

Family Employment Readiness Program

Certificate of Completion

has successfully completed

Instructor

Date

your Career

Pretest

INTERVIEWING SKILLS

Last four digits of your social security number _____

True or False

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
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| T | F | 2. Behavioral, screening, social events and one-on-one interviews are common types of interviews used today. |
| T | F | 3. An interviewer MAY ask you about a disability if it has impact on the position you are seeking. |
| T | F | 4. Sometimes interviewers will ask you wild, or off-the-wall type questions like what kind of animal you'd like to be to see how you respond. |
| T | F | 5. Arrive at least an hour before your interview. |
| T | F | 6. A smile and a firm handshake are important. |
| T | F | 7. Discuss your salary requirements early in the interview so if it's too low, you're not wasting time. |
| T | F | 8. Employers expect you to negotiate salary and benefits when they offer you a job. |
| T | F | 9. Hand writing a "Thank You" note after an interview is appropriate. |
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Interview Questions

Common Questions

Q. Tell me about yourself.

A. This is a common introductory question for many interviewers. It gives you an opportunity to market yourself. Concentrate on job-related accomplishments and information; this is not the time to talk about your personal life.

Q. How would your previous supervisor(s) describe you?

A. Focus on qualities such as being “a team player,” “organized,” “thorough,” “have initiative”, etc.

Q. How have your education and experience prepared you for this job?

A. Discuss how your education has given you the tools to succeed, and experience has given you the opportunity to apply your education.

Q. What made you decide to apply for this position?

A. Indicate how your interest and skills, and abilities match the job description. You may also state that you’ve heard positive things about the company.

Q. Why did you leave your last position?

A. Answers such as relocation, career enhancement or advancement, or pursuit of educational goals are all acceptable responses. Try to stay away from words such as “fired”, “terminated”, or “personal reasons”, Avoid saying anything negative about previous employers. If asked about your relationship with a previous employer concentrate on positive traits. For example: Your previous supervisor may not have been a very good supervisor, but they may be an excellent public speaker.

Q. What do you know about our organization?

A. Do your research! Get company information from the Internet, company brochures, people who work for the company, etc.

Q. What can you bring to our organization?

A. Discuss job-related accomplishments. Emphasize experience, skills, training, machine proficiency, etc., that will help the organization.

Q. What are your salary expectations?

A. You may reply with a salary range which you have researched for your career field and geographic location. Or you may reply with your own question such as, "I would hope to receive a salary that your company finds fair for a person with my skills and abilities. What is the salary range for this position?"

Try to avoid mentioning salary until you have a firm job offer. Remember, pay isn't everything. Being able to move up the career ladder once you are in the organization may pay higher dividends in the long run.

Salary can also come in the form of benefits. Negotiate for:

- Additional annual leave, sick leave, paid holidays, education leave, etc.
- Health benefits.
- Insurance (life, long and short term disability).
- Paid parking.
- Retirement plan, stock options, 401K.
- Merit promotions, pay raises, bonuses.
- Tuition or training reimbursement.

Q. What are your strengths and weaknesses?

A. Start with a weakness. Identify a problem area and then tell how you are working on the problem. For example: "My typing speed is not as fast as I'd like it to be, but I am taking an evening typing class at the local college to increase it". Try to avoid work-related weaknesses.

Talk about three strengths. They can be:

- Education or training.
- Skills that relate to the job.
- Abilities that will enable you to get the job done.
- Personal qualities such as honesty, enthusiasm, dependability, high energy, hard working, positive attitude, etc.

Provide a work-related example for each strength.

Q. How long do you plan to stay at our company? Or where do you see yourself in five years?

A. Stress performance in doing the best job possible in the new position. Concentrate on gaining additional knowledge and experience so that you can become more valuable to the company.

For longer term goals, emphasize completion of educational goals and certifications that directly apply to the position.

Q. What major problems did you encounter in your last job and how did you overcome them?

A. Tell a success story of a past accomplishment, remembering to always stay positive. Never criticize former co-workers.

Q. What other types of jobs or companies are you considering?

A. Remain vague by saying that you have a couple of other “irons in the fire”, but that the company you’re interviewing with is your first choice.

Q. What do you do in your spare time?

A. Don’t include any dangerous activities such as skydiving or drag racing, but do have a couple of activities you do for fun so that you’ll look well-rounded.

Q. Do you have any questions?

A. Prepare a list of four or five questions. Ask:

- When will a decision be made?
- Who will I report to?
- What will be the major focus of the job during the first few months?
- What additional information do you need from me to make me your candidate of choice for this position?

Q. Describe a time when you worked on a project as part of a group or team.

A. Include information on:

- Goal of the project.
- What went well.
- Your role.
- What challenges you faced and how you overcame them.

Q. Tell me about a situation in which you had to resolve a conflict.

A. Try to give a work or volunteer experience. Do not use a family conflict. Clearly list the steps you took to resolve the situation. Include how you know that you succeeded.

