

INTERVIEWING GUIDE

CSM CAREER CENTER



Colorado School of Mines

INTERVIEWING

All of your time spent working on your resume, the grueling process of composing a convincing cover letter for each position, the networking with friends, relatives, neighbors and faculty, and the repeated emails and phone calls leads to one goal: getting the interview with the company of your choice. It is important to maximize these meetings and conversations.

This guide is designed to help you prepare for these encounters. Remember that a moderate amount of anxiety associated with the interview process is good. Following these guidelines will increase your effectiveness in the interview. Remember, the employer is actually on your side. S/he has a need and has every reason to hope that you will fill it.

Purpose of an Interview

It is important to remember that the purpose of the interview is two-fold:

(1) The employer needs to find out if you are the best candidate for the job

Can you do the job?

- Do you have the appropriate background, including education, skills, and experience?
- Do you have the expertise needed to make you "stand out?"
- Are you able to learn and adapt?

Will you do the job?

- Do you want to work for this company, or do you simply see it as a stepping-stone?
- Are you aware of and honest about your future goals and plans?
- Are you motivated and eager to learn?

Will you fit in?

- Do you work well with others?
- How do you respond to supervision and criticism?
- Do you have the skills to balance where their team is currently weak? Do they like you?

(2) you need to find out if this is a good opportunity for you.

What do I want my typical workday to look like?

What are my career goals for the next five years?

What kind of work schedule do I want?

What kind of work setting do I want?

Am I willing to relocate?

PREPARING FOR AN INTERVIEW

Just as in learning any skill, successful interviewing requires preparation and practice. This is not the best time to try and “wing it.” A successful interview is very much like a sales encounter. If you want to appear that you want the position for which you are interviewing, then you must demonstrate your interest by finding out everything you can about the company and the position before the actual interview.

The kinds of things you should know about the company include:

- How long has the company existed?
- What services does the company provide or what products does it make?
- Who are their major competitors?
- What divisions or subsidiaries exist?
- What is the parent company?
- What geographic areas are covered?
- How many people are employed by the company?
- What are the company's assets and earnings?
- Does the company have any international operations?

This information is available from various sources including the Arthur Lakes Library (both periodicals and reference materials can help -- ask your librarian for assistance), the World Wide Web (many companies have web pages), the Career Center (many companies send us recruiting brochures) and the company itself (don't be afraid to stop by their offices and pick up some information).

The kinds of things you should learn about the interview itself include:

- If possible, know and be able to pronounce the name of the interviewer
- Find out what you can about the format and length of the interview
- Will you meet with a panel?
- Will you meet with several people individually?
- Will you have a lunch meeting?
- Be certain you have clear and precise directions to the interview site (a trial run ahead of time can save you the potentially fatal embarrassment of arriving late)

Create a list of your strengths. From your research of the company and the industry, refine your list of strengths into three to five attributes that a company might want in an employee. Be ready to offer evidence through scenarios and stories. It's up to you to market the connection of your skills to their requirements. Also knowing your “learning edges” and speaking confidently about how you approach challenge is important.

INTERVIEW PREP: WORKSHEETS, NOTES & HELPFUL HOMEWORK

Company Name

Company Web Address

Company Address / home office or local branch address information as applicable

Key contacts / decision makers at the firm

INFORMATION GATHERING

What are the company's main products?

What do you like about this company?

How do the company values align with yours?

What are products or services that interest you?

Who in your network might have done business with or have contacts with this company?

Who are the company's main competitors?

What is this company's position in the market relative to competitors, long and short term economic factors and management reputation?

BE PREPARED

Know your interviewer: HR person, colleague in the firm, hiring manager – can be a combination of any or all players in the firm. Plan your approach for different interviewer audiences: screening, evaluation, team member, decision maker. Find out in advance who you will see.

Do a drive by or assure that the directions to your interview location are good. Plan for the unexpected; add a cushion in advance of your scheduled arrival time.

Questions I want to be prepared to answer:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Questions I would like to ask the employer:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Practice interview questions. Any responses should be short, about 45 to 60 seconds. Answer the question, do not over communicate. Too much information can be hazardous to your outcome or even eliminate you from consideration.

Plan your interview outfit, pressed and polished. Impressions are made or broken in seconds.

Notes:

CREATING YOUR OWN 30-SECOND COMMERCIAL

As a job seeker, you are in charge of a marketing campaign and the product is **you**. One key tool you will use throughout the process is defining who you are, what you are looking for, your skills, expertise and experience. Develop a 30-second commercial, sometimes called a positioning statement.

Communicating to employers what your goals and key strengths are in a clear and concise way is essential to your success in acquiring the job of your dreams. Do not assume that a title and the name of the company you worked for will clearly present who you are and what you have accomplished. Once you have developed your 30-second commercial you can customize it to fit any situation.

Your 30-second commercial can be used in several phases of your job search.

- Networking at meetings, school events, and even leisure activities.
- Use it in phone conversations with potential employers to introduce yourself.
- Integrate it into your resume and cover letter as a summary statement.
- During an interview use it as your point of origin for answering “tell me about yourself.”

Guidelines:

- Be specific – communicate with a defined focus.
- Make your pitch conversational, but not overwhelming with content.
- Emphasize your uniqueness through your skills and shining personality.
- Communicate enthusiasm and motivation.

What to include in your 30-second commercial

- What are you looking for? (describe your dream job, professional career field, fulfilling position)
- Recent education/prior relevant work experience.
- Areas of expertise/skills/accomplishments.
- Include works that emphasize your enthusiasm.

Example:

I'm looking for (an entry-level, senior-level) position to use my mechanical engineering skills. I recently completed my degree at Colorado School of Mines. During my last year, I worked full time at XYZ Firm assisting the partners in planning projects for their clients. I secured this position after I completed a four-month internship. The owner was impressed with my technical skills and offered me a full-time position. Design and development is my thing.

My strongest points are my ability to listen to client needs and come up with unique ways to create solutions for their project specifications.

One of my main career interests is manufacturing in the XXXXX industry. What are the key qualities you firm looks for in a mechanical engineer?

Contributed by Washington Group International
Integrated Engineering, Construction and Management Solutions

How to Dress for an Interview

Good grooming

Check your hair, fingernails, and make-up application. Clothing should be neatly pressed and shoes should be in good condition.

Dress conservatively

The emphasis should be on appropriate dress; there is no rule that fits all people. For male and female professionals, a conservative and properly fitting business suit is recommended. If in doubt, dress up. Jewelry should be limited. Beards and mustaches are generally accepted when nicely groomed.

Types of Interviews

Employers often use a variety of interview techniques and settings to determine your candidacy and hireability. It is to your advantage to be aware of which type of interview you'll be experiencing and how to respond to fit the situation. Following are common interview types and tips for success in each situation.

Campus Interviews

Campus interviews will determine who will be invited for on-site interviews. **Tip:** You must impress the campus recruiter with your enthusiasm for your field of study and your potential.

Screening Interview

Screening interviews may be conducted in person, over the phone, or via video to help employers determine if you meet the minimum qualifications for the position. This type of interview is often used when an organization is considering flying you out to their headquarters for a full round of interviews. These interviews are generally handled by a representative of the HR team and tend to follow a set format. Sometimes a written "personality" profile will accompany this type of interview. **Tip:** Emphasize succinctly and directly that you bring the desired skills/abilities for the position. For phone interviews, keep your notes and portfolio within reach for easy access and reference. In phone interviews, your voice is your only presentation. For video interviews, rehearse in advance with a career counselor to prepare for a natural and focused presentation.

One-on-One Interview

This is the most common interview format and is usually conducted on site by the hiring manager. The interview focuses on questions to assess your skills, knowledge, and abilities specific to the job. **Tip:** In addition to selling your key strengths, ask what problems the supervisor is facing currently and then suggest strategies that he or she could implement to resolve the issue.

Panel Interview

Three or more people, representing varied departments within the company, typically conduct group interviews. These representatives generally ask you questions that relate to their areas of interest and expertise. **Tip:** Remember to direct your answers to the person who asks the question, but maintain eye contact with other members of the group as well. Gather business cards from the group. Place the cards in front of you in the configuration of the people in the room to remember names and key in to their represented functions. Following the interview, send a thank you note to each of the participants, personalizing with comments or questions specific to that individual or division.

Peer Group Interview

This type of group interview will introduce you to your potential co-workers. These team members will not have the ultimate authority to hire you, but each person's input has influence. Each will be evaluating you and making recommendations about your fit with the group and the company.

Tip: Focus on being agreeable and approachable rather than someone with all the answers.

Luncheon Interview

The purpose of a lunch interview is to assess how well you handle yourself in social situations. You will probably be dining with your potential boss and co-workers along with HR professionals.

Tip: Make your meal selection carefully. Select light, healthy and easy things to eat. Steer clear of spaghetti or any other potentially messy foods that are not easy to eat gracefully. Do not order alcohol even if others do.

Second Interview or Series Interview

The series interview consists of consecutive interviews with three or more people in the organization, all in one day. The interviewers may consist of someone from personnel, the person who will be your boss, two or three people from the department, and someone from a different department. You may have a combination of individual, panel and peer group interviews throughout the process. The focus of the second interview is to ensure you have the necessary skills and that you will blend well with the organization's culture. The key to performing well in this interview is to know in advance that you will be having it; advance warning will give you time to get mentally prepared.

Tip: Switch your focus from emphasis on your specific strengths to selling yourself as a well-balanced package. Listen carefully to the interviewers to determine any underlying concerns and attempt to dispel them. Prove that you've researched the company and demonstrate that you will work as a dedicated member of the organization.

Qualities Employers Evaluate During the Interview

- Self concept, self confidence, goal setting, realistic assessment of strengths and limitations
- Mature behavior and judgment
- Communication skills, the ability to interact with others, the ability to listen actively
- Leadership potential, often demonstrated in extra curricular activities and on the job
- Personality, enthusiasm, poise, cheerfulness, flexibility, sense of humor
- Patterns of accomplishment
- Problem solving and analytical abilities
- Interest in and knowledge of career field
- Work ethic, acceptance of responsibility, ability to keep commitments
- Appearance, dress and grooming

Discriminatory Questions

In general, all questions relating to personal background or family history must be asked of both male and female applicants seeking similar positions and must be specifically job-related. Questions about marital status and family plans are normally aimed at determining the student's long-range career commitment but, while the underlying reason for these questions may be legitimate, the overt questions are not.

When you are asked a question which you consider to be discriminatory, it presents a real problem. Although the question may not be legal, refusing to answer it may make the employer think you cannot handle the job. The best approach is to give a calm, rational answer to the CONCERN rather than the QUESTION:

Q - How will your spouse feel if you are away from home several nights a month?

A - I have given my career plan much thought and preparation. I am confident my personal life will not interfere with my job.

Questions such as the following require an answer because they reflect on how confident you are of your career choice and ability to do the job:

"Do you know how dirty a foundry is?"

"How deep a mine is?"

"How will you feel if all your customers/co-workers are men?"

"Can you lift a 94 lb. sack of cement?"

In addition, statements such as, "No man will buy machinery from a woman" need a positive, but not argumentative response.

If you have any problems in this area or any concerns about the way your interview was conducted, please see the Career Center staff immediately to discuss the situation.

HANDLING ILLEGAL QUESTIONS

By Rochelle Kaplan

Various federal, state, and local laws regulate the questions a prospective employer can ask you, the job candidate. An employer's questions—whether on the job application, in the interview, or during the testing process—must be related to the job you're seeking. For the employer, the focus must be: "What do I need to know to decide whether this person can perform the functions of this job?"

If asked an illegal question, you have three options:

- You can answer the question—you're free to do so, if you wish. However, if you choose to answer an illegal question, remember that you are giving information that isn't related to the job; in fact, you might be giving the "wrong" answer, which could harm your chances of getting the job.
- You can refuse to answer the question, which is well within your rights. Unfortunately, depending on how you phrase your refusal, you run the risk of appearing uncooperative or confrontational—hardly words an employer would use to describe the "ideal" candidate.
- You can examine the question for its intent and respond with an answer as it might apply to the job. For example, the interviewer asks, "Are you a U.S. citizen?" or "What country are you from?" You've been asked an illegal question. You could respond, however, with "I am authorized to work in the United States." Similarly, let's say the interviewer asks, "Who is going to take care of your children when you have to travel for the job?" You might answer, "I can meet the travel and work schedule that this job requires."

The following are examples of some illegal questions and their legal counterparts.

Inquiry Area	Illegal Question	Legal Questions
National Origin Citizenship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you a U.S. citizen? • Where were you/your parents born? • What is your "native tongue"? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you authorized to work in the United States? • What languages do you read/speak/write fluently? (This question is okay only if this ability is relevant to the performance of the job.)
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How old are you? • When did you graduate? • What's your birth date? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you over the age of 18?
Marital Family Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What's your marital status? • With whom do you live? • Do you plan to have a family? When? • How many kids do you have? • What are your child-care arrangements? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would you be willing to relocate if necessary? • Would you be able and willing to travel as needed for the job? (This question is okay if it is asked of all applicants for the job.) • Would you be able and willing to work overtime as necessary? • (These questions are okay assuming it is asked of all applicants for the job.)

Inquiry Area	Illegal Question	Legal Questions
Affiliations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What clubs or social organizations do you belong to? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> List any professional or trade groups or other organizations that you belong to that you consider relevant to your ability to do the job?
Personal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How tall are you? How much do you weigh? (Questions about height and weight are not acceptable unless minimum standards are essential for the safe performance of the job.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are you able to lift a 50-pound weight and carry it 100 yards, as that is part of the job?
Disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you have any disabilities? Please complete the following medical history. Have you had any recent or past illnesses or operations? If yes, list them and give dates when these occurred. What was the date of your last physical exam? How's your family's health? When did you lose your eyesight? How? Do you need an accommodation to perform the job? (This question can be asked only after a job offer has been made.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are you able to perform the essential functions of this job? (This question is okay if the interviewer has thoroughly described the job.) Can you demonstrate how you would perform the following job-related functions? As part of the hiring process, after a job offer has been made, you will be required to undergo a medical exam. (Exam results must be kept strictly confidential, except medical/safety personnel may be informed if emergency medical treatment is required, and supervisors may be informed about necessary job accommodations, based on exam results.)
Arrest Record	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have you ever been arrested? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have you ever been convicted of _____? (The crime named should be reasonably related to the performance of the job in question.)
Military	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you've been in the military, were you honorably discharged? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In what branch of the Armed Forces did you serve? What type of training or education did you receive in the military?

Reprinted from Job Choices for Science, Engineering, & Technology Students: 2006, with permission of the National Association of Colleges and Employers, copyright holder. Reprint permission is granted solely for one-time use; further or other uses of the material, including revisions, future editions, ancillary aids, and derivative works, requires separate permission.

PLEASE NOTE: Permission to reprint NACE materials does not extend to an electronic (or online) version of this publication. Permission to reprint electronically, including on a password-protected web site, is not available.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Practice

In order to improve or enhance your communication skills, make an appointment to video tape a practice interview in the Career Center. Seeing yourself on tape and having the interview critiqued by an experienced – and friendly – counselor can be one of the most effective ways to prepare for an interview.

Behavioral Interviewing

In this sort of interview, the interviewers tend to ask questions about general situations, with the candidate asked to describe how they did or would handle a specific problem. The goal of the interview is to assess the candidate's ability to respond to the sorts of situations that the job may present them with. The questions asked will therefore be based on the job description, the performance indicators, the skills/personal qualities required and the interviewer's knowledge of operating in the role. Questioning will usually be based on historical examples from your current or previous experience ('when situation X arose, how did you deal with it?'). Either way, the interviewer is interested in (a) the thought process used and (b) the values of the candidate and the outcome of the situation.

Behavioral interviewing techniques evaluate a candidate's experiences and behaviors to determine potential for success. The approach is based on the premise that your past performance is the best predictor of your future performance. You can anticipate questions to assess fact-based, past behavior (e.g. what did you do, tell me about a time when...) rather than subjective judgment of theoretical answers (what would you do if...)

A rating system is often developed and selected criteria are employed during the interview. As a candidate, you should be prepared to answer the questions and statements thoroughly. Prepare for responses using the Situation – Action – Result model.

Situation – what you encountered

Action – how you responded

Results – what you achieved

- Develop and write out many such examples from your courses and work experiences.
- Develop anecdotes or scenarios that demonstrate your strengths. Use the questions to follow as your guide. If you do not have a ready reply for the specific question, stay cool, smile and ask if you could think a bit and come back later to respond to that question.
- Behavioral interviewing can be stressful. Good preparation will boost your confidence.

GET READY TO TELL YOUR STORY

Companies devise behavioral or competency-base questions to mine your past performance based on common dimensions expected by most employers.

SAMPLE RESPONSE:

“Give an example of a time when you demonstrated initiative.”

For my senior project, I was working with a team of five students to design a roofing system for condominiums in Vail, CO to handle high snow and wind loads. **(S)** As the project progressed it appeared that the original design parameters provided by the contractor (our client) were not realistic for this area of the country.

Rather than design a system that wouldn't work, I spearheaded a meeting between our design team and the contractor to discuss our findings and possible solutions. **(A)** The contractor listened, provided feedback, and encouraged us to re-calculate the design parameters using the new methodologies and local data. **(R)** Although it was many hours of additional work, we implemented the contractor's recommendations and our team felt very proud of delivering an excellent quality product to our client.

FOCUS AND DEDICATION TO THE INDUSTRY

1. Why did you choose this major and career?
2. At what point did you make this decision
3. What attracts you to this industry as a career? Be specific.

