



Effective Interviewing Advice

Interviewing Skills

This section gives tips on interview preparation for all types of employment interviews.

Researching Career and Industry Interests

You will only have a short amount of time to impress a recruiter. Similar to taking an exam, preparation should not be put off until the night before. One of the biggest complaints from interviewers is that candidates have not researched the employer and/or the industry. Nothing signals your lack of preparation to an employer more quickly than asking general questions which should have been researched in advance.

You can impress a recruiter as being a prepared, motivated and career-minded individual by conducting career research and being knowledgeable about your chosen field. Accessing trade publications, joining professional associations, reading general business publications such as *Crain's Detroit Business* and the *Wall Street Journal* are great ways to learn about your field. The Walsh College Library and Career Services are excellent resources.

Formulating career goals can increase your probability of being hired. Career planning is best started prior to interviewing so that you can target your resume and job search process. Career development is an ongoing process and therefore your goals may change as you complete a job search. Some methods which can be helpful in making career decisions include vocational interest testing, informational interviewing, and internship experiences. It can be helpful to clarify your career goals with a career services professional.

Researching Companies for Interview Preparation

Before any interview, it is advisable to prepare by researching the company. This can be accomplished by:

- ◆ The Internet
- ◆ Reading company brochures that are available in Career Services, the Walsh Library, Crain's Detroit, or through a request to the company or firm
- ◆ Using the Walsh College Library
- ◆ Talking to present/former employees
- ◆ Using public libraries

Try to learn as much as possible about the company or firm. Specifically, make an attempt to research their:

- ◆ Products and services
- ◆ History, size, locations, etc.
- ◆ Management goals and objectives
- ◆ Key personnel
- ◆ Corporate culture
- ◆ Expected work attire
- ◆ Career paths and opportunities for advancement
- ◆ Salary/benefits
- ◆ Competitors
- ◆ Clients served
- ◆ Financial stability
- ◆ New initiatives in the firm or in the industry

You may not be able to find information on all of the above items, but the more you know, the better. The best way to make a good decision regarding a potential offer is to have as much information as possible.

Preparing Questions to Ask the Interviewer

Most interviewers will expect you to ask at least two intelligent questions about the company, job or industry. By the types of questions you ask, interviewers will be clued into whether or not you have researched the company. Questions regarding salary, benefits, office hours, or your first day off should NOT be asked during the first interview. However, these questions may be asked if the interviewer starts this line of questioning in the second or third interview. You may ask these types of questions when an offer is made. Use the time you have with the interviewer to discuss your qualifications and how you can benefit the employer. (See page nine for suggestions.)

Preparing to Answer Questions

How can you prepare yourself for questions when literally thousands of variations could be asked? Because of these variations, memorization of responses to questions is NOT the answer. Employers hire individuals for a number of reasons but mostly because the individual meets their requirements now and for the future. Since most of us have many skills and good qualities, we must learn to focus on those which are needed and best match the open position and organization. Interviewing is similar to a sales presentation - you find out what the company's needs are, demonstrate how you can uniquely meet those needs and handle any objections (negative points). Please inform Walsh College career services if you are asked inappropriate questions during an interview during an on-campus interview.

Appearance

Since your first face-to-face impression with the recruiter is critical, you should plan your attire well in advance. Bear in mind that most employers interviewing for business positions are fairly conservative so it is safer to err on the side of conservatism. Male candidates are required to wear business suits, shirts and ties and female candidates are required to wear business suits.

The following guidelines should be considered:

Male Candidates

- Generally a white shirt with dark suit and tie works well for most conservative positions
- No sport coats
- Dark, polished shoes of a conservative style such as cap-toe, medallion or wing tip brogues
- Tie styles that are small foulard prints, solids, diagonal stripes or small pin dots
- Socks that do not show your bare leg when sitting down
- Black socks and shoes should be worn with blue or gray suits
- Conservative hair styles, such as those that are cut above the ears on the sides and above the shirt collar in the back
- Light jewelry - do not wear earrings, rings (except class or wedding rings) or heavy bracelets
- Avoid cologne or after shave

Female Candidates

- If interviewing with a conservative organization, select a darker colored suit
- Avoid broad or loud prints in skirts and blouses
- Light jewelry - avoid excessive jewelry such as multiple bracelets, long dangling earrings, or pieces which may detract attention from what you have to say
- Closed toed shoes (pumps or flats) which are polished and dark in color
- Avoid excessive makeup, but use a daytime makeup look. Do not go without makeup entirely
- Avoid perfume
- Clean nails with a neutral shade of polish, if worn
- Neutral colored hose
- Hair styles should be conservative and hair below the shoulder should be pulled back
- Carry either a purse or briefcase - both are too bulky
- Avoid linen fabrics, especially for longer second interviews, as they may wrinkle

Day of the Interview

Arrive 15 minutes prior to your scheduled interview time. Always assume there may be delays such as traffic jams or car trouble so that you will not be late. Review your notes and compose yourself in order to overcome the anxieties, which may manifest themselves. Motivate yourself so you can enter the interview with a positive, enthusiastic attitude.

The Interview Process

When you meet the recruiter, be sure to smile, make direct eye contact and give a firm palm-to-palm handshake. Generally, the recruiter will escort you to the interview office and ask you to take a seat. Usually, the recruiter will be prepared and will set the tone for the interview. If the recruiter leaves this up to you, a good way to get started is to indicate how pleased you are to be at the interview. If the recruiter continues to let you take control, this is where your research will pay off. You will be prepared to ask intelligent questions.

Recruiters all have different interview styles. Some will barely speak and want you to do all the talking while others will dominate the conversation. Be prepared to adjust to different personalities. If an interviewer is talkative, try to insert your attributes where they seem to make the most sense in the conversation. If given the opportunity to talk, be positive and address the perceived needs of the organization. However, do not ramble to the point of releasing negative information or communicating disorganized thoughts. Try to learn additional information about the position(s) available as early on in the interview so that you can relate your skills, courses, experience and activities to the job opening.

