# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is an Interview?</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why is an Interview so Important?</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation Before the Interview</td>
<td>2-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Interview Look</td>
<td>8-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing Materials</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Location</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Telephone Interview</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Interview</td>
<td>11-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Interview Questions</td>
<td>14-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing the Interview</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After the Interview</td>
<td>21-22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**CENTER FOR STUDENT SUCCESS**  
**CAREERS**

63 Fifth Avenue, 4th floor, 419  
(212) 229-1324  
careers@newschool.edu  
www.newschool.edu/careers  
http://newschoolcareers.blogspot.com
WHAT IS AN INTERVIEW?

An interview is a conversation with a representative from a potential employer. The employer is looking to find out more about your experience and personality and how you may fit with his/her organization. This is an opportunity for you to market yourself and your abilities, as well as find out if you feel the organization suits your needs.

WHY IS AN INTERVIEW SO IMPORTANT?

• An interview gives you an opportunity to personally communicate the skills and personal qualities that you will contribute to a potential employer/organization.

• It is a chance to expand on and highlight the most important aspects of your resume while adding a personal touch through dialogue.

• Interviews are important because it is the employer's opportunity to assess your understanding of the professional environment and area of work.

PREPARATION BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

The majority of the interview process is preparation. This section will discuss what you need to know about yourself and the organization before you enter an interview.

Know Yourself

One of the keys to effective interviewing is the ability to articulate your positive qualities and attributes to the interviewer. It stands to reason that part of your preparation will be to know what these qualities are. Remember, you won't have time for self discovery during the interview. This knowledge must be gleaned in advance.

There are several strategies you can employ to help you collect information about yourself. They include:

• Analyzing the information on your resume
• Asking others who know you well
• Using the exercises on the following pages

SELF-DISCOVERY ACTIVITY

I. List 5 strengths (skills or personality traits) and areas for improvement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Areas of Improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
II. Give a brief example of how you have used each of your strengths in a work or personal situation.

1. ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

2. ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

3. ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

4. ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

5. ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

Give a brief example of how you are working on your areas of improvement.

1. ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

2. ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

3. ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

4. ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

5. ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
III. What are three important things that you want an interviewer to know about you?

1. ________________________________________________________________
2. ________________________________________________________________
3. ________________________________________________________________

IV. Why do you want to work in the field you have chosen?

______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________

V. State three questions that you hope an interviewer does NOT ask you.

1. ________________________________________________________________
2. ________________________________________________________________
3. ________________________________________________________________

How would you respond to these questions?

1. ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

2. ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

3. ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
The best approach to preparing for an interview is to apply the S.T.A.R.S. method when constructing your success stories. Success stories are examples from your work, school or life in which you demonstrated initiative, leadership or teamwork skills to solve a problem or make a decision. Complete the following exercise based on the example:

S  **SITUATION:** Describe what happened; its context; how big, interesting or otherwise impressive; your use of timing and organization; and the interpersonal situations involved. Ex: “Both cashiers called in sick and I was asked if I would handle the cash register even though I had not been trained in its use.”

T  **TASK:** The objective, assignment or problem to be solved. Ex: “I agreed and was assigned to the cash register for the entire day.”

A  **ACTION:** How YOU accomplished the task. Ex: “I had a very brief emergency training session from the manager and handled all sales until the evening cashier came in.”

R  **RESULTS:** Use numbers, what the result means for the organization or for you. Ex: “When they reconciled the totals at the end of the day, they found that I hadn’t made any errors. The manager was impressed and eventually moved me from the stock room to the cashier’s desk.”

S  **Skills/Attributes illustrated:** Highlight the skills you utilized. Ex: “Through quick decision-making, I demonstrated to the management my skill in handling new and stressful situations.” This may be written or inferred.

This frame can help you effectively answer any questions that can be answered with an example from your past experience. It is also highly effective for behavioral questions (see page 12), and can help you think about a personal pitch. (See the following.)
Personal Pitch

The personal pitch is the keystone of your job search. It is useful in informational interviewing, networking, or answering common interview questions, such as, “Tell me about yourself.” It will help you clarify your job target and marketable skills. The written version of a personal pitch is called a positioning statement, which is used in your resume and/or cover letter.

The most basic essence of a personal pitch is:

- Who I am
- What I’ve Done
- What I Want

Example: My name is John Doe, and I have a B.A. in Liberal Arts from The New School. I’ve been in the field of marketing for about two years and love the industry. I love working with creative people on challenging projects. At this point in my career, I’m looking to take on more clients and work with a different client base than I have in the past.