Q. Talk about a project that you had either at work or school. Describe in detail how you managed it.

A. The goal of this question is to see if you can organize your work load and meet deadlines. Include information on planning for the unexpected.

Tough or Illegal Questions

Unless directly related to job performance, questions in the following areas are illegal to ask:

- Age. The only permissible question is whether the applicant is over the minimum legal employment age of 18.
- Arrest Record.
- Citizenship/Natural Origin. Questions relating to citizenship, lineage, ancestry, national origin, descent, birthplace, native language are not allowed.
- Gender or Sexual Orientation.
- Health/Disabilities. May ask questions about health and disabilities related to specific job requirements.
- Family Status. Questions about whether the applicant is married, single, divorced, number and age of children, child care needs, or spouse's job are taboo. May not ask about pregnancy or future family plans.
- Military/Veteran Status. May not ask about type or condition of discharge.
- Race.
- Religion. May ask questions if it's applicable to the job such as applying to teach Sunday school.

Possible Answers to Illegal Questions

Although these questions are illegal, you do not want to jeopardize your chances of being hired. The following examples suggest ways to handle these questions.

Q. Why are you leaving the military?

A. I enjoy my time in the military. I received good training and met a lot of interesting people. It's time to put my skills to work in the civilian environment.

Q. Are you married? What does your spouse do for a living?

A. Yes, I'm married. My spouse and I are very supportive of one another's careers.

Q. Are you a military spouse?

A. Yes, I am a military spouse. I know employers are often concerned that military spouses may not stay in the area for only a short time. I am quite settled in this area and, if I do join your company, I intend on staying. Or if you've lived in the area for quite a while, say "I've lived here for ten years, and fully expect to live here at least ten more."

Q. How many children do you have?

A. I am a responsible parent and employee. I can assure you that I have adequate child care arranged.

Q. Why haven't you worked in so many years?

A. I have chosen to focus my skills in other areas. Although I have not received a paycheck, I have worked in several areas including (List volunteer experiences and household management skills). I believe the experience and skills that I have developed will definitely be an asset in the workplace.

Q. Why have you changed jobs so often?

A. I have changed jobs for various reasons, including relocation and promotion.

I feel that the range of my career experience has given me wonderful opportunities to expand my skills and abilities as well as great opportunities to learn quickly and be flexible.

Q. Have you ever been arrested?

A. Take a positive approach in your answer, explaining the situation as best you can. Stress what you learned from the experience.

Q. Have you ever been fired?

A. Be honest, but positive. Never make negative comments about a former employer. Explain how you went on to a more challenging position, higher pay, more interesting work, etc.

Off-the-Wall Questions

- If you could be a superhero, what would you want your superpowers to be?
- If someone wrote a biography about you, what do you think the title should be?
- If you had to be shipwrecked on a deserted island, but all your basic needs such as food and water were taken care of, what two items would you want to have with you?
- If you had six months with no obligations or financial constraints, what would you do with the time?
- If you had only six months left to live, what would you do with the time?
- If you could have dinner with anyone from history, who would it be, and why?
- If you could compare yourself with any animal, which would it be and why?
- If you won \$20 million in the lottery, what would you do with the money?
- Who do you admire the most and why?

The key to responding to an off-the-wall question is not to let it rattle you. Don't adopt a deer-in-the-headlights look. Simply smile, take a deep breathe, and take a moment to compose your response. A little bit of silence is better than blurting out something even sillier than the question.

You don't have to be witty. Just give an honest response. If you absolutely cannot think of an answer, ask if you can come back to that question later. You may lose a few thinking-on-your-feet points, but you'll gain points for handling a difficult situation with poise. There is rarely a wrong answer to offbeat questions.

If you can turn your answer into something job-related, that's a bonus, but it's probably above the expectations of the interviewer. For example, if you're interviewing for a finance job and are asked what you'd do with a large windfall of money, you could give a clever response about how you'd invest the cash.

Questions to Ask the Interviewer

Use an interview to evaluate whether or not you want to work for the company. Ask questions throughout.

At the Beginning of the Interview Ask:

- What are the primary duties of this position?
- What types of skills are you looking for in a person to fill this position?
- What is a typical day like for the person in this position?
- Is this a new position or was the person who was in this position promoted?

Mid-interview Ask:

- What results would you like to see me produce?
- Can you tell me a little about my co-workers or the people I'd be supervising?
- What are the opportunities for advancement within the company?

Towards the End of the Interview Ask:

- Is there anything else I can tell you about my qualifications?
- When do you expect to make your decision?
- How will I be notified?

When Offered the Position Ask:

- I greatly appreciate your offer. How soon do you need a decision?
- Would it be alright if I let you know by (date)?

If You are not Offered the Position Ask:

- Do you know of other organizations that would be interested in my experience?
- Could you keep my resume on hand should other positions become available?
- Would you be willing to give me feedback in order to help me prepare for future interviews?