Questions Frequently Asked During the Interview

The following questions are typical of those asked during on-campus interviews:

- What are your future career plans?
- Tell me about yourself. (Disclose only information relevant to performing the job, not personal information.)
- What type of position are you most interested in?
- Why do you think you might like to work for us?
- Why did you choose your particular field?
- What do you know about us?
- What qualifications do you have that make you feel that you will be successful in your field?
- Why did you decide to go to this particular school?
- Why did you think you would like this particular type of job?
- Do you prefer working with others or by yourself?
- What kind of boss do you prefer?
- What interests you about our products or services?
- What do you know about opportunities in the field for which you are trained?
- How long do you expect to work?
- What is your major weakness?
- How do you feel about relocation now and in the future?
- What job in our firm would you choose if you were entirely free to do so?
- What is your expected career path with us?
- What kind of work interests you?
- In what activities have you participated? Why?
- How do you spend your spare time? What are your hobbies?
- What courses did you like best? Least? Why?
- Have you ever changed your major field of interest while in college?
- What have you done which shows initiative and willingness to work?
- Tell me about yourself (provide a brief, articulate summary of your career related experience and plans).
- How are you doing academically? Does your GPA accurately reflect your academic ability? (Emphasize areas in which you have excelled, be prepared to discuss academic problems without making excuses).
- Where do you expect to be in five/ten years? (Stress goals which are realistic, discuss responsibilities and environments you seek).
- Describe a leadership position you have held. Do you consider yourself a leader?
- How well do you work with other people? How well do you work independently? Which do you prefer?
- How are you doing in your job search? What other organizations are you talking to? (There is no need to provide specific information).
- Are you willing to work long hours?
- How do you feel about traveling?
- Why should we hire you? What could you contribute to our company or firm?

Rather than asking specific questions, some interviewers will describe a business situation and ask you to comment. In this case, the interviewer is usually interested in the methodology you would use, as well as additional information you would require to solve the problem.

Other Interview Tips

- Do not smoke or chew gum.
- Maintain comfortable eye contact.
- If you are stumped on a question, take a moment to organize your thoughts before answering.
- Do not use slang expressions.
- Limit use of "ya knows", "umm's", etc. as much as possible.
- Show enthusiasm about the position and the company or firm.
- Do not show anxiety or boredom.
- Do not look at your watch.
- Do not show samples of work or transcripts unless requested due to the limited time allotted for on-campus interviews. You can, however, let the recruiter know you have them.
- Do not ask about benefits, vacations or salary.
- Do give more than yes/no answers. Expand with examples.
- Be polite and show good manners.
- Maintain good posture - lean slightly forward.
- Do not speak poorly of a professor or former employer. Always make positive statements when interviewing.
- Make sure your long-range goals fit with the organization's long range plans. Do not say you are going to law school for example, if the position does not require it. Likewise, do not just say what you think the recruiter wants to hear if it is not a true statement. Remember, you are trying to find a good career match, not force one.
- Be prepared to sell yourself. You may have to do most of the talking.
- Avoid controversial subjects unless asked a direct question.
- Do not demand a particular salary.
- Do not be afraid to close the interview by saying that you are very interested in the position.

Occasionally students are asked questions which do not appear to relate to the position. Unless very offensive, it is suggested that you answer the question briefly and discuss it with a Career Services staff member after the interview.

The Closing and Farewell

Take the cue from the recruiter when the interview is coming to a close and briefly cover any items you may want to emphasize, or which have not been covered already. Ask the interviewer if there are any further questions. Before leaving, be sure to determine who is to take the next action. For example, will you receive a letter regarding the interviewer's decision or are you to call the interviewer back? Shake hands and, using the interviewer's name, thank them for the opportunity to interview for the position. Leave promptly at the conclusion of the interview.

The Follow-up

Immediately after interviewing, it is suggested that you jot down the highlights of the interview. By keeping detailed notes of your interviews, you will be able to use the information in preparing for a potential second interview, to write a thank you letter, and when you are deciding between offers of employment.

The campus interview should be followed up with a brief thank you letter. It should include an expression of appreciation for the recruiter's time, a reference to an attribute or qualification that appeared to fit the position well, and an indication of your interest. A thank you letter is similar to a cover letter because it continues to match up your skills with the position available.

Interviewing Checklist

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Researched profession
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Know career goals
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Know strengths and what you have to offer
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Purchased or put together appropriate attire
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Resume has been proofed by a professional, completed, and uploaded into eRecruiting
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Registration form submitted to Career Services
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Attended mock interview session or practiced interviewing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Obtained student copy of transcripts and made sure references are in order
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Researched employers on campus
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Researched specific company or firm prior to scheduled interview
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Prepared for specific interview by matching up strengths with requirements of position
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Practiced firm, palm-to-palm handshake
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Positive, enthusiastic attitude
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Took a deep, relaxing breath and say "Hello, nice to meet you Mr./Ms. _____"
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Took notes immediately following interview
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wrote follow up letter to recruiter within one of week of interview
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Utilized other job search methods
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Maintained a positive attitude despite rejections
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Communicated results of interviews to Career Services
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Communicated acceptance of any employment to Career Services

SECOND INTERVIEWS AND OFFERS

Most employers will invite you for a second interview prior to making an employment offer. This second interview can be for any time from an hour to a full day. You may see one person or several persons before a final decision is made regarding your suitability for employment with the organization. You should clearly understand what the invitation entails and make your plans accordingly. If a second interview will be for several hours, schedule it for a day when you are relatively free from classes, work and other commitments.

Making a Decision on an Offer

During the interview process, make a list of values and factors that are important to you in your new position. These can even be weighted. Examples may include:

- Anticipated rapport with supervisor and other personnel
- Work location
- Nature of the work (skills used, responsibilities, travel, overtime, etc.)
- Opportunity for advancement (within and outside of the organization)
- Training
- Transferability of skills
- Salary and benefits
- Reputation and stability of the organization

You may have other factors that are important. Add those to your list, placing them in order of importance to you. Then evaluate each one, using your results as a decision-making tool. If you do not have enough information to judge each factor, make sure you clarify it with the employer and consult with Career Services, faculty, and associates.

If you receive an offer of employment from a company, you should make sure you completely understand the offer. If you have any questions, make sure you call the appropriate person to clarify the offer. At this time, you can clarify benefits, start date, performance evaluation and salary. If you need assistance with salary negotiation, please ask Career Services for a general guideline of starting salaries.