Here is an additional activity to help you create your personal pitch step by step:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Current Student</th>
<th>Alumni</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 1</strong></td>
<td>Your name&lt;br&gt;Program of study, degrees held&lt;br&gt;School(s) attended</td>
<td>Your name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 2</strong></td>
<td>Job Target: Role, industry, where, when? I’m ready for a new challenge in “x” role.</td>
<td>Job Target: Role, industry, where, when? I’m ready for a new challenge in “x” role.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 3</strong></td>
<td>Work background (paid, unpaid, internship)</td>
<td>Work background (paid, unpaid, internship)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 4</strong></td>
<td>Areas of expertise, strengths. What do you do better than your competitors?</td>
<td>Areas of expertise, strengths. What do you do better than your competitors?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 5</strong></td>
<td>Languages spoken</td>
<td>Graduate degree&lt;br&gt;Program of study&lt;br&gt;Languages spoken</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Communication

Practice your communication skills before an interview. Here are few key things to try and remember:

- Avoid inarticulate filler words and phrases, such as “um,” “like” and “you know.”
- Use correct grammar and strong vocabulary.
- Check your nonverbal skills. See the S.O.L.E.R. acronym on the next page.
- Get comfortable talking about yourself as the main topic! This will take practice. People are sometimes shy or less inclined to talk about themselves, but if you do not sell yourself, who will?
- Practice stating your selling points with emphasis and enthusiasm.
- Practice relaxation techniques.
- Practice in the mirror and with others.
- Set up a mock interview with the Office of Career Development.
Know the Organization

The most common negative feedback from employers is that candidates have not researched the company enough before the interview. Lack of knowledge about the company and industry is seen as a lack of professionalism and/or interest in the job.

- Thoroughly review the company’s website.
- Conduct internet searches to find other company or industry-related articles and information. (Check out: www.findarticles.com or Google the company).
- Call the organization and find out how you can get a copy of annual reports and recruiting literature.
- For larger employers, get information from web sites such as www.hoovers.com
  www.vault.com
  www.wetfeet.com
- If you are unable to locate information (sometimes the case for smaller organizations), call the employer and ask them to send you information on the organization.

Some of the questions you might want to address in your research of employers and their industries include:

- Is this in the educational, service, or public sector?
- What services or products are sold?
- Who are the leading companies in this industry? (Know something about their competition).
- Is this a growing or declining industry?
- How might this industry be affected by shifts in the economy? Shift in the political climate?
- Is this a public or private organization?
- Is the company local, regional, national or international?
- What is the size and environment/culture of this organization?
- What are the company’s values?
- What skills and attributes are necessary for the position you are applying for?

THE INTERVIEW LOOK

You only get one chance for a first impression so the clothes you wear need to be appropriate. The first thing the interviewer will notice is the way you are dressed. Most employers make assumptions about interview candidates within the first few seconds of meeting and this includes attire. With this in mind you need to look your best from the moment you step into the interview room.

Appropriate interview clothing will generally be, for men and women, a business suit. Remember that you are marketing yourself so you want to be dressed as well as possible. In general, dress more formally than what the job requires -- even if you are aware that standard dress code on the job is business casual.
By the way, not only will the employer be impressed, but the way you dress can affect your state of mind. The better you look, the better you will feel about yourself and the better you feel, the more confidence and enthusiasm you can project to the interviewer. Below are some hints on putting together your interview look.

**The Men’s Look**
- Navy, gray, or dark olive suits are appropriate for an interview. Darker color suits project more accomplishment and are therefore preferred. Consider colors which look best on you. Avoid suits with a noticeable pattern. Wear a solid white or light blue dress shirt. We suggest tab collars rather than button down -- this is more formal and the collar usually sits better.
- Wear socks high on your calves so that no skin will show if you cross your legs. Wear polished leather shoes in a color that compliments or matches your suit.
- Your tie should be silk. Ties can be conservative or bold. Gauge the expressiveness of your tie by the field you will be entering. For example, you would not wear a very bold and graphic tie to an interview within the financial industry, however, this type of tie may be more appropriate for a graphic artist.
- Your hair should be short, neat and clean. Any facial hair should also be trimmed and neat.
- Do not wear earrings or other visible body piercings. If you choose to wear any of this jewelry, be sure it’s not distracting. Earrings and body piercings should not be large.

