.* And don’t ask questions such as, *‘how much does it pay?'; ‘how soon am I eligible for vacation time?'; or ‘how long does it usually take to get promoted?’*

Ask yourself these questions. Then think of the industry, company, and job you’re interviewing for, and tailor your answers to be as specifically relevant to the employer as you can. You’ll be top of the class of candidates in no time.

**HOW ARE YOU RATED DURING THE INTERVIEW?**

**JOB**

**QUALIFICATIONS**

**10%**

**ATTITUDE**

**40%**

**COMMUNICATION**

**SKILLS 25%**

**APPEARANCE**

**25%**

# MOCK INTERVIEW EVALUATION

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| INTERVIEWER: |  |
| STUDENT: |  |
| DATE OF INTERVIEW: |  |

## Rate the student interviewee on a scale of 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest) in the following areas of interviewing skill.

NONVERBAL BEHAVIORS

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. Dressed appropriately | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Firmly shook hands of interviewer before and after | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Maintained eye contact with interviewer | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Maintained good posture | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. Did not fidget | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. Used hands for emphasis where appropriate | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

VERBAL BEHAVIORS

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. Listened closely to questions | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Answered questions completely, yet briefly | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Greeted interviewer by name | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Thanked interviewer | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. Emphasized qualifications | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. Pointed out work-related skills | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. Displayed enthusiasm | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. Focused on strengths; avoided weaknesses | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. Acted in polite manner | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. Stayed calm | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. Responded to questions promptly, but not hurriedly | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. Knows when a decision will be made | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. Asked appropriate questions of the interviewer | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. Spoke clearly and at a reasonable volume | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. Demonstrated knowledge of the field/company | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. Avoided use of phrases such as “um” & “you know” | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. Stated career goal(s) and related it to position | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |