The interview allows a potential employer to evaluate you in person and thereby adds a human dimension to your credentials on paper. A typical interview lasts 20 to 30 minutes. You have the first four minutes to convince the interviewer that you are the best person for the job. Employers hire people, not degrees, union cards, etc. You must sell yourself and your skills/ideas. BE PREPARED! It is critical to getting the job.

OBJECTIVES OF THE INTERVIEW:

The interviewer
The main objectives for the interviewer are as follows:
- to gather relevant information about the candidate’s qualifications for a particular job.
- to assess how these qualifications match requirements of the position.
- to present the company/agency positively so well-qualified candidates will be attracted to the position.

The applicant
The applicant, however, is primarily concerned with selling himself/herself. For the applicant, the main objectives are:
- to communicate information and qualifications about oneself clearly and accurately.
- to seek relevant information about a particular job, position, and employer. From this information, the interviewee should be able to make a tentative decision about whether this position is a “good” match between personal needs and what the job can offer.

TYPES OF INTERVIEWS: There are as many kinds of interviews as there are interviewers because everyone does things a little differently. However, there are four basic types that can be identified.

The structured interview is the most common type of interview. The interviewer has a predetermined list of questions to ask the interviewee and often takes notes during the interview.

The unstructured interview is more informal. The questions are broad and general, and will require that the interviewee do most of the talking.

In the group/committee/panel/board interview there is one interviewee and several interviewers. Each interviewer will have a few questions to ask from a list of predetermined questions, and all will take notes. These are often used for hiring higher-level positions.

The stress interview is designed specifically to put the interviewee under stress so that behavior, responses, and reactions can be observed. This type may be used when the position is a high-stress job.
Stages of an Interview

In a job interview you can anticipate four stages. Allow for some variety as each interviewer has his/her own particular style.

1) **OPENING AND INTRODUCTIONS:** Your interview begins the moment you walk through the door. The initial conversation may appear to be meaningless chitchat; but at this stage, it is very important to develop a good rapport and a positive first impression.

2) **DISCUSSING THE CANDIDATE’S BACKGROUND:** This is the “why, how, when, where” phase of the interview. During this stage the interviewer will be asking questions which will give you an opportunity to talk about yourself and your background. This is the time for you to sell yourself. Be honest, straightforward, and articulate. Be specific. Tell the interviewer what you can do for his/her company and why you are the best candidate for the position.

3) **YOUR TURN TO ASK QUESTIONS:** During this stage of the interview you have the opportunity to ask for the information you need to know in order to determine if you want to work for this particular organization. It is best to focus your questions on the job and the organization, rather than on what the company can do for you. Ask about training and advancement opportunities rather than about pay and benefits. See “Questions an Applicant May Wish to Ask” later in this document.

4) **CLOSING:** Ask for the job! Briefly summarize the interview verbally from your perspective and indicate that you want to work for that company. Also clarify the next steps of action or communication. Ask when they will be making a decision.

In job hunting, as in most other endeavors, persistence pays. The key to success is your ability to sell yourself--to communicate your assets to an employer.
Phone Interview

Before the call:

Make sure your cell phone battery is not about to run out, that your roommate is not about to run the vacuum, and that you will be able to concentrate. Even if you are not seen by the interviewer, you will present yourself better if you are well groomed. It may help to have your notes and résumé in front of you, and to have a pen in your hand to take notes. (Don’t rattle papers.) If the entire hiring committee is on the other end in a conference call, you will want to write down each person’s name/role so you can refer to it later. It’s important that you are clear about whether or not you can hear the interviewer clearly. Don’t say “Can you speak up?” Do say “I’m having trouble hearing you. Can you hear me clearly?” The latter is slightly less confrontational and clarifies whether the connection between you is bad or if the problem is on the recruiter’s end. As with any interview, be prepared to ask questions at the end. You want to have the recruiter(s) hang up with a good impression of your interest in the company.