**The Women’s Look**
- For most settings, choose a classic suit in a conservative color, such as navy or black. Make sure you choose a suit that fits well. If wearing a skirt, select a skirt length that is fashionable but covers most of your thighs when you are seated. For more creative fields, feel free to add tasteful jewelry or scarves to your outfit; bolder colors and trendier styles may work as well.
- Keep the blouse simple and subdued.
- If your hair is long, tie it back or wear it up, and keep it neat. If you wear nail polish, make sure it is not chipped and that the color is either clear or light.
- Wear only a few pieces of jewelry. Keep earrings small and remove visible body piercings. Keep make-up conservative.
- Pantyhose, even in summer, are a must.
- Open-toed shoes are not appropriate. Wear closed-toe pumps. Make sure you break in the shoes before wearing them and are comfortable with the heel size.

**Personal Hygiene**
Another part of the physical preparation for an interview involves your personal hygiene. On the day of your interview, make sure you shower, wash your hair, and use deodorant. Do not overuse perfume or aftershave, since some individuals are sensitive to these odors and allergic to them. If you smoke, do not do so immediately before the interview and be aware of any smoke odors on your clothes. If possible, brush your teeth or use mouthwash or a breath mint immediately before an interview.

**MARKETING MATERIALS**
- Always bring extra copies of your resume, cover letter, and reference list printed on resume paper to an interview.
• Invest in a portfolio from Staples, Office Max, or a stationery store in leather or a similar material. You can have your directions and questions written on the pad inside and your resume and other materials neatly kept in the side pocket.

• If you are an artist, you will want to have a variety of work represented in a portfolio. If appropriate, show work in as many different media as possible. These entries can be organized into subject matter categories or by medium.

### INTERVIEW LOCATION

Obtain directions before the day of the interview and bring them with you. You may want to practice getting there a few days in advance. Be sure to allow plenty of time for unexpected traffic.

- If you are traveling by **car** check out: *Yahoo! Maps or Mapquest.*
- If you are traveling by **subway or bus** check out: [www.hopstop.com](http://www.hopstop.com)

### THE TELEPHONE INTERVIEW

Employers often conduct telephone interviews as a method of screening candidates prior to deciding whether they are qualified for a face-to-face interview. Phone interviews may be scheduled in advance, or some employers will conduct a phone interview without prior notification to see how you handle yourself when you are caught slightly off-guard. Keeping this in mind, you always want to answer the telephone with a positive, professional attitude. Also, make sure your answering machine greeting is professional and includes your first and last names. You should treat this interview the same as an in-person interview in terms of answering questions and personal attentiveness. Be sure to remove yourself from any distractions when having a phone interview!

### THE INTERVIEW

Overall, you may be nervous, which is normal. Many interviewers expect their interviewees to be nervous. An interview is an important event in a person's life. If you find yourself suffering from anxiety, try taking a few deep breaths. Most people become relaxed after a few minutes. Discover personal ways to manage anxiety before your interview, and remember: it's just a conversation.

#### Upon Arrival

Try to arrive about 10-15 minutes early. This will give you enough time to introduce yourself to the receptionist, fill out any necessary applications or paperwork. It will also give your interviewer enough time to shift gears and get his or her mind into interviewing you. Wait patiently in the waiting area and remember that the interview started the moment you stepped into the office, so try to compose yourself. Be aware that the receptionist who greets you may also influence the hiring decision-maker, so be on your best professional behavior.

#### Meeting Your Interviewer

*The verbal greeting.* Many interviewees botch this up, not by saying the wrong thing, but by giving THEIR greeting at the wrong time. Remember that the interviewer is inviting you into
Interviewing

their office. Accept the invitation and presentation of themselves by *listening first*, waiting for their introduction, and then responding with your own greeting, such as, "Nice to meet you Mr./Ms.__________." Too many interviewees end up talking over, or talking at the same time as, the interviewer. Remember, listen first, and then respond.

*The handshake.* Your handshake should be straight on, about waist level, firm and confident, but not crushing. Try to avoid shaking hands with your fingertips.

**Managing Non-Verbal Messages - S.O.L.E.R.**

There are a few tips to remember as you begin the interview process that will make you aware of negative verbal and non-verbal skills that often send a message. Use this acronym as a guide:

- **Sit squarely**
  Be sure to have your whole body face the interviewer indicating that you are attentive and alert.