If you have interviewed with several employers and feel you will be receiving more than one offer, you might ask for a specific period of time in order to consider all offers and make your decision. It is important to adhere to the time commitment or ask for an extension. Acceptance of an employment offer

should be made in good faith and with the sincere intention of honoring the employment commitment. The college believes that it is highly unethical to accept an offer and then reject that offer upon receiving a more desirable offer from another company or firm.

You may receive a letter indicating that you will not be considered for a position in the recruiter's organization. Rather than considering this a defeat, try to look upon it as a learning experience. Do not let rejection detract from your self-confidence. It is not unusual to experience some rejections before achieving success. If you feel you are not progressing as you expected, review your job search targets, interviewing techniques and seek the advice of Career Services. Remember that persistence and perseverance are large factors in the success of candidates. If you have confidence in yourself, then employers will likely see it in your interview.

Avoid Interviewing Mistakes



1. First impressions are lasting impressions! Dress your best and be conservative. The employer assumes that this is the best you are ever going to look and is deciding if they would like you to represent their organization. Your appearance tells the employer how important this interview is to you. Facial jewelry should not be worn and only minimal jewelry such as a ring should be worn. Your handshake will make an impression as well. Firm and brief is the rule to follow.

2. A messy or incomplete application. Your application should be filled out neatly. Most employers interpret how you complete their application as a strong indication of how you will handle paper work. Have all the information you will need to fill out an application with you. Names, dates, addresses, phone numbers, and references will be needed. Bring at least two copies of your resume on resume quality paper to hand to the interviewer as well as a separate sheet with three professional references listed.

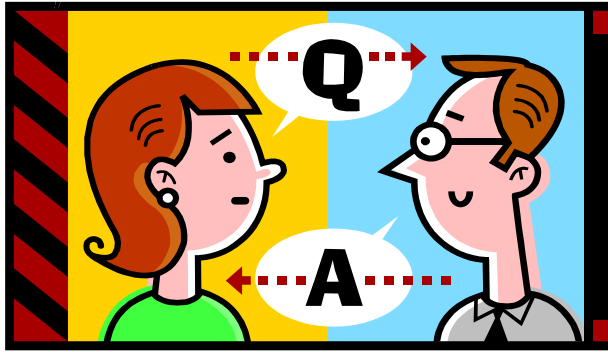
3. Late arrival can kill your chance for consideration. Being late for an interview shows a lack of planning or arrogance that your time is more valuable than the interviewer. Drive to the interview the day before and ask for an application to take home and neatly complete. Now you know exactly how long the drive to the interview is and you will be able to find all the addresses and phone numbers requested on the application. Plan to arrive at least 15 minutes early.

4. Don't forget that the interview starts the minute you enter the door. Don't chew gum, make loud sighing noises, use your cell phone or pace the lobby. Your behavior in the lobby will most likely be conveyed to the hiring authority. Remember to bring a pen and don't ask the receptionist for one to use. When you hand in your completed application be sure to include a copy of your resume.

5. Inability to express thoughts clearly, poor diction and grammar. Slang expressions and obscenities demonstrate the limited size of your vocabulary and intelligence. Courtesy and likeability are extremely

important. Correcting the interviewer on some unimportant point or interrupting him or her is as foolish as talking back to the judge in court.

- 6. Poor preparation.** Don't go to an interview and just wait to see what questions are asked. Prepare an outline of the information that you believe will make the employer think you are the best candidate. Include related experience, education, specific technical skills and personal attributes that are required for the position you are applying for. This will help you remember to cover those points during the interview. If questions are not asked that allow you to state this information, you should state a summary of the relevant qualifications you possess near the conclusion of the interview.
- 7. Lack of planning or a lack of focus in your job search is equally deadly.** If you don't know where you are going, any path will keep you lost. Employers seek candidates who are confident they can contribute to the organization's success and will be committed to meet or exceed objectives. Know and state what your relevant long-term career goals are so the employer will understand they will receive return on their investment to train you. Always define your career objectives and be confident you possess the right qualifications. You must be a match for the company culture and the position. Research the company before going into an interview so you can tell the interviewer why you are going to be successful and meet their needs. Remember this is your opportunity to sell yourself. The interview should focus on what you can do for the company, not what they can do for you. Salary and benefit information will be provided to you in a second interview or at the time of a job offer.
- 8. Your response to questions about salary can make or break your chance.** Know what the appropriate range is for the position. Make this part of your research. You should try to find out what range has been authorized for the position if possible. Most employers will try to get you to name a figure. You can try to approach this by telling them you are most interested in the opportunity, not the salary and you are confident that if they find you to be the strongest candidate they will make you a competitive offer. If pressed state a range instead of a specific figure, but you could be offered the low end of the range you state.
- 9. Evasiveness or rationalizing unfavorable points in your background only makes you look bad.** Show that you have learned from your mistakes if this issue comes up. Condemnation of past employers is another pitfall. They will think you will speak negatively about them too. Always stay positive with your comments.
- 10. Indifference shows you do not want the position.** It may be seen as an example of your enthusiasm for your work. Employers seek candidates who will be enthusiastic about their job.
- 11. No follow-up after the interview.** You must send a thank you letter within 48 hours. If the employer will be making a decision quickly, email the thank you letter. This reaffirms your interest and allows you to address any areas in the interview where your responses were weak. You can also comment on why you are a good match now that you know more about the job and company.



QUESTIONS TO ASK THE INTERVIEWER

Most interviewers will expect you to have at least two intelligent questions about the company, job or industry. It is important that you have researched the company prior to the interview and developed your questions based upon some of the information that you gathered. This is your opportunity to show that you are interested in learning more about this company.

An interview should be viewed as an exchange of information between professionals. You are assessing if the company is a good fit for you just as the interviewer is trying to find out if you are the best candidate. Use the time to ask questions not only as an opportunity to further sell yourself and the research you have done, but as a chance to ensure this would be a good career move.

Sample questions can include:

May I have a more specific job description? (Only if one was not provided.)

What is the company's profit margin? How does that compare to last year?

Tell me about your company culture; what are the best aspects?

What strategic advantage do you have over your competitors?

When was the last significant layoff? What prompted it?

What is the best thing about the team I would be working with? Are there any challenges in working with this team?

What type of training would I receive? From whom would I be receiving the training? What is the normal acceptable learning curve time?

What qualities are you looking for in your new hires?

What characteristics does a successful person have at this company?

How was this position created? Was it an existing position or is it newly created?

What industry trends will affect this company in the coming years?

What are your company's most important goals this year?

What could be the greatest challenge in this position?

What are the priorities for this position right now?

How is an employee evaluated and promoted?

Is it company policy to promote from within?

What is the natural career progression for an employee beginning in this position?

Does your organization participate in strategic planning? Who is involved?

Is diversity a part of your strategic framework?



Behaviorally Based Interviews



The most commonly used interviewing style is the behavioral interviewing method. Most interviewers are looking for behavioral examples that indicate a presence of job related skills and abilities. A behavioral example is a description of a specific life history event which can be used to rate the presence of a job skill. Even if the interviewer has not been trained to look for behavioral skills, they will be influenced by positive and negative behavioral examples. They will be looking for accomplishments and results from your past experiences. The way you have handled situations in the past is a direct indicator of how you will handle situations in the future.

To be prepared for a behavioral interview you should:

- ★ Identify the skills/abilities a company is looking for in a candidate (leadership, creativity, analytical skills, interpersonal skills, etc.). Talk with someone who interviewed with the company or works for them to get this information. It can also often be determined by reading the position listing or by visiting the corporate website to learn about the key attributes they seek.
- ★ Prepare specific examples from your life history that support why you have each skill/ability by using the STAR Approach.



Establish the Situation.

A specific situation you encountered that relates to the question. Be sure to give a specific example, not a general statement. Do not include all details, only use those that relate to the problem at hand. This overview will set up the rest of your answer.



Establish the Task

The task to be completed to rectify the situation. This is a statement that you will use to summarize the action needed and the goals and objectives.



Describe the Action

Your plan of attack. What you did to handle the situation and why.



Describe the Result

What happened as a result of your action? For example, sales increased by 15%, customer complaints decreased by 20%. Always remember to conclude your answer with the result. Many forget this important piece of data when giving the interview response; however, this can be one of the most powerful portions of your answer.

See the sample questions below to assess various skills that are relevant to the position for which you are interviewing. It is not necessary to have an answer for each question, but pick a few from each section and come up with a library of answers for that you can always refer to.

We have categorized the questions so that you know what skill set is being assessed. Be sure to have at least a couple examples for each skill area, particularly leadership abilities. Your response to these questions will be unique to your background as it pulls from your specific experiences and examples.

When answering these types of questions, keep in mind that the interviewer is looking for specific examples, not generalizations. Be sure to tell them in a concise manner: *the situation, the task, the action, and the result*. It is also important to express what “you” did and the role “you” played in your example. Giving concise answers about your role highlights your leadership abilities. Even if the question does not appear to be “behavioral,” it is important to show a result or relate your answer to the company’s interests or job responsibilities.



Sample Questions Organized by Dimension/Skill Set

Teamwork/Cooperation

- ★ Gaining the cooperation of others can be difficult. Give a specific example of when you had to do that, and what challenges you faced. What was the outcome? What was the long-term impact on your ability to work with this person?
- ★ Please give me your best example of working cooperatively as a team member to accomplish an important goal. What was the goal or objective? What was your role in achieving this objective? To what extent did you interact with others on this project?
- ★ Tell me about a time when your coworkers gave you feedback about your actions. How did you respond? What changes did you make?
- ★ Describe a project you were responsible for that required a lot of interaction with people over a long period of time.
- ★ How have you recognized and rewarded a team player in the past? What was the situation?
- ★ Tell me about a course, work experience, or extracurricular activity where you had to work closely with others. How did it go? How did you overcome any difficulties?
- ★ Describe a problem you had in your life when someone else’s help was very important to you.

Customer Orientation

- ★ Give me a specific example of a time when you had to address an angry customer. What was the problem and what was the outcome? How would you assess your role in defusing the situation?

Continuous Learning/Development

- ★ Describe a decision you made or a situation that you would have handled differently if you had to do it over again.
- ★ When you have been made aware of, or have discovered for yourself, a problem in your work performance, what was your course of action? Can you give me an example?
- ★ Tell me about a time when your supervisor/co-workers gave you feedback about your work/actions. What did you learn about yourself?
- ★ What have you done to further your own professional development in the last five years?
- ★ Tell me about a job that you had which required you to learn new things.

- ★ Tell me about a recent job or experience that you would describe as a real learning experience. What did you learn from the job or the experience?
- ★ Discuss the highlights of your most recent educational experience. Did you accomplish any special achievements? What were your most difficult challenges?
- ★ I noticed on your resume that you attended _____ training program. Please describe the training program. How have you applied what you learned to your current job?

Displays Vision

- ★ Describe what steps/methods you have used to define/identify a vision for your unit/position.
- ★ In your current or former position, what were your short and long-term goals? How long ago did you set them? Who else was involved in setting them? Which ones were achieved?
- ★ How do you see your job relating to the overall goals of your present/previous organization?
- ★ Tell me about a time when you anticipated the future and made changes to current responsibilities/operations to meet future needs.

Leadership/Initiative

- ★ What are three effective leadership qualities you think are important. How have you demonstrated these qualities in your past/current position?
- ★ Describe a situation in which you were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to approach things your way. What level was the person you had to persuade?
- ★ What risks did you take in your present/previous job? Tell me about it.
- ★ Describe a leadership situation that you would handle differently if you had to do it over again.
- ★ What one experience proved to you that you would be a capable manager?
- ★ What have you done to develop the skills of your staff?
- ★ Tell me about a time when you were able to provide a co-worker with recognition for the work they performed. What did you do?
- ★ Tell me about a time when you reached out for additional responsibility.
- ★ Tell me about a project/suggestion that you initiated. Explain how you communicated the project/suggestion.
- ★ What have you done in your present/previous job that goes beyond what was required?

Respect for Others

- ★ Tell me about a time when you had to resolve a difference of opinion with a co-worker/customer/supervisor. How do you feel you showed respect?
- ★ Tell me about a time when you needed to give feedback to an employee with emotional or sensitive problems. What was the outcome?
- ★ Describe the way you handled a specific problem involving others with differing values, ideas and beliefs in your current/previous job.

