

# INTERVIEW INFORMATION & TECHNIQUES

*Sacramento City  
College*

Career Services

Camie Foster Corley  
(916) 558-2384

<http://sconeston.org>



# **INTERVIEW TIPS**

**THE PURPOSE OF AN INTERVIEW** - The purpose of the interview is to evaluate your Personality, Background, and Qualifications for the job sought. The interview gives you an opportunity to prove to the employer that you are the best candidate for the job. It also allows you to determine whether you want to work for this company. The following seven steps adapted from the video, "The Interview I, Mastering the Job Interview" (JIST WORKS, Inc.) outline the interview process.

## **1. BEFORE THE INTERVIEW**

**RESEARCH** - For any interview, it is important to understand the position and company in which you are interested. Know what the company does, makes, or sells so you will be in a position to show how you will fit into the organization and why it will be to its advantage to hire you. Researching a position involves gathering information through:

- # Visiting the job site
- # Performing informational interviews
- # Viewing Internet information on the company and position
- # Obtaining job descriptions, labor market information and recruitment brochures

**PREPARATION** - Role-playing to prepare for an interview can be extremely helpful. You can practice with a friend or attend an interview practice workshop. Also, be sure you know where your appointment is to be held and arrive early.

**DRESS** - Dress in a manner suitable for the position for which you are applying. It is always safe to dress in a similar style to the employees you observe when visiting the work site.

SELF-ASSESSMENT - What are your skills, interests and abilities. Do they match the needs of the employer? You should know and provide information about yourself relevant to the job for which you are applying. This includes personal, technical and academic skills and abilities.

### **BEGINNING THE INTERVIEW**

- # Enter the room in a quiet, confident manner.
- # When you are introduced, give the interviewer a firm, dry handshake. You will most likely feel nervous, but that is normal. Being well prepared will considerably decrease the nervousness and make you feel more at ease.
- # Think positively about yourself.
- # Maintain good eye contact.
- # Be sure to bring several copies of your resume and your master application along, just in case.
- # Go to the interview alone.

## **2. THE INTERVIEW**

- # Be visibly interested, cheerful and pleasant. Don't forget to smile.
- # Let the interviewer lead with the questioning. Keep your answer related to what was asked (no more, no less) and wait for the next question. Don't try to fill in all the "silence."
- # Be aware of your body language—are you too stiff or too relaxed?
- # **Be a good listener.** Pay strict attention so you understand what is really being asked. If you do not, politely request a repeat or a rephrasing.
- # Answer questions by presenting your related skills. A problem-action-results approach is most effective. Give concrete examples, use numbers, and connect the sequence of events for the employer.

- # Don't interrupt. Sometimes an employer will state a hypothetical situation, then ask the question. Give him time to finish and give yourself time to think before you reply.
- # Don't try to give the answer you think the employer wants. Be honest and consistent. If you think you are right on a point, stick with it; if you are wrong on a point, admit it.
- # **Never gossip or speak negatively about your present or past employers.** By remaining neutral about your previous employer, you can achieve two things: (1) you keep open the possibility for future references or recommendations from this employer (2) you make a strong statement about your character as an employee.
- # Give both technical and personal information about yourself. Your resume tells the employer what you have to offer them: your skills and abilities. In an interview, the employer wants to know more about who you are.
- # Answer questions truthfully but in a non-damaging way.
- # Speak clearly in a moderate voice, smile occasionally when appropriate, and if possible, find ways to use the interviewer's name. Include what you know about the company in your conversation. Remember, employers like to hear complimentary things about their company.
- # Unless the interviewer brings it up, do not discuss the subject of salary until you are offered the position.
- # Think about your answer to each question so it is presented in an organized manner.
- # If it becomes obvious you are not the right person for the job, at the conclusion of the interview ask if there is another area in which you might be qualified. If the organization is small, ask the interviewer if he or she might suggest a place or company who could logically use your services.