- **Open posture**
  Be sure to maintain an open posture with the interviewer with arms at your side or neatly folded. Crossed arms may indicate that you are nervous or reserved.

- **Lean forward**
  Be sure to lean forward in your chair and not slouch. This indicates you are listening and interested in what the interviewer as to say.

- **Eye contact**
  Be sure to maintain eye contact with the interviewer. This indicates that you are attentive.

- **Relax**
  Most importantly, maintain your composure. Fidgeting and excessive hand gestures indicate you are not relaxed and probably not listening well.

*Engaging in small talk.* Many interviewers will begin the interview with some small talk. Topics may range from the weather to sports and will rarely focus on anything that brings out your skills. Nonetheless, you are still being evaluated. Interviewers are trained to evaluate on many different points and may judge you on how well you communicate on an informal basis. You don’t need to know everything about sports or the weather, but be prepared to do more than smile and nod. You can practice this with your career counselor in addition to reviewing interview questions.

**Responding to the Questions**

In this section, we will provide you with preparation tips and sample questions to work on, as well as make you aware of questions that interviewers should not be asking. Whatever question you are asked, remember: The only way to become proficient in formulating effective responses to questions is to *practice, practice, and practice*.

Here are tips on preparing your responses:

1. **Keep your answers brief and concise, but colorful and complete.** Limit your responses to one or two minutes per question. Practice with a friend or tape yourself to see how long it takes. You also want to provide enough memorable information to make the response stand out.
2. **Include concrete, quantifiable data.** Interviewees tend to speak in generalities. However, you need to paint a vivid picture about who you are and what you know. This means being more specific. Include memorable details, buzzwords, and numbers in your response, where appropriate.

3. **Repeat your key skills, qualifications, and characteristics.** Realize that by repeating key ideas you will be continually associating your name and face with your marketability.

4. **Prepare success stories.** Use these stories to exemplify your key skills, qualities, and characteristics. These stories will help the interviewer remember you. Always give examples of your strengths and successes.

5. **Expect the Unexpected.** You may be asked unusual questions to see how you react. For example, surprise questions could range from “Tell me a joke” to “What time period would you like to have lived in?” The best advice is to think and give a natural response. One good strategy for dealing with a more complex question is restating it to the interviewer and clarifying before answering.

6. **Accentuate the Positive.** You should be prepared to discuss parts of your resume that are not emphasized or are questionable such as lack of extra-curricular activities or time in between jobs. Always discuss the positive points for example: a lack of involvement in extra-curricular activities may have been a result of you working two jobs after school to pay for college. In certain cases you may have no related work experience, but plenty of other experiences show you to be a loyal and valued employee with important skills to attribute to an organization.

7. **Ask questions.** Develop and be able to ask meaningful, intelligent questions. This can make a tremendous impression on the interviewer. This is where the organizational research we asked you to perform in the beginning of this handbook will come in handy. This is a good time to ask about professional development and growth within the organization. Feel free to ask these questions any time during the interview where it seems appropriate. See examples later on in this guide.

8. **DO NOT ASK ABOUT BENEFITS OR SALARY.** Remember that an interview is about what you can do for the organization and why the organization should invest in you and your skills, NOT about what the organization can do for you. Reserve these questions for after you receive an offer. See our Salary Negotiations Resource Guide for more information on this issue.

### THE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

There are 5 types of interview questions. Being able to identify each of these question types will aid you in answering the interviewer completely and accurately.

1. **Behavioral Questions**

These questions will assess how you acted in a particular situation. The interviewer will ask you to describe a particular situation, and how you handled it. Another way for the interviewer to ask this question would be for him or her to ask you to describe a situation in which you used a certain quality or skill. To answer, you need to describe the situation, explain how you handled it, and how the example illustrates the targeted skill. Think of your answer as a story, one with a beginning, middle and a (positive) ending.
The S.T.A.R. Method discussed earlier is especially effective for answering behavioral questions.

**Situation** - Describe the situation.
**Task** - What needed to be done? How did I need to become involved?
**Actions** - What did I do specifically? What steps did I take to address/deal with the situation?
**Results** - What were the outcomes? What did I learn?

Example:
“Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a difficult customer. How did you handle the situation?”

**Situation** "While working as a salesperson for Deluxe Caterers, I was given an account that had been mishandled by our company in the past. When this customer came in to place a large new order, she was angry, expressing dissatisfaction with past service and asked us to guarantee superior work this time around."

