

## Interviewing

### 1. What do interviewers look for in graduate school and job applicants?

- a. Your suitability for the job or program: Do you have the necessary skill set to do the job or finish the program?
- b. Manageability and Teamwork: Are you able to be managed and be a team player?
- c. Professional Behavior: Are you professional in all your behavior?
- d. Problem-solving skills: Are you a problem solver?
- e. Potential leadership abilities: Can you be organized, take initiative, and be a reliable group leader?  
*Note: be able to provide examples of the skills or abilities listed above.*
- f. Knowledge of the company or program: Have you done your homework? Do you have a list of thoughtful questions prepared that are not easily answered by readily available information?

### 2. What is proper interview etiquette and behavior?

- a. Be early! Wait patiently. Review your job materials while waiting. DO NOT be on your phone.
- b. Shake hands firmly and look the interviewer in the eye.
- c. DO bring your portfolio (if applicable), your resume or curriculum vita, a reference list, and a pad and pen to take notes.
- d. DO NOT bring your phone, gum, soda, or coffee.
- e. Dress appropriately and be neatly groomed. Your clothing conveys an image of who you are as a professional.
- f. Be mindful of your nonverbal behavior. The College Journal reports that, according to some studies, body language comprises 55% of the interview! Listen intently and politely, laugh only when appropriate, do not interrupt, make eye contact, be friendly, and maintain an open body posture (i.e., do not cross your arms and legs).
- g. Be mindful of your voice and speech. Speak clearly and avoid speaking too quickly, using slang, cursing, or saying “um,” “like,” or “you know.”
- h. Send a thank you note within 12 hours of your interview.

### 3. What are inappropriate questions and how do I handle them?

Inappropriate questions are those related to religion or religious days observed, marriage, pregnancy, birth control and child care, ancestry, race or national origin, and disabilities. If you feel comfortable, you can answer the questions briefly and then move on to a new topic area, however deflecting the question is often the better response. For example, you can state, “I assure you that my personal life

will not impact my work life” or “I would prefer to focus on my professional accomplishments and qualifications and not my personal life.”

#### 4. What are some common pitfalls when interviewing?

- a. Failing to answer the question - It is better to take some time to think rather than not responding.
- b. Answering a question that was not asked – Pay attention and make sure that your response directly relates to the question asked.
- c. Providing superfluous, inappropriate, or irrelevant information – Avoid tangents and overly disclosing personal information.
- d. Talking about religion, politics, or something controversial

#### 5. What to wear

In an interview your attire plays a supporting role. Appropriate attire supports your image as a person who takes the interview process seriously and understands the nature of the industry in which you are trying to become employed. Your attire should be noticed as being appropriate and well-fitting, but it should not take center stage. Never confuse an interview or business function with a social event. Don't dress for a party or a date.

##### **Interview Attire Guidelines for Men and Women**

**Suit:** A two piece matched suit is always the best and safest choice.

**What if the JOB is in a NON-SUIT-wearing work environment:** Even if you would or could wear jeans on the job, or the work environment is outdoors and very non-suit, wearing a suit to the interview shows you take the interview seriously as a professional meeting.

**Conservative colors:** Navy, dark gray (and black for women) — are safe. Other color trends may come and go; avoid the extremes. Solids or very subtle weave patterns or plaids (the kind that look solid across a room) are safest.

**Cost / quality:** You are not expected to be able to afford the same clothing as a corporate CEO. Do invest in quality that will look appropriate during your first two or three years on the job. One good quality suit is sufficient for a job search if that is all your budget allows. You can vary your shirt/blouse and tie/accessories.

**Details:** Everything should be clean and well pressed. Carefully inspect clothes for tags, dangling threads, etc.

## **Grooming Tips**

**Hair:** Should be clean and neat.

**Shoes:** Should be in polished condition. Make sure heels are not worn.

**Details:** No missing buttons, no lint; and don't forget to remove external tags and tacking stitches from new clothes.

**Hands:** Clean fingernails.

**Fit:** Clothes should be clean, neatly pressed, and fit properly.

**Smell:** Perfume or cologne should be used sparingly or not at all. Remember that some people have allergies/sensitivities; you'd hate for that to derail an interview. No odors in clothes. Don't smell like smoke.

**Pad folios:** Preferred over a bulky briefcase. A small briefcase is also appropriate. But if you have no reason to carry a briefcase, don't; you risk looking silly.

## **6. What types of questions might an interviewer ask me?**

### **Specific to Employment**

- a. Tell me about yourself? (or Describe yourself in 3 words)
- b. What is your biggest strength/weakness? (or biggest success or failure)
- c. Quality X is on your resume . . . Tell me about a time when you used X?
- d. Tell me about a time when you had trouble working with others.
- e. What have you done to show initiative?
- f. Why do you want to job in the field of X?
- g. What would your last employers say about you?
- h. What interests you most about this position?
- i. Why should I hire you?
- j. Do you prefer working alone or in a group?
- k. What concerns you about this position or company?

### **Specific to Graduate School**

- a. What are your plans if you are not accepted to a program (Plan B)?
- b. What concerns you about graduate school?
- c. Why do you want to go to graduate school?
- d. Tell me what you liked/did not like about your undergraduate program?
- e. How would your professors describe you?
- f. How do you know you are ready for graduate school?

## **6. What types of questions should I ask? Yes, you should have questions prepared.**

### **Specific to Employment**

- a. Is there anything that I talked about today that you would like me to elaborate on?
- b. Why did the interviewer join the company? How long has he/she been there?
- c. What type of training is required for the job?
- d. What will an average day in the job position be?
- e. What makes an employee successful at this company?

### **Specific to Graduate School**

- a. What is the typical student enrolled in the program like?
- b. What are the greatest strengths of this program?
- c. What makes a student successful in this program?
- d. Where do graduates of this program typically work?