Salary Negotiation Strategies

Most of us are uncomfortable negotiating our salaries, but today's employer expects some type of negotiation.

Avoid the question of salary, until you have an offer.

On job applications under salary requirements, put "open," "negotiable," or "competitive." If a salary requirement must be given, then give ranges (usually begin your range at 10% higher than your last salary and add \$10K to get your range).

Be vague if asked for a salary figure.

Ask, "What would a person with my background and qualifications typically earn in this position with your company?" Or, "I'd rather discuss salary when we are both confident that I am a good match for the position."

Research your market value.

Before you go into an interview, make sure you are armed with the most recent information on the salary ranges for the position that you want. Call directly into Human Resources and ask their salary ranges for the job you are seeking or go online to get salary ranges.

Do not accept an offer on the spot.

How valuable and in demand will you seem if you accept an offer the moment it's presented? Instead, either take home the written offer or take notes on the details of the offer.

Examine the entire compensation package.

Be sure to consider insurance, stock options, 401(k) plans, pension and profit sharing plans, salary progression, vacation days, paid holiday, and sick/personal days.

Negotiation is expected.

When a company offers you an exact figure, it is usually safe to expect that the number is its mid-range. Even if you're satisfied with the offer ask for a few thousand dollars more, a higher match on your 401 K, or additional leave days. You may very well get your request. And, if you don't, at least you tried.

Respond to low offers.

Say, "I really like you, the job seems to be a good match, and the goals of management and the company's organizational strategy all seem good. The only area holding me back is the initial compensation offer. Quite frankly, the salary is less than I expected. I am truly interested in the position and from my research, (\$ range) is the approximate level for the salary. The other companies I am speaking with are in that range. What can you do in this area?"

Examine alternatives.

If efforts are exhausted in the salary negotiation, and the company has not offered a salary acceptable to you, but you still want the job, shift the conversation to the future. Discuss a 60-, 90-, or 120-day performance review, year-end bonus, or a lump-sum signing bonus.

Compare Job Offers

If you have more than one offer, compare them by using the following chart.

For each of the factors given in the checklist below, place a “+” in the column where this factor has a clear advantage. Leave both columns blank if there is no clear advantage with either position, or if the factor is unimportant to you. Add up the “+” for each column to determine which job is more advantageous to you.

Comprehensive Checklist

	Job A	Job B
Salary		
Bonuses		
Stock Options		
Employee Stock Purchase Plan		
401K Plan		
401K Match		
Pension		
Vesting for Stock Options, 401K Plan, and Pension (Forfeitures and when you can begin)		
Health Care Benefits		
Holidays/Vacation		
Sponsored Programs such as Health Club Membership		
Mileage to Work and Parking Costs		
Job Title		
Nature of Work		
Your Interest in the Work		
Fits with Future Plans		
Clear Understanding of your Role by Yourself and Others		
Advancement Potential		
Amount of New Learning Required		
Availability of Flextime		
Potential for Telecommuting		
Amount of Travel Required		
Workload vs. Staff		
Tight Deadlines		
Bad Boss		
Turnover Levels		
Job Stability		
Poor Upper Management		
Office Politics		
Type of Work Environment		

	Job A	Job B
Office Space		
Family Friendly		
Diverse Workforce		
Boss's Management Style		
Company Culture		
Company's Values Match My Values		
Training and Development Programs		
Compatibility with Peers		
Company Size		
Degree of Risk (startup vs. stable, mature company)		
Industry Growth Potential		
Your Interest in Industry		
Company's Health		
Company's Resources (ability to fund projects)		
Management Team		
Company's Vision and Strategy for the Future		
Total		

Post Test

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Participant Evaluation

INTERVIEWING SKILLS

Your input is valuable. Please take time to complete this form so we can continue to improve our programs.

Program Title: _____

Presenter: _____ Date: _____

Please rate the following:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. The information presented in this program was useful.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Audio/visuals, handouts and/or support material were appropriate.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. The presenter demonstrated knowledge of subject matter.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. The material was delivered in an informative manner.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I would have liked to have spent more time on _____					
6. I would have liked to have spent less time on _____					
7. What are the most convenient days and times of the day for you to attend workshops? _____					
8. How did you hear about this workshop? (Check all that apply.)					
<input type="checkbox"/> Local Newspaper	<input type="checkbox"/> Email	<input type="checkbox"/> Local TV/Radio Station			
<input type="checkbox"/> Poster	<input type="checkbox"/> Training Session	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please list)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Message Traffic	<input type="checkbox"/> Installation TV/Radio Station	_____			
<input type="checkbox"/> Flyer	<input type="checkbox"/> Installation Marquee	_____			
9. What other suggestions do you have to improve this training? _____					
10. Overall, this workshop was:					
<input type="checkbox"/> Poor	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Outstanding		