**Task** "I wanted to maintain this customer relationship, but also to not promise service we could not deliver and compound the problem. I expressed regret to her over past service problems and told her I would review her order in detail with my supervisor and get back to her within 24 hours."

**Action** "I scheduled a meeting with my supervisor and we reviewed her order, identifying potential pitfalls, resulting in our adjusting the services we could provide. I then returned the customer's call, negotiated a new contract, and faxed it to her."

**Result** "While the customer was a little disappointed that we could not provide everything she wanted, she appreciated my being honest about what we could do. In the end both parties were happy."

2. **Hypothetical Questions**
These questions set up a situation that you may have never encountered before. Your goal is to formulate an intelligent, reasonable response to the best of your ability.

For example, John is interviewing for a teaching position at a secondary school:

**Interviewer**: Imagine that you are faced with a situation in which a parent comes to you and accuses you of treating their child unfairly in class. What would you do?

**John**: I would immediately set up a meeting with the student and his or her parent. Before the meeting, I would review my interactions with this student over the term thus far. Any data that seemed relevant would be kept at hand for the meeting. I would then listen actively to the parent and student. I would try to consider whether I had indeed, albeit inadvertently, not been fair. I would summarize the main points of concern back to the parent and student to be sure they knew they had been heard. Then I would present my thinking about each point supporting it with any evidence. I would then ask the parent and student what they recommended as solutions, and try to find the common points. If the parent, the student, and I were unable to resolve the issue comfortably, I would invite an administrator to serve as a facilitator and mediator in a second meeting.
3. Controversial Questions
This kind of question is a difficult one to answer. In this question, the interviewer will ask for your opinion about a current topic in your field. You need to make sure you are knowledgeable about the current events and issues in your field. Read professional journals or attend professional organization meetings to discover what is current and controversial. The best way to handle a question like this is to acknowledge the sensitivity of the question then take a middle-of-the-road approach giving pros and cons of both sides of the issue. By doing this you avoid getting on the "wrong side" of the issue.

For example, Jennifer is interviewing for a spot in medical school:

Interviewer: Jennifer, what do you think about the endeavor taken up by Dr. Kevorkian?
Jennifer: Well, it certainly has been a controversial and complicated topic. The topic of assisted suicide can be argued in many different ways. I know that many people would rather end their life than suffer with a horrible illness. However, there is clearly a valid concern for misuse and wrongful death issues. My true hope is that medicine in the new millennium will be able to tackle chronic pain and terminal illness more effectively so that fewer people will need to consider these kinds of drastic measures.

4. Technical Questions
These questions assess your theoretical knowledge of the field you would like to enter, or in which you already work. These questions can be about procedures, processes, or methodologies important to your chosen field. An accountant candidate may be asked about the way they would log a certain entry in a ledger. A psychologist candidate may be asked about handling a client in a particular theoretical framework. And a computer systems analyst candidate may be asked about certain servers.

For example, Jeanine is interviewing for a position in the information technology industry:

Interviewer: Jeanine, please tell me about the software you are proficient in and what you have used each application for.
Jeanine: I am proficient in Microsoft Office and Windows NT. I used MS Access to develop a student database of pertinent information for a career development office I worked in. I have also used Access for SQL programming. Using Excel I was able to enter analytical data into spreadsheets for a research project. I also used Excel to create graphs for the same project. My proficiency with Windows NT allowed me to become the server administrator and information systems manager of a medium sized accounting firm.

5. Vague Questions are the final set and are about your personality, skills, attributes. These questions come in a variety of forms and certainly this information is also being collected through the questions identified above. Vague questions can leave a lot of room for you to show your stuff. This is an excellent time to utilize the S.T.A.R. technique.

For example, Jimmy is interviewing for a photographer's position at a major metropolitan newspaper:

Interviewer: So, Jimmy, tell me about yourself.
Jimmy: Well, Mr. White, I love photography. My interest started when I was in my high school's photo club. I continued to take pictures for my university's newspaper and won an award among major universities for Best Photography on an expose I covered called "Real Life Superheroes". In this expose, I photographed local firefighters and police
officers in the line of duty. I went to the fires and rode with the police to get the pictures. I love taking pictures of people doing things and of major events. I am assertive and will do anything to get the shot needed for a piece. I like to take risks, so being in the center of the action to get the right shot is where I will be. My artistry allows me to take exciting, eye catching photographs, especially for a front page! Finally, I have been involved with both my high school and university newspapers in editing and know what it takes to put together a newspaper, including meeting deadlines and working late hours to complete an issue.

GENERAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What are your major strengths/weaknesses?
2. How is your previous experience applicable to the work we do here?
3. What are your long/short term career goals/objectives? How are you preparing yourself to achieve them?
4. What are your interests outside of work?
5. Why do you want to work here?
6. Tell me about yourself.
7. What were some of the most important events or decisions in your life?
8. Tell me about a time when you had a crisis at work. How did you handle it?
9. What do you consider to be your major accomplishments?
10. Give me an example of your leadership ability.
11. What do you see yourself doing five years from now?
12. What motivates you to put forth your greatest effort?
13. How do you work under pressure?
14. What prompted you to choose your major?
15. What do you know about our organization?
16. What qualifications do you have that make you think you will be successful in this job?
17. In what ways do you think you can make a contribution to this organization?
18. Describe the relationship that should exist between a supervisor and those reporting to him or her.
19. What criteria are you using to evaluate the organization for which you hope to work?
20. Define cooperation.
22. What have you learned from your mistakes?
23. How do you determine or evaluate success? Describe your ideal supervisor and your least ideal supervisor.
24. How has your school experience prepared you for this career?
25. How would a friend or professor describe you to others?
26. If you were hiring for this position, what qualities would you look for in a candidate?
27. How well do you adapt to change?
28. Describe your work ethic.
29. What else can you tell me about you that will help in considering your application?

TYPICAL DISCRIMINATION and ILLEGAL QUESTIONS

For the most part, good interviewers know not to ask these questions. However, sometimes interviewers are not aware that these types of questions may lead to perceived bias in the hiring process. In the event that you are asked one of these questions, it is best not to be
argumentative and to respond to the question the best you can (possibly using some of the strategies indicated below), evaluating the organization if and when the position is offered. Here are some possible questions and responses:

Questions about your home/family life
Do you have any plans for having children/ a family?
I don't know at present. I plan on a career and believe my career will be successful with or without a family.

What are your marriage plans?
If you are concerned with my ability to travel or my commitment to employment, I can assure you that I have no problem meeting any of the job responsibilities.

What does your husband/wife do?
I am interested in working because... What my husband/wife does is not relevant to my career goals.
OR
My husband's/wife's career and mine dovetail. He/She has helped me become more effective as a..., and I have helped him/her become better as a....

What happens if your husband/wife gets transferred or needs to relocate?
My husband's/wife's career will not interfere with my own career.
OR
My husband/wife and I would discuss relocation at that time. At present our jobs are where we wish to live.

Who will take care of your children while you are at work?
I have made arrangements so that my family life will interfere as little as possible with my work.

How do you feel about working for a woman/man?
This would be no problem. I have effectively worked with both men and women in the past.

Questions about your age
How old are you? OR What is your date of birth?
I wish to be evaluated on my skills, competence and experience. Age is irrelevant.

How would you feel working for a person younger than you?
Age does not interfere with my ability to get along with others. I am adaptable and respect superiors who are knowledgeable and competent.

Questions about your national origin
Where were you born? OR Where were your parents born? OR Of what country of origin are you a citizen?
I am a permanent resident of the United States and have legal permission to work here.
OR
I am quite proud that my background is... My heritage has helped me to deal effectively with people of various ethnic backgrounds.

Questions about a disability
Do you have any disabilities? OR As a person with a disability, what help are you going to need in order to do your work? OR How severe is your disability?
Any disabilities I may possess would in no way interfere with my ability to perform all aspect of this position.

OR

Actually, I don't need help doing my work because I have been adequately trained. What I need might be minor adaptations of the workstation. *Additionally you can discuss how your disability has helped you develop certain qualities.*

*However, an interviewer can ask, “What accommodations will you need to perform this job?” This is different from the illegal question above as it does not call attention to the disability itself.*

**Questions about your religion**

What is your religion? OR What church do you attend?

My religious preferences should have no relationship to my candidacy for this job.

Do you hold any religious beliefs that would prevent you from working certain days of the week?

No.

OR

(if your response is Yes) Yes, I do, however, I am able to work other days of the week to make up for it.

**Questions about your race or color**

Do you feel that your race/color will be a problem in your ability to perform this job? OR Are you of ______________ heritage/race?