## QUESTIONS ASKED BY EMPLOYERS

### PERSONAL QUESTIONS

- # Tell me about yourself.
- # Why did you choose to interview with our organization?
- # Describe your ideal job.
- # What can you offer us?
- # What do you consider to be your greatest strengths?
- # Can you name some weaknesses?
- # Define success; failure.
- # What three accomplishments are you the most proud of?
- # How does your college education or work experience relate to this job?
- # Have you had difficulty getting along with a former professor/supervisor/co-worker? How did you handle it?
- # Have you ever spoken before a group of people? How large?
- # Why should we hire you rather than another candidate?
- # Do your grades accurately reflect your ability? Why or why not?

### EXPERIENCE-RELATED QUESTIONS

- # What job-related skills have you developed?
- # What did you enjoy most about your last employment? Least?
- # Have you ever quit a job? Why?
- # Give an example of a time when you provided a solution to an employer.
- # Give an example of a time when you worked under deadline pressure.
- # How do you think a former supervisor would describe your work?
- # Do you prefer to work under supervision or on your own?

## QUESTIONS THAT REVEAL INTEGRITY/ HONESTY/ TRUSTWORTHINESS

- # What would you do if someone asked you to do something unethical?
- # Have you ever experienced a loss for doing what is right?
- # In what business situations do you feel honesty would be inappropriate?
- # If you saw a co-worker doing something dishonest, would you tell your boss?  
What would you do about it?

## QUESTIONS THAT REVEAL PERSONALITY/ TEMPERMENT/ABILITY TO WORK WITH OTHERS

- # How would you describe your personality?
- # If I call your references, what will they say about you?
- # With what kinds of people would you rather not work?
- # What kinds of responsibilities would you like to avoid in your next job?
- # What are two or three examples of tasks that you do not particularly enjoy doing? Indicate how you remain motivated to complete these tasks?
- # Have you ever had to resolve a conflict with a co-worker or client? How did you resolve it?
- # Describe a perfect relationship between a supervisor and subordinates.
- # How have you worked as a member of a team in the past?
- # What previous job was the most frustrating and why?
- # What previous job was most satisfying and why?
- # Tell me about the best boss you ever had. Now tell me about the worst boss you ever had. What made it tough to work for him or her?
- # What do you think an employer owes you?

## QUESTIONS THAT REVEAL PAST MISTAKES

- # Tell me about an objective in your last job that you failed to meet and why.
- # Tell me about a situation where you abruptly had to change what you were doing.
- # Tell me of a time when you had to work on a project that didn't turn out the way it should have. What did you do?

- # If you had the opportunity to change anything in your career, what would you have done differently?

#### QUESTIONS THAT REVEAL CREATIVITY/CREATIVE THINKING/ PROBLEM SOLVING

- # What have you done that was innovative?
- # What was the most difficult decision you have had to make? How did you arrive at your decision?
- # Were you ever in a situation in which you had to meet two different deadlines given to you by two different people and you couldn't do both? What did you do?
- # What type of approach to solving problems seems to work best for you?

#### BEHAVIOR-BASED QUESTIONS

- # Multi-tasking: Describe to me a situation at one of your previous jobs where you were required to do multiple duties/things at the same time. What were the tasks involved? How did you feel about the situation? How did you accomplish the task?
- # Conflict/coping/attitude: Tell me about a past situation where a co-worker or supervisor gave you constructive criticism on your performance. How did you handle it? What was the result? How does it affect you today?
- # Ownership: Describe a past situation where you feel you performed above and beyond the call of duty. How did that compare to your peers? Describe to me the greatest success you have had in a past work experience. What actions did you take to contribute to that success?
- # Ability to follow directions: Tell me about a work situation where you've had to follow written/verbal instructions to complete a task. Describe your actions when you became confused or unsure about any part of the process. What was the result?
- # Teamwork: Describe a time when you were responsible for completing a project at work as part of a team. What challenges/successes did you have on this project or duty?

- # General: Describe your ideal work environment. Where, in your past experience, did you find an environment that best matches your description? Give me an example of how the work environment affects your performance at work (positively or negatively).