Interpersonal Skills

- ★ Give me a specific example of a time when you had to address an angry customer. What was the problem and what was the outcome?
- ★ Tell me about the most difficult challenge you faced in trying to work cooperatively with someone who did not share the same ideas. What was your role in achieving the work objective? What was the long-term impact on your ability to get things done while working with this person?

- ★ Describe a work situation that required you to really listen and display compassion to a co-worker/employee who was telling you about a personal/sensitive situation.
- ★ Describe the way you handled a specific problem involving people in your last job.

Supports Diversity and Understands Related Issues

- ★ Tell me about a time when you had to adapt to a wide variety of people by accepting/understanding their perspective.
- ★ What have you done to further your knowledge/understanding about diversity? How have you demonstrated your learning?
- ★ Can you recall a time when a person's cultural background affected your approach to a work situation?
- ★ How have you handled situations in which you could not understand a customer's strong accent?
- ★ Tell me about a time that you successfully adapted to a culturally different environment.
- ★ Tell me about a situation in which you had to separate the person from the issue when working to resolve differences.
- ★ How have you taken responsibility/accountability for an action that may have been offensive to the recipient?
- ★ Tell me about a time that you had adapted your style in order to work effectively with those who were different from you.
- ★ How have you reacted to conversations between co-workers that were clearly offensive to non-participants?
- ★ Give examples of when your values and beliefs impacted your relationships with your co-workers.
- ★ Tell me about a time that you evaluated your own beliefs or opinions around issues of difference.
- ★ Tell me about a time when you avoided forming an opinion based upon a person's outward appearance.
- ★ How have you made your voice heard in a predominantly male or female-dominated environment?
- ★ What measures have you taken to make someone feel comfortable in an environment that was obviously uncomfortable with his or her presence?

Honesty/Fairness

- ★ Tell me about a specific time when you had to handle a tough problem which challenged fairness or ethical issues.
- ★ Tell me about a tough decision you made. What steps, thought processes, and considerations did you take to make an objective decision?

Builds Trust

- ★ Think of a situation where you distrusted a co-worker/supervisor, resulting in tension between you. What steps did you take to improve the relationship?
- ★ Keeping others informed of your progress/actions helps them feel comfortable. Tell me your methods for keeping your supervisor advised of the status on projects.
- ★ If you can, tell me about a time when your trustworthiness was challenged. How did you react/respond?
- ★ Give me an example of how you have acted with integrity (walked your talk) in your job/work relationship.
- ★ Tell me about a time when you had to give feedback to an employee who displayed a lack of professionalism in their work relationships. What did you say? What standards did you set? What was the outcome?
- ★ Setting high expectations implies you believe the employee can deliver. Give me an example of having done this.

- ★ Trust requires personal accountability. Can you tell me about a time when you chose to trust someone? What was the outcome?
- ★ Tell me about a time when you had to give the “benefit of the doubt” to a co-worker/supervisor. What was the outcome?
- ★ Give me an example of when you ‘went to the source’ to address a conflict. Do you feel trust levels were improved as a result?

Recognizes Others’ Achievements/Contributions

- ★ Give me an example of how you and your staff have celebrated success in the past. What was the occasion?
- ★ Tell me about a time when you were able to provide a co-worker/employee with recognition for the work they performed. What did you do?
- ★ What consistent methods do you use to ensure that your staff feels valued for their contributions?

Understands Others’ Perspectives

- ★ By providing examples, convince me that you can adapt to a wide variety of people.
- ★ Gaining the cooperation of others can be difficult. Give a specific example when you had to do that.
- ★ Tell me about the most difficult challenge you faced in trying to work cooperatively with someone who did not share the same ideas. What was the difference in ideas? What was the outcome? What was the long-term impact on your ability to get things done working with this person?
- ★ Tell me about a time when you felt your staff was under too much pressure. What did you do about it?

Resolves Conflicts Constructively

- ★ Give me an example of a time when you were able to successfully communicate with another person even when you felt the individual did not value your perspective.
- ★ Tell me about a time when you and your previous supervisor disagreed but you still found a way to get to your point.
- ★ Describe a time when you facilitated a creative solution to a problem between employees.
- ★ Tell me about a recent success you had with an especially difficult employee/co-worker.
- ★ Thinking of the most difficult person you have had to deal with, describe an interaction that illustrates that difficulty. Tell me about the last time you dealt with him/her. How did you handle the situation?
- ★ Describe a time when you took personal accountability for a conflict and initiated contact with the individual(s) involved to explain your actions.

Positive Attitude

- ★ What three specific things about your last job gave you the most satisfaction? Why?
- ★ What have you done in your last job that makes you feel proud?
- ★ Please think back to a time when setting a positive example had the most beneficial impact on people you worked with. How did you determine that a strong example was needed? What was the outcome?
- ★ Describe your best boss. Describe your worst boss.

Planning/Organization

- ★ Give me a specific example of a time when you did not meet a deadline. How did you handle it?

- ★ Using a specific example of a project, tell me how you kept those involved informed of the progress.
- ★ Are you better at working on many things at a time, or are you better at working on and getting results on a few specific things? Please give me two examples that illustrate this.
- ★ Name one of your best accomplishments, including where the assignment came from, your plans in carrying it out, how you eventually did carry it out, and any obstacles you overcame.
- ★ Of your current assignments, which do you consider to have required the greatest amount of effort with regard to planning/organization? How have you accomplished this assignment? Tell me how you handled it. How would you assess your effectiveness?

Problem Solving/Judgment

- ★ Describe an instance when you had to think quickly to free yourself from a difficult situation.
- ★ Tell me about a politically complex work situation in which you worked.
- ★ Give me a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.
- ★ Give me an example of a time when there was a decision to be made and procedures were not in place. What was the outcome?
- ★ How do you go about solving problems at work?
- ★ Tell me about a specific time when you eliminated or avoided a potential problem before it happened.
- ★ What types of problems do you most enjoy tackling? Give me some examples of such problems you faced. What did you enjoy about them?
- ★ What types of problems do you least enjoy tackling? Give me some examples of such problems you faced. What was it about the problems that you least enjoyed?
- ★ To whom did you turn for help the last time you had a major problem and why did you choose that person?
- ★ In some aspects of work it is important to be free of error. Can you describe a situation where you have tried to prevent errors? What did you do? What was the outcome?

