

"So tell me about yourself..." The interview is your opportunity to sell yourself. Your cover letter, resume, and personal network has gotten you this far. Now is the time for you to verbally communicate why they should hire you. Perhaps the most important key to succeeding in the interview process is to *be prepared*. Questions will usually cover five areas: education, experience, career goals, skills and abilities, and knowledge of the organization. Be able to effectively communicate how your background aligns with the position and organization using concrete examples. Use the **STAR (Situation, Task, Action, Response) or PAR (Problem, Action, Result) methods to tell your story**. It is critical to communicate how your background is complimentary to the position and the goals of the organization. The interview process is a two-way street; not only are you being interviewed, but you are interviewing them.

Preparing for the interview.

- Research the organization and know what the position entails.
- Know yourself so that you can communicate your experiences, skills, and accomplishments with ease.
- Confirm the time, date, and location of the interview.
- Confirm the title and correct spelling of the interviewer's name.
- Obtain directions, and allow plenty of time to get there.
- Be able to discuss anything on your resume and cover letter.
- Prepare a list of questions to ask the interviewer.
- **PRACTICE!** There are sample questions on the back.

The big day.

- **Be on time...**this means arrive 15 minutes before the interview.
- Bring an extra copy of your resume.
- Always be honest, confident and positive when answering.
- Do not discuss salary or benefits in the first interview.
- Don't be afraid of silence. If you need to, take a few moments to collect your thoughts before answering. An interviewer will appreciate a well-thought answer as opposed to a hasty one.
- Keep your answers brief and to the point.
- Avoid using slang.
- Be aware of and control your non-verbal language - eye contact, posture, gestures, & hand movements. Be aware of nervous fillers...ums...ahh...hmmm...and other nervous habits.

After the interview.

- Take notes to remind you about the interview.
- Promptly email a thank you note to the interviewer(s), emphasizing your interest in the position and your qualifications. Use your notes to remind you what was discussed in the interview, to include in the note.
- Review your performance for future interviews.
- If you do receive and accept an offer, inform and thank those people who helped you in the process.
- If you do not receive an offer, follow-up with the interviewer to discuss how you can improve your next interview.

Appearance.

- Always dress professionally, neatly, and appropriately to the organization for which you are interviewing. It is best to always be on the conservative side.
- Navy blue or black are standard conservative colors.
- For women: a well-tailored suit with minimal jewelry and makeup. Be sure that you are comfortable and able to walk in the shoes you wear.
- For men: a well-tailored suit, conservative tie, and polished shoes.
- As with everything else, hair should be in a neat, conservative style; make sure your fingernails are clean.
- It is important that you are comfortable so that you can concentrate on the interview.
- Do not chew gum or smoke.
- Do not overuse cologne or perfume.

Ethics.

- Never take an interview just "for practice." By doing so, you are deceiving the organization about your intentions and interest, and denying an opportunity to a genuinely interested candidate.
- Always be honest about the info you provide, both on your resume and in an interview. Npot doing so can come back to haunt you, even many years later, if misinformation is discovered.

Illegal questions.

- It is illegal for an interviewer to ask certain types of questions. These include questions about age, race, religion, citizenship, national origin, sexual orientation, marital/family status, physical handicaps, financial situation, and arrests without conviction.
- These questions may not always be asked outright. Keep in mind the information that is being pursued.
- You will find a sample list of illegal questions on the back. If you are requested to disclose this information, in any form, there are a few ways you might choose to handle the situation:

1. Address the question directly by asking how that information affects your ability to do the job, and then address the intent of the question (ex. My personal life will not interfere with the job because of my commitment)
2. Answer truthfully.
3. Remind the interviewer that the question is illegal.

Types of interviews.

- **Behavioral Interview:** This type of interview is based on the theory that past performance is the best indicator of future performance. Emphasis is put on detailed examples as opposed to hypothetical situations. For example, merely stating that you were in a leadership position will not suffice to emphasize your supposed leadership skills. The interviewee must describe action he/she took and give examples of situations. These questions are usually open-ended and do not elicit a certain desired response.