I have extensive experience working with people from a variety of backgrounds. A person's race, whatever it may be should not interfere with the work environment. OR I do not feel I should be judged based on race or color.

---

**TYPICAL LEGAL QUESTIONS**

There are a few legal questions that an employer has the right to ask verbally or on an application. These include:

- Have you ever been arrested?
- Have you ever filed a workers' compensation claim?
- Have you ever been a target of sexual harassment?
- Have you ever been found guilty of sexual harassment?

---

**TOUGH QUESTIONS**

If you are asked what you feel to be a difficult question, try not to get defensive. Slow the process down by taking a deep breath and practicing relaxation techniques. Then, answer the question by stating the facts, be confident and be competent. If this pertains to an illegal question, or one you are not comfortable answering, you don’t have to answer. You can say, “Why do you ask?” or “I’m not comfortable answering that, may I ask how this pertains to my eligibility for this position?”
QUESTIONS FOR THE INTERVIEWER

If there are questions that were not answered during the interview, it gives you another opportunity to discuss your skills, interests and experience that will make you the best candidate for the position. It also demonstrates your listening skills and continued interest in the organization. It is always good to prepare some of these questions for the interviewer. Assuming that they went over a lot of things in the interview and you are well aware of your duties from the job description, here are few other things you may want to know:

1. What is the corporate culture here like?
2. Will I be working closely with other interns/staff members?
3. How often are meetings held?
4. How long have you been with the company? What do you like best about working here?
5. Is there room for growth in this position and if so, what kind?
6. What is your evaluation or feedback policy like?
7. What qualities and skills are you looking for in a candidate?
8. What kind of growth opportunities exist here?
9. Can you tell me more about the training program?
10. Is there any travel required with this position?

CLOSING THE INTERVIEW

Often the conclusion of the interview is indicated when the interviewer stands up. This is a good time to ask about the process going forward. What is the next step in the interview process? When can you expect to hear from them next? Ask for a business card. Say good-bye with a smile and a firm handshake and thank them for the opportunity to meet with you. Remember that the interview isn’t over until you walk out the door and leave the premises.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

After the interview, analyze the meeting and make notes while the information is still fresh in your mind. Note the difficult questions you were asked, suggestions made by the interviewer, and any pertinent organizational information given by the interviewer.

The following tasks may mean the difference between receiving or not receiving an offer:

1. Send a thank you letter within 48 hours after the interview. Not only will it appear thoughtful, but it will reiterate your interest in the position, and restate your qualifications.
2. If an employer asked you to call him/her back at a certain time -- DO IT! Don't ruin a possible opportunity by not following up.
**The Thank You Letter**

This letter need not be long or too formal. It can be in the form of an e-mail, regular letter, on personal stationery, or in a card. It should be addressed to the interviewer, or the head interviewer if you interviewed with more than one person on the same day. The letter should:

- Thank the person for the interview and show appreciation for considering YOU for the particular position.
- Re-emphasize your interest in them and the position
- Rephrase your background and briefly explain how your experience can compliment the requirements of the job.
- Indicate that you intend to follow-up the letter with a telephone call to determine if and when the employer wishes to see you again. This last point should be used with caution as this may not always be appropriate.

If the position for which you interviewed is not the position you really want, consider sending a thank you letter anyway indicating that. A letter of this kind projects professionalism and politely helps the employers refocus their energies elsewhere. Let the organization know you would be interested in future positions more suited to your interests, skills and qualifications.
Sample Thank You Letter

Patricia Bartig
231 Libson Avenue
Buffalo, New York 14214
917-887-6532
bartigp@hotmail.com

January 12, 1999

Mr. Mike Charles
Manager
General Switch Gear
35 South Castle Rock Road
Buffalo, New York 14260

Dear Mr. Charles:

It was a pleasure to meet and talk with you on Tuesday morning regarding the engineering position available at your company. I appreciate the discussion we had about the company and the position.

I have given considerable thought to the problems you described that challenge General Switch Gear and feel certain that I can produce the results you want in a short time period. My experience in production and design will be extremely valuable in this respect. The broad exposure I gained while assembling and designing relays, starters, motors, and control panels has enabled me to solve many problems requiring adaptations of standard products.

I am extremely interested in the job and convinced that this is just the opportunity I have been seeking. I plan to call you on Thursday afternoon to find out if a decision has been made regarding my candidacy. Again, thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Patricia Bartig