After the call:

Immediately after the call, write a short thank-you note. Correct phraseology for a phone interview would be something like “Thank you for spending time with me on the phone today talking about the enrollment management position. I enjoyed the conversation and have a better understanding of the job. I would be interested in an on-site interview, and would welcome the opportunity to further discuss my candidacy.”

A chance to test the waters:

The phone interview is the second step in the process for many recruiters. During a phone interview, interviewers can check out whether you are as good as you sound on paper, if you are articulate, and if you would be a good person to have join the firm. Most importantly, a phone interview serves as a way to narrow down the pool to the semifinalists and finalists. Few people get hired solely on the basis of a phone interview. The phone interview is a way for both the candidate and the interviewer to test the waters. So relax, be professional, and be yourself!
First Impression

Although most job interviews last 20 to 30 minutes, research indicates that interviewers tend to make an overall evaluation of the applicant within the first four minutes. Use your awareness of this to your advantage by making your initial impression on the interviewer a very positive one. Remember that nonverbal behavior is an important consideration. Here are some factors that affect first impressions.

**EYE CONTACT:**
Upon first meeting, make direct eye contact and greet the person(s) interviewing you with a smile.

**APPEARANCE:**
Project a professional, businesslike image. You should be well-groomed and conservatively dressed. Your clothes should be impeccably coordinated, clean, and well pressed. If you do not have an outfit to wear to an interview in which you feel comfortable and confident, buy one; it is a worthwhile investment towards your future success. If you’re on a tight budget, check out second-hand stores. A rule of thumb: Be dressed a little better than if you were working there (as if for the next highest position in that organization).

**HANDSHAKE:**
Take your cues from the employer. If the employer reaches out to shake your hand, reach to shake their hand using a firm handshake.

**VOICE:**
Be enthusiastic — sounding upbeat but not “gushy.” Enthusiasm projects energy and motivation. Avoid talking too quickly or too slowly.

**POSTURE:**
During the interview, lean slightly towards the interviewer rather than away. This will communicate your interest in what the interviewer is saying and show confidence as you speak. Keep your arms and legs unfolded and your head up.
Negative Factors in an Interview

The following is a list of reasons employers give for rejecting applicants during the initial interview.

1) Poor personal appearance.
2) Nervousness.
3) Failure to look interviewer in the eye.
4) Limp, “fishy” handshake.
5) Sloppy application.
6) Inability to express himself/herself clearly, poor voice, diction, grammar.
7) Indefinite response to specific questions.
8) Sarcasm.
9) Appearance of hostility, overbearing, over-aggressive, conceited, know-it-all.
10) Lack of interest and enthusiasm (passive, indifferent, apathetic).
11) Over-emphasis on money (interested in only the best dollar offer).
12) Unwillingness to start at the bottom; expectation of too much, too soon.
13) Making excuses, being evasive, and hedging on unfavorable factors in record.
14) Lack of maturity.
15) Lack of courtesy, ill-mannered, failure to express appreciation for interviewer’s time.
16) Condemnation of past employers, no tact.
17) Desire a job for only a short time.
18) Lack of knowledge of field of work, no interest in company.
19) Low moral standards, intolerance, strong prejudices.
20) Poor handling of personal finances, marital troubles, poor personal life.
21) Inability to take criticism, failure to accept instruction.
22) Lack of appreciation of the value of experiences or education.
23) Arriving late for interview.
24) Indecision about the job wanted.
25) Lack of smile.
26) Clock-watcher.
27) Bringing friends or relatives to the interview.
28) Arguing or disagreeing with interviewer.
29) Failure to ask for the job.
Interview Tips: Dos & Don’ts

