

## INTERVIEWING SKILLS

### OBJECTIVE:

Upon successful completion, students will be able to successfully participate in a mock interview.

### CAREER PREPARATION LEARNING RESULTS MET OR PARTIALLY MET:

B.2. Demonstrates job seeking skills.

### SKILLS UTILIZED:

Listening, oral communications, research and organization, business etiquette

### NECESSARY SUPPLIES:

1. Copies of The 5-Part Interview.
2. Copies of Interview Questions to Think About.  
How Are You Rated During the Interview? overhead.  
Copies of the Mock Interview Evaluation form.  
Copies of Sample Thank You Letter.

### TIME REQUIRED:

1- 2 class periods

### LESSON PROCEDURE:

1. Ask students if they have participated in an interview before and what they thought about it. Were they prepared for the interview?
2. Describe how interviews are used.
  - a. Employers making hiring and promotion decisions.
  - b. Colleges making admission decisions.
  - c. Scholarship committees making financial aid decisions.
3. Stress to students the importance of being a salesperson during an interview. The interviewee's goal is to convince the interviewer that they should be selected. Good salespeople know their product. Self-knowledge and the ability to express it are the keys to successful interviewing.
4. Hand out copies of The 5-Part Interview. Walk students through the five stages of the interview process. Emphasize that small details are very important in interviews.
5. Ask students to brainstorm some possible questions for an employment interview and a college admissions interview. Hand out Interview Questions to Think About. After students look over the questions, ask them which ones would be difficult for them to answer.
6. Discuss the importance of promptly sending a thank you letter to the interviewer. Have students review the Sample Thank You Letter. Optionally, have students compose a thank you letter for a hypothetical interview.
7. Wrap up the discussion by showing students the How Are You Rated During the Interview? overhead.

### ASSIGNMENT:

Students will participate in brief (5 - 10 minute) mock interviews to develop skills in the interviewing process. The Mock Interview Evaluation form has been included to provide students with feedback.

### SUGGESTED FOLLOW-UP:

If a video camera is available, it is useful for students to watch their interviews on tape. They could then complete a Mock Interview Evaluation form critiquing their own performance.

## 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

6. 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!
7. Know where you are going. Drive by the site of the interview a day or two before the interview.
8. Arrive 5 - 15 minutes early.
9. 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.
10. 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)

11. Inform the secretary/receptionist that you have an interview, whom it is with, and the time of the interview.
12. 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.
13. 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.
14. When all else fails: SMILE!!
15. 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)

16. Always face the interviewer with good posture and body language.
17. 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

18. Know your resume and portfolio well and be prepared to answer questions about them.
19. Don't be a know-it-all! Express your willingness to learn!
20. Be honest with all answers. Experienced interviewers can see right through "little white lies."
21. Be thorough with your answers. Never answer with just a "yes" or "no." Always provide explanations and examples.
22. If you don't understand the question, ask the interviewer to explain.
23. Pay close attention to what the interviewer is saying.
24. 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.
25. Watch for illegal questions, such as information about your age, religion, race, ethnicity or marital status.
26. 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.
27. 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)

28. Ask the job-related questions you prepared for the interview.
29. 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.
30. 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.
31. Make sure the interviewer knows how best to contact you and that you are available for any additional information that may be needed.
32. 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

33. Send the interviewer a thank-you letter soon after the interview.
34. 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