Makes Effective Decision

- ★ Tell me about a decision you made but wish you had done differently.
- ★ Tell me about an experience in which you had a limited amount of time to make a difficult decision. What was the decision and the outcome/result of your decision?
- ★ Give me an example of a time when there was a decision to be made and procedures were not in place. What was the outcome?
- ★ Tell me about a time when you had to make an unpopular decision.
- ★ Discuss an important decision you have made regarding work. What factors influenced your decision?
- ★ In a current job task, what steps do you go through to ensure your decisions are correct and or effective?

Takes Responsibility

- ★ Give me an example of something you've done in previous jobs that demonstrate your willingness to work hard.
- ★ What is the biggest error in judgment or failure you have made in a previous job? Why did you make it? How did you correct the problem?
- ★ Tell me about a time when your supervisor criticized your work. How did you respond?
- ★ Tell me about a time when you took responsibility for an error and were held personally accountable.

Achieves Results

- ★ Describe a situation in which you were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to approach things your way.
- ★ Give me an example of an important goal that you had set in the past, and tell me about your success in reaching it.
- ★ What projects were accomplished during your previous job? How were these accomplished? What experiences did you have when meeting deadlines for project completion? Explain.
- ★ Are you better at working on many things at a time, or are you better at working on and getting results on a few specific things? Please give me two examples that illustrate this.
- ★ What do you consider your greatest accomplishments in your current/previous position?

Communicates Effectively

- ★ Describe a situation in which you were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to see things your way.
- ★ Tell me about a time in which you had to use your written communication skills in order to get an important point across.
- ★ Give me an example of a time when you were able to successfully communicate with another person even when that individual may not have agreed with your perspective.
- ★ Give me a specific example of a time when you had to handle an angry customer. What was the problem and what was the outcome?
- ★ Tell me about a time when you and your current/previous supervisor disagreed but you still found a way to get your point across.
- ★ Tell me about your efforts to “sell” a new idea to your supervisor.
- ★ How do you make your feelings known when you disagree with the views of your staff?
- ★ What have you done to improve your verbal communication skills?
- ★ What have you done to improve your listening skills?
- ★ Tell me how you kept your supervisor advised of the status on projects.
- ★ How have you assessed your behavioral messages and what have you learned about yourself as a result?

Dependability/Attendance

- ★ Give me an example of a time when you did not meet a deadline. How did you handle it?
- ★ We all face times when personal issues pull us away from work responsibilities. If possible, tell me about a time when your dependability or attendance was challenged.
- ★ How did you handle it and/or remain accountable or involved in work? How long did the situation last?

Job/Organizational Knowledge

- ★ Describe how your position contributes to your organization’s/unit’s goals. What are the goal’s/unit’s mission?
- ★ Tell me how you keep your job knowledge current with the ongoing changes in the industry.

Productivity

- ★ Give me an example of an important goal that you had set in the past, and tell me about your success in reaching it.
- ★ Tell me about a time when you had to complete multiple tasks/projects within a tight timeline.
- ★ Tell me about a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.

- ★ Give me a specific example of a time when you did not meet a deadline. How did you handle it?
- ★ Give me two examples of things you've done in previous jobs that demonstrate your willingness to work hard.
- ★ Describe a course, project, or work experience that was complex. What kind of follow-up did you undertake? How much time was spent on unexpected difficulties?

Coaches/Counsels/Evaluates Staff

- ★ Give me an example of a time when you helped a staff member accept change and make necessary adjustments to move forward. What were the change/transition skills that you used?
- ★ Tell me about a specific time when you had to handle a tough morale problem.
- ★ Tell me about a time when you had to take disciplinary action with someone you supervised.
- ★ Tell me about a time when you had to tell a staff member that you were dissatisfied with his/her work.
- ★ Tell me about a time when you had to handle a highly emotional employee.
- ★ Discuss a work situation in which you felt you successfully directed the work of others.
- ★ Tell me about a time when your department was going through long-term changes or working on a long-term project. What did you do to keep your staff focused?

Identifies Areas for and Supports Employee Development Opportunities

- ★ What have you done to develop the skills of your staff? How many of your employees have received training (any form) during the past year? What were the specific topic areas? Did they ask for the training or did you suggest it to them?
- ★ Tell me about a specific development plan that you created and carried out with one or more of your employees. What was the specific situation? What were the components of the development plan? How long was the time frame from start to finish? What was the outcome?

Encourages Teamwork and Group Achievement

- ★ Please tell me about your most successful attempt to encourage others to take action and get the job done. What led you to take these actions? Exactly how did you encourage others to take action or responsibility? What was the result of your efforts? Did anyone comment on your actions? Who? What was said? How often have you taken this type of action in the past six months?
- ★ Tell me about a time when you needed to have co-workers working on a project who normally have different work styles/ideas. How did you pull them together?

Leads Change/Achieves Support of Objectives

- ★ Tell me about a time when you were responsible for hiring and orientating a new employee. What did you do to help them adjust?
- ★ Tell me about a time when your department was going through long-term changes or working on a long-term project. What did you do to keep your staff focused?
- ★ Give me an example of a time when you helped a staff member accept change and make the necessary adjustments to move forward.

Enables and Empowers

- ★ Tell me about a time when you needed to delegate parts of a large assignment. How did you decide whom to distribute them to? What problems occurred? What was the outcome?

- ★ What specific information do/did you share with your staff, how often do you share this information and why?
- ★ Give me a specific example of how you have empowered your staff to make independent decisions.
- ★ Tell me about the expectations you create for staff. What are they? What factors do you consider in setting/communicating expectations?

Strives to Achieve Diverse Staff at all Levels

- ★ Give me a specific example of how you have helped create an environment where differences are valued, encouraged and supported.
- ★ What have you done to support diversity in your unit?

Diversity Issues and Creating Supportive Environment for Diverse Employees

- ★ Tell me about the specific talents and contributions of your team/staff and how you have utilized these qualities to increase the effectiveness of the unit.
- ★ What have you done to support diversity in your unit?
- ★ Can you recall a time when you gave feedback to an employee who was un-accepting of others?