### **QUESTIONS EMPLOYERS SHOULD NOT ASK:**

Unless it pertains directly to your qualifications for a specific position, it is illegal for employers to ask questions about:

- # Age, race, sex, creed or ethnicity
- # Arrest and health records
- # Place of birth
- # Anything regarding religious beliefs
- # Your marital status
- # Plans for children or family members
- # Height/weight
- # Child Care, Disabilities, Transportation
- # Physical conditions in general
- # Past worker's compensation issues

### **3. CLOSING THE INTERVIEW**

- # Know when the interview is over and be sure to thank the interviewer at that time.
- # Ask if there will be a second round of interviews.
- # Review your strengths and skills for the interviewer.
- # Ask any questions which have not been answered yet.
- # If you are interested in the position, let them know it.

- # If the position is offered and you want it, accept it on the spot. If you would like time to think it over, be courteous and tactful when asking for that time. Give a definite date when you will provide an answer. Usually, 24 hours is the appropriate time frame to think about a job offer.
- # Ask for the interviewer's business card so you can write a thank you note as soon as possible.

#### QUESTIONS TO ASK EMPLOYERS

- # What kinds of assignments might I expect the first six months on the job?
- # Does your company encourage further education?
- # How often are performance reviews given?
- # Do you have plans for expansion?
- # How do you feel about creativity and individuality?
- # In what ways is a career with your company better than one with your competition?
- # What is the usual promotional time frame?
- # Has there been much turnover in this position?
- # Do you fill positions from the outside or promote from within first?
- # What qualities are you looking for in the candidate who fills this position?
- # What skills are especially important for someone in this position?
- # What characteristics do the achievers in this company seem to share?
- # Is there a lot of team/project work?
- # What is the next course of action?
- # When should I expect to hear from you or should I contact you?

#### 4. FOLLOW-UP

- # Write a thank-you note immediately after the interview and send it to the interviewer that day.
- # Write down some thoughts about your interview.
- # Make a list of the questions you were asked.
- # Did you do enough research?

- # How can you prepare better for the next interview?
- # Ask when you should expect to hear something.
- # Send any additional information you promised.
- # Call the employer back at the time arranged or two or three days after the interview if you have not heard from them.

#### **4. THE NEGOTIATION PROCESS**

Once you are offered a position, you are in a position to bargain for what you want. Before you begin negotiating you should prioritize what is important to you so you will be able to tell the employer what is and isn't acceptable. Items you might want to negotiate are:

- # Salary
- # Job Title
- # Hours
- # Advancement
- # Benefits

You may want some time to think about whether you want the position after you receive a job offer. It is acceptable to ask for 24 hours to think about the offer. In that case, arrange a date and time when you will call them with your answer.

#### **7. MAKING A DECISION**

When it is over, you are left with the decision of whether or not to accept the job. This involves personal evaluation of the information you have learned about the position.

- # Does it meet all of your needs? It may be helpful to make a list of the pluses and minuses of the position.
- # If you decide to take it, call the employer to let him or her know your decision and arrange a date and time to start.
- # If you decide not to take the job, call the employer as soon as possible and politely decline the position. Remember that while you may not be taking a position with this company at this time, you may want to work for them in the future.

**WHAT ARE EMPLOYERS LOOKING FOR WHEN  
THEY INTERVIEW AN APPLICANT?**

**EMPLOYERS ARE LOOKING FOR EMPLOYEES WHO:**

**UNDERSTAND THE CONCEPT OF TIME:**

Being on Time Every Day! Following Schedules!

**UNDERSTAND MONEY AND HOW TO HANDLE IT:**

Can Keep Records! Understand Employee Deductions!

**KNOW HOW TO WORK WITH OTHERS:**

Participate as a Member of a Team! Negotiate Rather than Argue!

Work Well with Men and Women from Diverse Cultures!

**KNOW HOW TO FIND ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS AND ACT ON  
THAT INFORMATION**

Can Find Answers, Evaluate Information, Create Solutions to Problems!

**UNDERSTAND THE “BIG PICTURE” IN RELATION TO THE JOB AT  
HAND**

Acquire, Evaluate, Interpret, and Communicate Information! Use Computers to Process Information

**UNDERSTAND and WORK WITH THE “NEW” TECHNOLOGY**

Choose, Apply, Maintain, and Troubleshoot Computers and Other NEW Types of Technology  
that Make Work More Efficient!