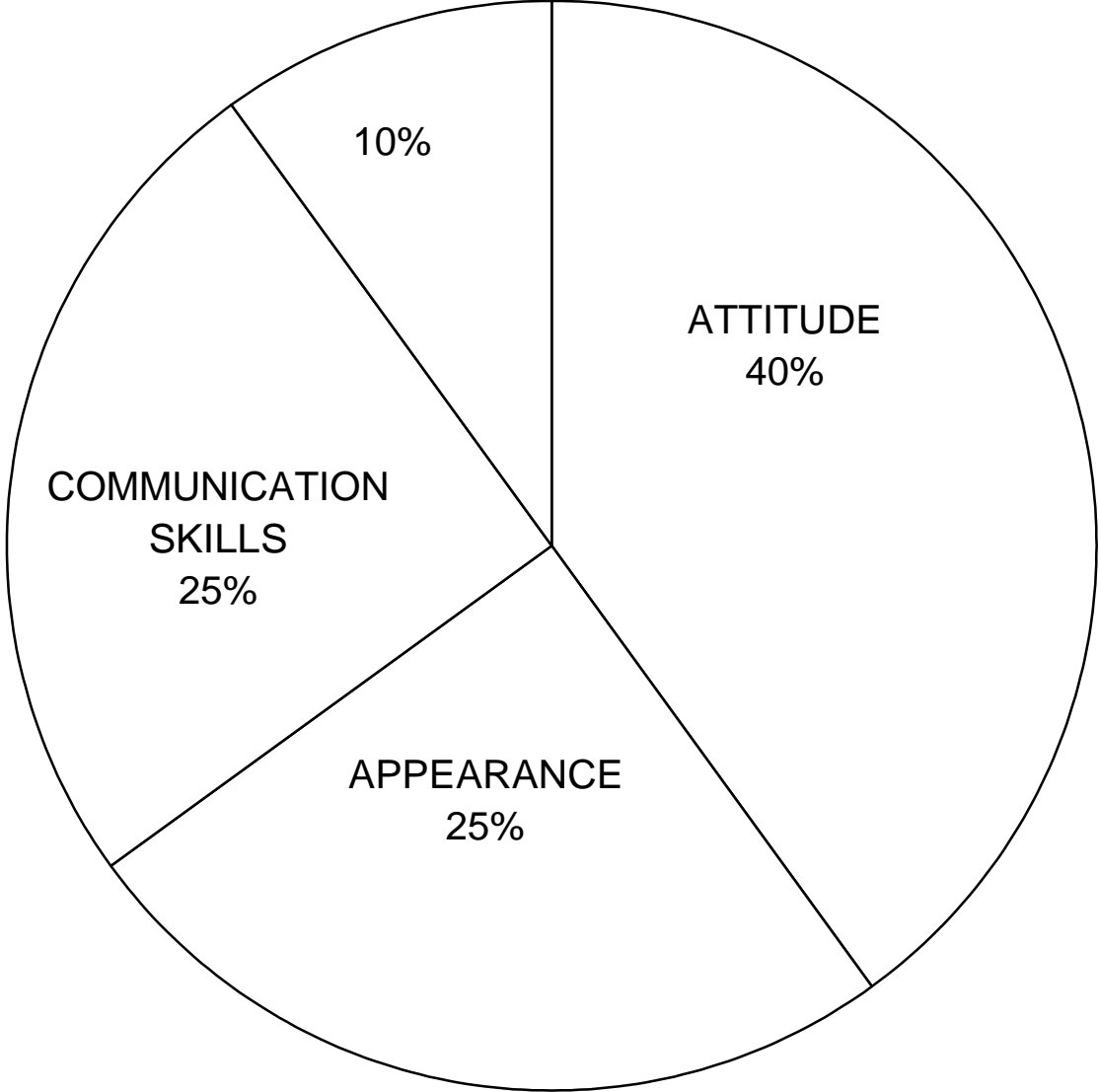
1. Tell me about yourself.
2. What are your short-range and long-range career goals, and how are you preparing to achieve them?
3. Why did you choose this career?
4. What do you consider to be your greatest strengths? Weaknesses?
5. How would you describe yourself? How would a friend or professor describe you?
6. How has your college experience prepared you for your career?
7. Why should I hire you?
8. How do you determine or evaluate success?
9. In what ways do you think you can make a contribution to our company?
10. Describe the relationship that should exist between a supervisor and those reporting to him/her.
11. Describe your most rewarding high school/college experience.
12. If you were hiring for this position, what qualities would you look for?
13. What led you to choose your field or major?
14. What have you learned from participation in extracurricular activities?
15. How do you work under pressure?
16. Describe the ideal job/college.
17. Why did you decide to seek a position with this organization and what do you know about us?
18. What major problems have you encountered and how did you deal with it?
19. What criteria are you using to evaluate the company/college for which you hope to work/attend?
20. What salary do you want?

### Questions Often Asked By Applicants

1. What are the strengths of the organization or department?
2. What are the career opportunities for someone entering this position?
3. What kind of orientation and training is available to new employees?
4. How large is the company/college? How large is this particular department/major?
5. To whom would I be reporting and what kind of communication channels are there?
6. What are the long-range plans for this organization?
7. How long was my predecessor in this position? Why did he/she leave?
8. How will I be evaluated? How often?
9. Is there an opportunity to transfer from one division to another?
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. What is the management philosophy of this organization? What is the general philosophy?
12. In what areas of the organization do you expect growth?
13. Is continuing education encouraged? Is tuition reimbursement offered?
14. Can you tell me about the history of this position, and changes anticipated?
15. What are your expectations of the person in this position?
16. Is overtime the norm in this office?
17. What kind of support staff is available? What is the ratio of support staff to professionals, and how is work distributed?
18. Generally, what percentage of time will be devoted to each of my responsibilities?
19. Do you work with daily, weekly, monthly, or annual deadlines?
20. Does the organization have a process for sharing creative ideas?

# HOW ARE YOU RATED DURING THE INTERVIEW?

## JOB QUALIFICATIONS



## 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

## Sample Thank You Letter

13 Main Street  
Springfield, ME 04007  
June 2, 2003

Mr. Joe Smith  
Saco Defense  
122 Main Street  
Saco, ME 04072

Dear Mr. Smith:

Thanks you for the opportunity to speak with you last Monday about the exciting possibility of an internship position in the Drafting Department at Saco Defense.

After our conversation, I was extremely interested in this apprenticeship and would be proud to work for such a reputable company. I feel confident that my work experience and coursework in drafting would be beneficial to the company.

I am available to provide any other information you may need and am looking forward to hearing from you. Once again, thank you for your time, attention, and interest in me as a potential intern.

Sincerely,

Waylon Smithers