TECHNICAL AND PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE

Your level of understanding of technical and professional information and your ability to apply technical and professional skills.

1. Sometimes it's easy to get in over your head. Describe a situation where you had to ask for help or assistance on a project or assignment

Situation	Action	Result
-----------	--------	--------

2. Give an example of how you applied knowledge from previous coursework to a project in another class.

Situation	Action	Result
-----------	--------	--------

3. Describe how you went about learning a new technical skill.

Situation	Action	Result
-----------	--------	--------

TEAMWORK/COLLABORATION

Working effectively with others in the organization and outside the formal lines of authority (i.e., peers, other units, senior management and the like) to accomplish organizational goals and to identify and resolve problems. Considering the impact of your decision on others.

1. Describe a situation where others on your project team disagreed with your ideas. What did you do?

Situation	Action	Result
-----------	--------	--------

2. Describe a time where your results did not meet your supervisor's expectations. What happened? What action did you take?

Situation	Action	Result
-----------	--------	--------

3. Talk about a situation where you worked with a colleague who did not complete their share of the work. Who, if anyone, did you tell or talk with about the challenge? Did the manager take any steps to correct the colleague? Did you agree or disagree with the manager's action?

Situation	Action	Result
-----------	--------	--------

4. Describe a scenario in which you had to arrive at a compromise or guide others to one?

Situation	Action	Result
-----------	--------	--------

5. Have you held leadership roles in extracurricular activities? How did you lead?

Situation	Action	Result
-----------	--------	--------

6. Talk about your best boss. Why? Your worst boss. Why?

Situation	Action	Result
-----------	--------	--------

COMMUNICATIONS

Clearly expressing ideas in writing—including grammar, organization and structure.

1. Tell of a time when your active listening skills really paid off for you, maybe a time when other people missed the key idea being expressed.
Situation Action Result
2. What has been your experience giving presentations to small or large groups? What has been your most successful experience in speech making?
Experience Steps to presentation Result
3. What difficulties have you encountered in trying to communicate technical information?
Situation Action Result
4. Tell me about a time when you were most persuasive in overcoming resistance to your point of view.
Situation Action Result
5. Give me an example of a time when you first resisted a change at work and then accepted it.
Situation Action Result

WORK STANDARDS

Setting high goals or standards of performance for self, subordinates, others and the organization.
Experiencing dissatisfaction with average performance.

1. Compare and contrast the times when you did work which was above the standard with times when your work was below the standard.
Above standard Below standard
2. Describe some times when you were not very satisfied with your performance. What did you do about it?
Situation Action Result
3. What are your standards of success in school/work? What have you done to meet these standards?
Situation Action Result
4. How have you differed from your professors in evaluating your performance? How did you handle the situation?
Situation Action Result

JOB MOTIVATION

The extent to which activities and responsibilities available in the job overlap with activities and responsibilities that result in personal satisfaction.

1. Give examples of your experience at school or in a job that were satisfying.
Situation Why?
2. Give examples of your experience at school or in a job that were not satisfying.
Situation Why?

3. **What are your standards of success in your school?**
Describe and define.
4. **What have you done to meet these standards?**
Cite examples.
5. **What conditions are most frustrating to you?**
Describe and define.
6. **Describe the last goal you set for yourself that you feel particularly proud of. What happened?**
Note the details.

INITIATIVE

Making active attempts to influence events to achieve goals. Self-starting rather than passively accepting. Taking action to achieve goals beyond what is necessarily called for, originating action.

1. Describe some projects or ideas (can or cannot be your own) that were implemented, or carried out successfully primarily because of your actions.
Idea Role in implementation Result
2. Describe a situation that required a number of things to be done at the same time. How did you handle it? What was the result?
Situation Action Result
3. Tell me about a situation where you were able to make a difference, where something was accomplished that would not have been if you were not there.
Situation Action Result
4. Can you think of a scenario you had to handle in which old solutions did not work?
Situation Action Result
5. Talk about your most innovative or creative project or assignment. What did you do that was resourceful? How did it turn out?
Situation Action Result

ANALYSIS / PROBLEM ASSESSMENT (DEFINING)

Relating and comparing data from different sources, identifying issues, securing relevant information and identifying relationships.