Know your resume well and think through examples of experiences that highlight your skills, attributes, and accomplishments in a variety of job/school-related situations. For example, think through examples of behavioral questions and find specific examples that focus on your involvement in the situation (Think in STARS):

Q: “Describe a time when you worked on a team that was having difficulties”

A: “I spent a semester working with a project team for my sociology class. Our assignment was... (**S**ituation/**T**ask) My responsibility was... We had difficulty because... My reaction/thought process was... (**A**ction) The results were... (**R**esults)”

Helpful Interview Tips:

- ★ With each question asked, think through what information is being sought - and provide an example from your own experience.
- ★ Don't talk just to fill up dead air – take a minute to collect your thoughts and organize your answer before replying.
- ★ Provide a short, concise overview of the situation.
- ★ Be specific about your role in each situation.
- ★ Stay away from using ‘we’ too often – the interviewer wants to know what ‘you’ accomplished specifically.
- ★ Explain what you learned from each experience.
- ★ Ask the interviewer if he/she would like more detail.
- ★ ALWAYS provide positive responses, NEVER say anything negative.

THE VALUE OF INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING

What do I want to do for a living? It can be difficult to make good decisions about choosing a major and pursuing a career when you don't have experience. How can you discover what a job is really like? Informational interviewing is a great way to learn about a potential career from someone working in that field. You can receive up-to-date information and find out what it's really like on the inside. It also helps you build contacts in your field.

How do I get an Informational Interview?

Interviewing someone can be intimidating. Who should you interview? What questions should be asked? The following information will help you get started.

Identify the person you want to interview

The first step is finding the right person to interview. If you've selected a field you are interested in, you can find relevant job titles in the Occupational Outlook Handbook available at <http://www.bls.gov/oco/>.

Ask your family and friends if they know anyone who has this job, or one like it. Expand your search to include family, friends, neighbors, teammates, co-workers, instructors, other students and anyone else you come in contact with. Follow up on these contacts; if the person you talk to doesn't have the job you're interested in, ask if they know someone who does. You could say, "Can you think of anyone else I should be talking to?"

Professional organizations are another good source for making contacts. Almost every profession has some kind of national or regional group that provides information, sponsors conferences, or publishes newsletters for that field. Many organizations have student chapters. Reference books such as National Trade and Professional Associations of the United States can help you find the right organizations.

The Alumni Association or career services department may know of people working in the field you are considering. The local Yellow Pages are also a good source.

Remember you want to talk to someone working in the same field you are considering. Human Resources will not be able to provide the specific insight you are seeking.

Networking will be important throughout your professional life, no matter what field you are in.

Keep a list of the people you've spoken with and the leads they've given you.

Once you have the name (or names) of the people you want to interview, the next step is contacting that person.

Scheduling an Interview

Identify who you want to interview and contact them by phone, e-mail, or mail. Today e-mail seems to be the best method of contact. Introduce yourself and explain why you are interested in speaking with them (they work in the field you are interested in). Mention the name of the person who gave you their name and number.

Ask for 20 minutes of their time, and then stick to that schedule during the interview. They'll appreciate your consideration of their busy schedule. Make sure the person knows that you are looking for information only, and that you aren't trying to get a job interview. This will often help overcome the reservations of someone who is initially not interested in helping you. Arrange your meeting and be sure to research the company.

Requesting an Interview by Phone

Calling a complete stranger can be intimidating. You are calling them to talk about what they do for a living. Most people like to talk about themselves and will accommodate a request for more information. A useful tool for making phone calls is to write a script. Then, you'll have the questions you want to ask in front of you, so you don't forget something important. If you get nervous or flustered, you're less likely to

lose your train of thought. Practice your script before calling, so you don't sound like you're reading; don't rush; be polite. Below is a sample script to help you get started.

1. Hello, (person's name - use Mr. or Ms., not their first name). My name is _____, and I'm a (your major) student at Walsh College. I'm interested in a career in (job title or field) and (your contact's name) suggested I call you to get more information. (If you didn't get their name from a contact, tell them how you found their name.)

2. Are you available for an informational interview on (give the either/or close) Wednesday or Thursday? I'd only take about 20 minutes of your time. I'm not looking for a job at this time. I'm looking for more information on (job title or field, or any specific areas you're interested in).

3. (If the person is available to meet at the time you suggested) Thank you for taking the time to meet with me.

- Or -

(if person is not available to meet at the time you suggested) Is there another time that is more convenient for you? (Person gives alternate time).

4. The address I have for your office is (read back their address to make sure it's correct.) Is that correct? (Person confirms, or gives you different address). I'll see you at (time and date). I'm looking forward to meeting you.

5. (If the person is not available or interested in helping you)

Thank you for your time. Is there someone else in your field that you would recommend I talk to? May I use your name when I contact him/her?

This should be a brief phone conversation, not more than a minute or two. When you arrive for your interview, remember that you've already talked to this person on the phone, so he's not a complete stranger. He/she is interested in helping you get started on your career search.

To Request an Interview by Mail

Sending a letter or e-mail is like writing a cover letter, minus the job pitch. Introduce yourself, tell the person why you are contacting him, and state your reasons for wanting the interview. At the end of the letter, let him know how and when you will contact him again, then follow through when you said you would. Don't expect him to call you.

Here's a Sample Letter:

Dear _____:

As a (your major) student at Walsh College I am interested in learning more about (field or job title). (Reason for contacting this person - their firm has a good reputation, you read something they published on a topic that interests you, your contact suggested they would be a good resource, etc.)

Because you are an experienced (field) professional, I am especially interested in learning more about your view of (field of interest).

I will contact you (day or week you plan to call) to arrange a time for us to meet briefly.

Sincerely,

(Your full name)

Here is an Example of this Letter:

Dear Dr. Smith:

As a marketing major at Walsh College, I am interested in learning about careers in advertising. I belong to the Great Lakes Interactive Marketing Association and was referred to you by John Jones.

As an experienced marketing professional, your insight on marketing careers and advertising agencies would be invaluable in helping me focus my academic studies and career goals. I would like to meet with you briefly to learn more about pursuing a career in advertising and the challenges you have faced working in your industry.