**DO:**
- 😊 Find out as much as you can about the company before the interview.
- 😊 Be prepared – review your personal and professional qualifications.
- 😊 Arrive 15 minutes early. Have accurate address and/or directions. Telephone if delayed.
- 😊 Wear well-fitting, appropriate clothes. Be neat and well-groomed.
- 😊 Go to the interview alone.
- 😊 Be polite and considerate of all office personnel.
- 😊 Pronounce the interviewer’s name correctly.
- 😊 Maintain good eye contact.
- 😊 Be as natural as possible. Let some personality show.
- 😊 Show enthusiasm and a positive attitude about work.
- 😊 Answer questions completely, but be concise and to the point – no longer than 60 seconds.
- 😊 Ask relevant questions about the job and the company.
- 😊 Have résumé and/or a completed application, letter of recommendation, etc., with you.
- 😊 Have examples of work (if appropriate) or equipment for possible skill demonstrations.
- 😊 Ask for the job! Let the interviewer know you are interested in the position.
- 😊 Thank the interviewer for his/her time and shake hands.
- 😊 Follow-up with a thank-you letter or a thank-you phone call.
- 😊 Take a pen and small notebook with you.

**DON’T:**
- 😞 Park in reserved places or in front of loading zones.
- 😞 Sit down before you are asked.
- 😞 Smoke, chew gum or tobacco, or drink anything in the interview.
- 😞 Wear hats or sunglasses.
- 😞 Put arms, elbows, purses or other articles on interviewer’s desk.
- 😞 Use slang – “yeah, you know, na, huh.”
Common Interview Questions

THE TOP TEN

- TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF.
- WHERE DO YOU WANT TO BE IN 5 YEARS?
- WHAT ARE YOUR GREATEST STRENGTHS? WEAKNESSES?
- TELL ME ABOUT A TIME WHEN YOU HAD A CONFLICT WITH A CO-WORKER?
- HOW WAS YOUR ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL/LAST JOB?
- TELL ME WHAT YOU KNOW ABOUT OUR COMPANY.
- WHAT CAN YOU DO FOR US THAT OTHER CANDIDATES CAN’T?
- WHAT DO YOU THINK DETERMINES A PERSON’S PROGRESS WITH A COMPANY?
- DESCRIBE YOURSELF IN ONE WORD.
- IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO TELL ABOUT YOURSELF THAT MAY HAVE BEEN OVERLOOKED?
- Why should I hire you?
- Why do you want to work here?
- What are your goals?
- Why did you leave your last job?
- When were you most satisfied with your job?
- What are three things your last boss would say about you?
- What salary are you seeking?
- Do you prefer to work alone or in a group?
- What are your future career plans?
- In what school activities have you participated? Which did you enjoy most? Have you held any offices?
- In what type of positions are you most interested?
- What jobs have you held? Where were they obtained and why did you leave?
- What courses did you like best? Least? Why?
- Why did you choose your particular field of work?
- How did you spend your vacations while growing up?
- Do you feel you have received good general training?
- How much money do you hope to earn by age 30? By age 40?
- Do you think your extracurricular activities were worth the time devoted to them? Why?
- What personal characteristics are necessary for success in your chosen field?
- Why do you think you would like this particular job?
- Would you speak up if your point of view differs from your co-workers or supervisors?
- How did your previous employer treat you?
- What have you learned from some of the jobs you’ve held?
- Can you get recommendations from previous employers?
- What interests you about our product or service?
- What do you know about opportunities in the field in which you are trained?
- How would you define cooperation?
Common Interview Questions (continued)