1. What steps do you follow to study a problem before making a decision?
Situation Action Result
2. We can sometimes identify a small problem and fix it before it becomes a major problem. Give an example (s) of how you have done this.
Situation Action Result
3. In a supervisory or group leader role, have you ever had to discipline or counsel an employee or group member? What was the nature of the discipline? What steps did you take? How did that make you feel?
Situation Action Result
4. Recall a time from your work experience when your manager or supervisor was unavailable and a problem arose. What was the nature of the problem? How did you handle that situation? How did that make you feel?
Situation Action Result

- Describe a situation in which you had to collect information by asking many questions of several people.

Situation Action Result

- Have you recognized a problem before your boss or others in your department/team?

Situation Action Result

- Describe the most difficult trouble-shooting challenge you faced?

Situation Action Result

- What is the hardest thing you have ever done?

Situation Action Result

JUDGMENT / PROBLEM SOLVING

Using past experience, knowledge, and sometime intuition to quickly and clearly identify the crux of the issue or situation at hand. Identify a “game plan” or process by which to develop best solution(s).

- What kinds of decisions do you tend to make rapidly, and which ones do you take more time to determine?

Cite examples.

- Tell me about a decision you have made which was the wrong one, and what you did about it.

Situation Action Result

- Give an example of a time when you used logic to solve a very difficult problem. Cite a situation where you had the longest time to consider a decision before making it. Why was it difficult? What were your alternatives? Was this a good decision in the end?

Situation Action Result

ADAPTABILITY

Assimilating and applying new job-related information properly.

- What tricks or techniques have you learned to make school or a job easier? How did you learn that skill?

Situation Action Result

- What tricks or techniques have you learned to make yourself more effective? How did you learn that skill?

Situation Action Result

PLANNING & ORGANIZING / WORK MANAGEMENT

Establishing a course of action for yourself (and/or others) to accomplish specific goals. Planning proper assignments for personnel and appropriately allocating resources.

- How do you determine priorities in scheduling your time? Give examples.

Priority How determined Result

- Describe a time in school when you had many projects or assignments due at the same time. What steps did you take to get them all done?

Situation Action Result

3. Tell me about a time when your course load was heaviest. How did you get all your work done?

Situation	Action	Result
-----------	--------	--------

4. If you are balancing work with full-time school, how do you prioritize your activities?

Situation	Action	Result
-----------	--------	--------

5. We all encounter situations where something just “slips through the cracks.” Can you give me an example of when this happened to you? Cause? Results?

Situation	Action	Result
-----------	--------	--------

CUSTOMER SERVICE ORIENTATION

Making efforts to listen to and understand the customer (both internal and external), anticipating customer needs and giving high priority to customer satisfaction.

1. Talk about the most difficult customer service experience that you have handled, perhaps an angry or irate customer. Be specific and tell what you did and what was the outcome?

Situation	Action	Result
-----------	--------	--------

2. Give an example of how you anticipated a customer need (internal or external) and the steps you took to meet it.

Situation	Action	Result
-----------	--------	--------

SENSITIVITY

Acting out of consideration for the feelings and needs of others.

1. Give an example of when you had to work with someone who was difficult to get along with. Why was this person difficult? How did you handle that situation?

Situation	Action	Result
-----------	--------	--------

2. Describe a scenario where you found yourself dealing with someone who did not like you. How did you handle it?

Situation	Action	Result
-----------	--------	--------

PRACTICAL LEARNING

Assimilating and applying new job-related information promptly.

1. Describe a course in which you felt challenged. How did you do? What did you learn from the experience?

Situation	Action	Result
-----------	--------	--------

2. Describe a time when you had difficulty learning something complex?

Situation	Action	Result
-----------	--------	--------

3. Tell me about a situation in which you were able to treat a negative experience as a learning opportunity?

Situation	Action	Result
-----------	--------	--------

KEY BEHAVIORS / PERFORMANCE SKILLS

You may be evaluated on these skills and behaviors.

Adaptability	Analysis	Attention to detail
Communication – oral	Communication – written	Control
Decisiveness	Delegation	Development of subordinates
Energy	Entrepreneurial insight	Equipment operation
Fact finding – oral	Financial analytical ability	Flexibility
Impact	Independence	Initiative
Innovation	Integrity	Judgment
Leadership / Influence	Listening	Motivation
Negotiation	Organizational sensitivity	Participative Management
Planning and organizing	Practical learning	Presentation skills
Process operation	Rapport building	Resilience
Risk taking1	Safety awareness	Sales ability / persuasiveness
Sensitivity	Strategic analysis	Stress
Teamwork/collaboration	Technical/professional knowledge	Technical/professional proficiency
Tenacity	Training	Work standards