I will contact you the week of May 22, 2008 to arrange a time for this meeting.

Sincerely,

Robert Johnson

Be sure to use standard business letter format and check your spelling and grammar. Use resume-quality paper and a matching envelope. Make a copy of the letter for your files.

Always follow up with a phone call when you say you will. The following script can be used for your call, if you need help getting started.

1. Hello, (Mr. or Ms. _____, not their first name). My name is _____, and I'm a (your major) at Walsh College. I recently sent you a letter requesting a meeting to get more information on (job title or field).
2. Are you available for an informational interview on (date you would like to meet)? The appointment will take about 20 minutes. I'm not looking for a job; I just want more information on (job title or field, or any specific areas you're interested in).
3. (If the person is available to meet at the time you suggested) Thank you for taking the time to meet with me.
- Or -
(If person is not available to meet at the time you suggested) Is there another time that is more convenient for you? (Person gives alternate time).
4. The address I have for your office is (read back their address to make sure it's correct.) Is that correct? (Person confirms, or gives you different address). I'll see you at (time and date). I'm looking forward to meeting you.

If the Person is not Available or Interested in Helping You

Thank you for your time. Is there someone else in your field that you would recommend I talk to? May I use your name when I contact him/her?

Be prepared for this interview. Your interviewee is doing you a favor; respect their time by having your questions prepared in advance. Don't include questions whose answers can easily be gotten somewhere else such as the Human Resources department or the company Web page. Remember, you're trying to get information that those sources don't have.

The company web site is a good place to starting looking for information. Any research from industry publications and professional organizations is also helpful; you may already have this information from researching your major.

Here's a list of sample questions to get you started. You should personalize this list to reflect your own interests. The next step is to conduct the interview.

Conducting the Interview

Conduct the informational interview like a job interview. Wear a suit if possible; if you don't own a suit, dress as professionally as you can. This includes a jacket and tie for men, and dress pants or a knee-length skirt for women. Wear a watch so you can keep track of time during the interview.

Arrive at the interview a few minutes early, so you don't appear rushed or out of breath when you walk in. Have your list of questions handy, and bring paper to write notes on and several pens. You may want to purchase a small folder or binder to keep these in; inexpensive ones are available at most office supply stores. It'll also come in handy later during your job search when you need to carry extra copies of your resume to an interview.

It's a good idea to take notes during the interview. Chances are, you'll be getting a lot of information during this time and you don't want to forget important points. Writing everything down now means you won't need to contact this person to ask for information he's already given you. You may also be getting the names and phone numbers or e-mail addresses of additional contacts.

Remember that it's important to stick to your schedule. If the interview is scheduled for 20 minutes, make sure it only lasts 20 minutes. You can always contact the person later with more questions, or even set up a second interview.

Don't panic if the person you're interviewing seems to wander off topic when answering a question and you think you may run out of time. The information he's giving you may be as useful as the questions you were originally planning to ask; you're there to get the information that interests you, not necessarily to get through a predetermined list of questions and answers. If he's digressing into a topic that doesn't interest you, remind them politely at the first opportunity that you have additional questions and that you don't want to take up more time than scheduled.

At the end of the interview, thank the interviewee for his time. Ask if you can contact him for additional information and if so, what is the best way to reach him. Asking this now means he won't be surprised or feel imposed upon if you contact him again. Don't forget to write a thank-you note after the interview.

Questions to Ask at Informational Interviews

Here are some questions you may want to ask during an informational interview. You'll get more information with an open-ended question.

You have a limited amount of time, so choose your questions carefully!

- What is your job like? Describe a typical day. Would it be possible for me to observe one sometime?
- What are some of the problems you deal with? What kinds of decisions do you make?
- How did you become interested in this field? How did you get your start?
- What kind of jobs did you have before this one? How did they help prepare you for this work? Which jobs were most helpful?
- Is your workflow steady or do you alternate between being very busy and very slow?
- What was your educational preparation for this field? Is a recent graduate's GPA important in hiring decisions?
- Is there growth in this field?
- What attributes do you think are essential for success?
- What professional journals do you read? What professional organizations do you belong to?
- What skills are needed in this field? What skills should I be concentrating on at this point in my education? What skills are looked for in entry-level employees?
- What are the challenges you face working in this field and what motivates you to stay in spite of them?
- What else should I know in order to make an informed decision about this field?
- What do you like most about your job? What parts do you dislike or feel dissatisfied about?
- Can you recommend someone else for me to talk with in this field? When I contact this person, may I use your name?

- Do you know of any comparable job titles I should be exploring in this field? Do you offer internships, co-ops, or summer jobs? What level of college students do you consider for these positions? Whom can I contact for more information?
- Would you be willing to critique my resume?
- Why did you decide to work for this company? What do you like best about it? How is this company different from the competition? What is the corporate culture like?
- What kinds of professional development does your company offer? Do employees in this field generally get advanced degrees or special training?

After the Informational Interview

Write a thank-you note and mail or e-mail it within 24 hours. If there was a topic discussed that particularly interested you or an area that you now want to explore further, let your interviewee know. He'll appreciate a personalized note, instead of a bland thank-you.

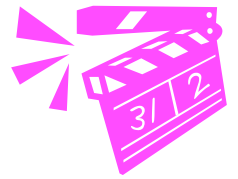
As mentioned before, it's a good idea to keep a list of all the people you've spoken with, the leads they've given you and other contacts generated along the way. If you ever need to contact that person again - with more questions, or as part of a job search - all the information will be easy to find.

The professionals you meet during informational interviewing could turn out to be valuable contacts when you begin your job search. You have just begun the first steps in networking; building contacts that will have an interest in helping you achieve your career goals.



Writing Your Commercial

Effective in introducing yourself to an employer.



Things to consider when developing your commercial:

- What do you have experience in or a detailed knowledge of?
- What is your education or training in?
- What things are you exceptionally good at?
- What things do you do well?
- What are your strengths?
- Why do you want to work for that organization?

My 30 Second Commercial

I am a _____, _____ professional
with a strong ability to _____.

I have a _____ degree in _____ from
_____. Over the past _____ years, I have gained valuable experience in
_____, and _____
_____. Some of the strengths that I can contribute to your organization
are _____.

I am interested in an opportunity with your organization because of _____
