Preparing to Interview

The key to conducting a successful interview is good preparation. In interviewing, it is not always the best qualified candidate that gets the job offer. More often than not, it is the best prepared.

The following are some basic steps to follow which will help you ready. When preparing don’t leave anything to chance! If you have questions or need help, get in touch with your Career Counselor.

BEFORE APPLYING

Before you even apply for the job, make sure:

A. You meet the minimum interview requirements
B. The job fits what you are looking for

Before beginning your job search, make a list of what is important to you in an employer and job. Include in your list any geographic or work schedule restrictions. Then do some preliminary research on potential employers to see how they match up to your list. If they require relocation and you’re not willing to move, or if you can’t accommodate the employer’s work schedule, don’t waste your time – and theirs – by applying.

Also remember that minimum interview requirements are just that – requirements. If you don’t meet the criteria they won’t interview you, so don’t bother to apply.

TWO WEEKS OR MORE PRIOR TO THE INTERVIEW

Make sure you have appropriate clothing for the interview. If you haven’t worn your suit in awhile, try everything on to make sure it still fits. Remember, over half of any interview is visual and if you are to be successful, you must make a positive and professional visual impression of yourself.

The following are some specific recommendations for interview dress:

MEN:

- Dark, conservative business suit (navy or charcoal)
- Starched and pressed white, long sleeve dress shirt
- Color coordinated tie – cinched up and tied to the proper length (the bottom of your tie should reach an area between the top and bottom of your belt buckle)
- Conservative, black, shined dress shoes (lace-ups are best)
- Conservative black dress belt
- Dark socks
- Well groomed – shave and get a haircut!

WOMEN:

- Dark, conservative business suit (black, charcoal or navy)
- Conservative blouse color – not too bright or flashy
- Conservative, black, shined dress shoes (NO OPEN TOES and not too high in the heel)
- Dark or neutral hose
• Minimum and very conservative makeup
• Clear nail polish only

EVERYONE:

• Minimum of jewelry (NO piercings other than one optional set of stud earrings for women)
• Minimum or no cologne or perfume
• No accessories brought to the interview except:
  o A professional business portfolio
  o A small conservative purse for women
• Cover visible tattoos

ONE WEEK PRIOR TO THE INTERVIEW

You’ve already done some preliminary research on the organization you’ll be interviewing with. Now it’s time to do the major research. Dig in and find out everything you can about the company and about the job. Don’t just visit the company web site – read articles, earnings reports and even visit the employer if you can. Remember, your knowledge of the company and job will be extensively probed during the interview.

Once you’ve done your research, start compiling a list of questions to ask the interviewer. Remember that for you, the interview is not a fact-finding mission, it’s a sales presentation! Focus your questions on things that will send positive messages about you, your knowledge of the organization, your career goals and especially how your career goals fit with the employer’s needs and goals.

Also, now is the time to start formulating your answers to the questions you anticipate might be asked. Review the job description thoroughly and identify the “core competencies” of the job. Once you’ve found the core competencies, think of two or three examples of positive, successful experiences you’ve had in each area. This will make answering the questions much easier, as you’ll already have your answers ready ahead of time!

Read the Career Services article; “Competency Based Behavioral Interviewing” to better understand the type questions you’ll be asked and how to respond.

1 – 2 DAYS PRIOR TO THE INTERVIEW

If you’re interviewing at the employer’s place of business, drive to the location, preferably at the same time of day in order to see what the traffic flows are like. Determine exactly how to get there and how long it will take. Also check out the parking situation.

Review your research notes, questions to ask and practice the responses you’re going to give to potential questions. Don’t forget to brush up on your non-verbal communication skills and practice/rehearse the initial introduction – a critical part of any interview.

THE NIGHT BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

Get to bed early and get a good night’s sleep! If interviewing in the morning, make sure your alarm clock is set.

THE DAY OF THE INTERVIEW

Get up in plenty of time so you won’t have to rush. Pay close attention to grooming and cleanliness when getting ready. Check yourself in the mirror after getting dressed.
Leave in plenty of time to get to your interview on time. If you get there early, just sit in your car and review your notes, then make your entrance about 15 minutes prior to the scheduled interview time.

Whether interviewing on or off campus, **SHOW UP ON TIME!** No-shows and tardiness are big hot buttons with all interviewers and are not tolerated!

**AFTER THE INTERVIEW**

Send a “thank you” note to everyone you interacted with during the interview.

**CONCLUSION**

Remember, the key to success in interviewing is good preparation! To get the job offer you must allocate the time necessary to get yourself ready. Also remember that interviewing is highly competitive. You are competing against others for the job offer. It is not enough to do well, you must be better than the others that are also interviewing for the job!

The University Career Center has many tools which can help prepare you. If you have not yet done so, schedule yourself for a Group Mock Interview, make an appointment with your Career Counselor and make use of all the other resources we offer.

*Good luck* and let us know if we can help in any way!

[www.utsa.edu/careercenter](http://www.utsa.edu/careercenter)