COMMON QUESTIONS YOU MAY BE ASKED

- What are your long-range and short-range goals and objectives and how have you prepared yourself to achieve them? What do you see yourself doing five years from now?
- Why did you choose the career for which you are preparing? What led you to choose your field of major study?
- In what jobs have you been most interested? Why? (Summer, Co-op, or part-time)
- Why did you choose your college? What college subjects did you like best? Why? What college subjects did you like least? Why? What changes would you make in your college or university?
- What do you expect to be earning in five years? Do you have a minimum salary for which you will work?
- Do you think your grades are a good indication of your academic achievement? What is your GPA? Why is your GPA so low?
- Why should I hire you?
- In what ways do you think you can make a contribution to our company?
- Why are you interested in this industry? Our company?
- What do you think you will be doing in this job you are applying for?
- What kind of person do you think this job requires and how do you match those requirements?
- What questions do you have about our organization?
- What are you looking for in an organization?
- How would you describe the ideal job for you following graduation?
- What do you know about our company?
- Are you willing to spend at least six months as a trainee?
- What geographic location would you prefer? Why do you want to work there?
- Are you free to relocate?
- What constraints do you have about relocation?
- How do you feel about traveling?
- How would you describe yourself?
- What do you consider your greatest strengths? Weaknesses?
- How do you work under pressure?
- What are your major accomplishments? Your failures? Your disappointments? What did you learn from each of these?
- Do you have plans for continued study and/or an advanced degree?
- How would your friends describe you?

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR INTERVIEWER

Asking targeted and intelligent questions in an interview demonstrates that you have done your homework and research and are motivated to do well if you land the job. Here are some sample questions recruiters like to hear from students.

1. What do you do in a typical work day? In a typical work week?

Ask this question in your interview with a hiring manager. It shows that you are enthusiastic about the company and want to know about life on the job.

2. Why did you choose to work for this company?

This question gives the recruiter or hiring manager the chance to “sell” the company and gives you an idea of why someone else picked this firm.

3. If I am hired, where do you see me best suited, which area or division?

If you have learned about the company, its products and departments from their website, be sure to incorporate that information. Again, this question demonstrates your research preparation and interest.

4. What is the natural career progression or path for employees with my skills?

This question shows that you are thinking about the future and would be interested in staying with the company, progressing within.

5. Does your organization have a coaching or mentoring program?

Through your answer, you indicate your desire to continue to learn and grow.

6. What kind of internal and external training do you provide?

Your question demonstrates a desire and willingness to stay current in the marketplace develop professionally.

7. How would you describe your company’s culture?

This question offers an opportunity for you and the recruiter to evaluate if you and the company are suited for each other.

8. Does your organization use strategic planning? How often? Who participates? Does the firm have a strategic plan in place?

This question shows that you have considered how organizations work and understand the value of strategic direction.

9. What is your company’s policy on sustainable development? (Defined as maintaining a delicate balance between the human need to improve lifestyles and feeling of well-being and preserving natural resources and ecosystems, on which we and future generations depend.)

This query helps determine your interest in the company and its long range approach.

10. What is the compensation range for this position? (*always ask using a range*)

Be sure this is not the only question you ask the interviewer. Pose it within other questions about the company. If the salary range is posted and known, it is best not to ask at all. This is best reserved until a secondary interview or until the interviewer raises the topic of salary.

MORE QUESTIONS YOU MAY WANT TO ASK IN AN INTERVIEW

During the interview you will usually be given the opportunity to ask questions. You should be prepared with questions about the organization that will help you make an intelligent decision about accepting a job offer. The questions will vary according to the type of employer and the type of position. Questions about benefits, vacation, etc., are better asked after a job offer has been made.

The following are suggestions of questions that might be appropriate to ask:

- Do you have a formal training program? How long is it? Could you describe the type of training?
- How will my performance be evaluated, and how often?
- How is the present economic situation affecting your organization?
- What are your plans for expansion in terms of product lines, services, new branches, etc.?
- How would you differentiate your company from your major competitors?
- What do you consider to be the major challenges to the industry today?
- What is the next step? Will I be hearing from you or should I contact you?
- What is expected of new hires?
- What are the company's most difficult challenges in the year ahead and how does the firm plan to overcome them?
- How will I know that I have met your goals?
- How often do managers conduct performance evaluations?
- How would you describe your company's management style and decision making habits?
- How do you help workers balance their personal and professional lives?
- What kinds of people are most satisfied working for your company?
- What is the staff turnover ratio? Why do you think people leave?
- What are the company's values?
- Does this position have room for growth and advancement?
- How is the company positioned against the competition?
- What does success mean to you?