- **Stress Interview:** Also known as a confrontational interview, this is one in which a deliberate attempt is made to make you feel uncomfortable in order to assess how you might handle a stressful situation. This may include deliberate attempts to bring out weaknesses, long periods of silence, or interruptions. As with all interviews, keep calm and think before answering a question. In other words, "roll with the punches," and remember that it is a technique designed to elicit a reaction.

- **Case Studies:** These are most common with consulting interviews. A candidate is given a problem to solve and the object is not to come to a specific solution, but to allow the interviewer to observe your analytical and problem-solving skills through the process you take to reach a conclusion. For example, you might be asked "How many light bulbs are necessary to light NYC?"

The following are some questions to use when preparing and practicing for your interviews. Keep in mind that these are not all of the possibilities, but rather a range of topics that are commonly covered during the interview process. Practice answering these and similar question out loud, not in your head.

Some interview questions to prepare for...

Practice until you are able to answer these with ease and confidence. Don't memorize your answers or they will sound that way. Use these questions as your opportunity to demonstrate how your skills and experience make you the best candidate by referring to the qualifications of the position and making a direct connection. Remember to always be positive and honest when answering.

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Why should we hire someone with a liberal arts background as opposed to someone with a more technical background?
3. What are your strengths? Your weaknesses?
4. Tell me about your internship at XYZ organization.
5. How would you describe yourself? How would your peers describe you?
6. What do you know about our organization?
7. Why did you choose to major in _____?
8. What did you do in your last job to create a teamwork environment? Be specific.
9. Tell me how your education and coursework provides a good background for this job.
10. Describe a situation when you needed to solve a problem.
11. Give an example of a creative solution to a difficult problem you have come up with.
12. What has been your most recent accomplishment?
13. If you had to do anything over, what would it be, how would you change it, and why?
14. What class did you like the best and why? Least?
15. Tell me about a time you had to deliver a high quality project in a short period of time or one that required budgeting your time over an extended period of time.
16. How would you describe your leadership experience?
17. What do you plan to be doing 5 years from now?
18. Why do you want to work in this field?
19. Is there anything else you'd like me to know?
20. Describe a situation where you had to reach a quick decision.
21. Do you have any questions?

Illegal interview questions/topics...

Remember that not all illegal questions are asked in an outright manner. Some may seem perfectly honest, yet are aimed at obtaining the same information about age, race, religion, citizenship, national origin, sexual orientation, marital/family status and plans, physical handicaps, financial situation, and if you've ever been arrested. Pay attention to the information you're being asked for and be prepared for how you will answer if you are asked an illegal question. However, also be aware that there are some questions which are permitted.

Illegal:

1. Does your religion allow you to work on Saturdays?
2. What is your native language?
3. How old are you?
4. What is your maiden name?
5. Do you have a girlfriend/boyfriend?
6. Where and when were you born?
7. Do you plan to have children?
8. What's your citizenship?
9. Do you have any physical disabilities?
10. Have you ever been arrested?

Permitted Inquiries:

1. Are you able to work weekend hours?
2. What languages do you speak/write fluently? (if job-related)
3. Are you over 18 years of age?
4. Do you have authorization to work in the U.S.?
5. Do you have any disabilities which would interfere with your ability to perform the job in question?
6. Have you been convicted of a crime related to the job duties?

Some questions to ask the interviewer...

Having a few, thoughtful questions to ask the interviewer will convey both your interest and enthusiasm for the organization. Be sure not to ask questions which were already answered, were included in materials you were given, or that is easily obtained through independent research prior to the interview.

1. Why do you enjoy working for your organization?
2. How is an employee evaluated and promoted?
3. Tell me about your training and development programs.
4. How would you describe your organization's strengths and weaknesses?
5. Describe a typical first assignment.
6. What path did you take to your present position?
7. Describe the work environment.
8. What is the retention rate of people in the position for which I'm interviewing?
9. What products/services is the company looking to introduce/eliminate in the near future?
10. What are the prospects for the organization's growth and expansion?