Ending the Interview

At the close of the interview, you'll want to make certain that you will be remembered.

1. State your interest in the position, and summarize how you would be a "good match" for this position. Do this by summarizing your top three skills, based on the skills the interviewer feels are important.
2. Be certain that you ask what the next steps are in the interview process. Find out what stage they are currently in, and when you could expect some kind of a response.
3. Be certain that you use a firm handshake, a confident smile, and maintain eye contact.
4. Get the interviewer's business card so you can send a thank you letter.

Thank-You Letter

Send a thank-you note. Restate your interest in the job, summarize key points of the interview, and add further information to help your case. This simple courtesy can make the difference between selection and rejection. Sending a thank-you note, even one as short as three sentences, can be one of the most important things you do. When employers receive thank-you notes, they immediately remember you. Sending a note makes you stand out positively because so few people send them. Thank-you notes can be handwritten or typed, and mailed. Email notes are acceptable as well.

Evaluation

Right after an interview is the best time to do a self-evaluation. You can review the entire process and determine your plan for following up and your plan for making any adjustments for corrections to your preparation and practice steps.

Evaluating the company and the position

- What skills and qualities is this employer looking for? Do I possess all of them? How could I better sell those skills in my next interview?
- What do I like and/or dislike about the job or company?
- What information about the job or company do I still need in order to determine whether would accept an offer?

INTERVIEW CHECKLIST

ITEMS FOR MY REVIEW:

- Arrived early for the interview.
- Dressed appropriately; clean, pressed clothing; shoes shined.
- Presented a firm handshake.
- Presented a professional image.
- Prepared for interview by knowing resume inside and out.
- Prepared for interview by knowing the skills required.
- Prepared for the interview by knowing the company's products/services.
- Prepared for the interview by researching company's problems, strengths, and possible plans for the future.
- Maintained good eye contact.
- Spoke with authority and confidence.
- Conveyed enthusiasm about the job. Appeared relaxed.
- Adjusted the volume of your voice and the accentuation of words.
- Did not laugh inappropriately (nervous laughter).
- Did not fidget or squirm. Good posture.
- Presented a natural, not stiff or rigid, posture and appearance.
- Body language supported what you were saying.
- Demonstrated good listening skills.
- Presented your skills and abilities well, and gave a concrete personal example of how the skills were used.
- Presented your benefits to the employer well, indicating how you would apply that benefit directly to the company.
- Clarified any misunderstandings that may have arisen.
- Gave examples from your experience to illustrate skills and benefits.
- Gave interviewer the impression that you were prepared for this interview.
- Communicated to the employer the reasons why you are applying to and chose this company.
- Thanked the interviewer for the interview.
- Complimented the interviewer, the company or the office.
- Indicated commitment to the position.
- Projected confidence that you are the right person for the job.
- Asked what the next steps in the selection process will be and when they will be.
- Made sure you have the interviewer's name for the after-interview letter. (Ask for his/her business card.)
- If asked about your weaknesses, expressed them as areas of skills that you are working on. Showed a plan for improvement, using an example.
- Showed excitement and enthusiasm.
- If given the opportunity, asked questions of the interviewer to help you gain further knowledge about the position, the company, and the organization's structure, work climate, stability, etc.
- If given the opportunity, provided additional qualifications that you have that either you forgot when asked earlier, or feel a need to elaborate or expound upon.
- Honestly presented your qualifications for and commitment to the position.

25 COMMON REASONS FOR EMPLOYER REJECTION

1. Poor personal appearance
2. Lack of interest and enthusiasm
3. Overemphasis on money
4. Weak handshake
5. Late to interview
6. Indefinite responses to questions
7. Inability to express oneself clearly (poor voice, diction, grammar)
8. Lack of planning for career -- no goals or purpose
9. Lack of confidence and poise; failure to look interviewer in the eye
10. Unwilling to start at bottom -- expects too much too soon
11. Makes excuses; evasive -- hedges on unfavorable factors on record
12. Lack of tact
13. Lack of manners, courtesy
14. Lack of maturity
15. Lack of vitality
16. Merely shopping around
17. Wants job only for a short time
18. Cynical
19. Low moral standards
20. Intolerant; strong prejudices
21. Failure to ask questions
22. Timid; lacks sufficient degree of assertiveness
23. Overbearing; overaggressive; conceited
24. Not prepared for interview; no research on company
25. Lack of knowledge of field of specialization; not well qualified