- What type of books have you read?
- What types of people seem to rub you the wrong way?
- Have you ever tutored an underclassman?
- What jobs have you enjoyed the most? The least? Why?
- Would you prefer working for a large or small company? Why?
- Do you like to travel?
- How much overtime did you work in the last year?
- What kind of work interests you?
- What are the disadvantages of your chosen field?
- What have you done which shows your initiative and willingness to work?
- If you had to describe yourself in one word, what would it be?
- Define customer service.
- How did you hear about the opening?
- Tell me about your professional training.
- Have you ever supervised people before? How many?
- Would you be willing to relocate?
- How have you handled work pressure or deadlines?
- Is it all-right to call your previous employer for reference?
- If you are hired, how long do you plan to stay with our company?
- Would you be willing to attend any special training programs?
- Do you plan to start your own business some day?
- Why should I hire you rather than anyone else?
- What do you like to do when you’re not at work?
- What skills or requirements are needed for this job?
- What motivates you to do a good job?
- Why is customer service so important today in business?
- As a youngster, what did you do to earn your own spending money?
- Have you ever had a disagreement with your boss?
- Who did you ask to serve as your personal reference and why did you choose them?
- Tell me about your current or most recent job.
- Why are you leaving or why did you leave your previous job?
- Are you planning to give notice that you’re leaving for another job?
- What will your manager say when you give notice that you’re leaving?
- What did you like most about your previous jobs?
- What would you change about your previous jobs?
- What do you think are the most important abilities that lead to success on the job?
- Do you have a driver’s license? What type? Do you have a car?
- Which course did you find most difficult? Why?
- How were your grades in math?
- How were you grades in English?
- Do you plan to continue your education?
- In your lifetime, what has been your greatest accomplishment? What did you learn from it?
Common Interview Questions (continued)

- What was your greatest failure? What did you learn from it?
- Would you rather be in charge of a project or work as part of the team?
- Give me two reasons why I should not hire you.
- What do you like most about yourself? Least?
- Describe your dream job.
- If you were told to report to a supervisor who was a woman, a minority, or who had a disability, what problems would this cause for you?
- You have one minute to convince me that you’re the best candidate for this job. Begin.
- Give me an example of when you had to deal with an angry customer or client. What were the results?
- Tell me about a time when you had to make a difficult decision. How did you go about making the decision?
- Think of a time when you worked on a team. What was your role? What was the process? What were the results?
- Think of a situation where you had a conflict with another individual. How did you resolve it?
- Give me an example when you had to deal with stress. How did you handle it?
- What would you do if one supervisor told you to do something and another told you to do it a different way?

Explain Negative Past in the interview

Be prepared for questions such as these:
- Last year, how many days of work (or school) did you miss?
- Have you ever been fired from a job?
- Have you ever been convicted of a crime?

4-STEP PROCESS FOR EXPLAINING A NEGATIVE PAST EVENT OR PATTERN

1) Briefly explain what happened and take responsibility. (10-20 seconds)

2) Briefly explain how you have changed, what you’ve learned and why things are different. (15-25 seconds)

3) Briefly introduce why the problem will not reoccur, not a problem for the employer. (10-20 seconds)

4) Transition into why you would be qualified for the position. (30+ seconds)
WHAT QUESTIONS DO YOU HAVE?

Note: Wait until you have been offered the job to ask about salary and benefits. You can research this information prior to your interview by going to the company’s website, talking to people you know who work there, or calling the Human Resources office. During your interview, your questions should focus on the job.

- When do you expect to make a decision about this position?
- What are the opportunities for advancement?
- What kind of on-the-job-training is available?
- How did this position become available?
- Who would be my supervisor?
- What are the goals of the department for the next year?
- What kind of assignments might I expect for the first six months on the job?
- Does your company encourage further education?
- How often are performance evaluations given?
- Do you have plans for expansion?
- What are your growth projections for the next year?
- Is this a new position or am I replacing someone?
- What do you like best about your job/company?
- Do you fill jobs from outside or promote from within first?
- What qualities are you looking for in the candidate who fills this position?
- What skills are especially important for someone in this position?
- What characteristics do achievers in this company seem to share?
- Is there a lot of team/project work?
- Where does this position fit into the organizational structure?
- How much travel, if any, is involved in this position?
- What is the next course of action? When should I expect to hear from you or should I contact you?

Close the interview by “asking for the job.” Tell the interviewer that you are excited about the possibility of working for his/her company. Then thank the interviewer for his/her time and consideration and shake hands if/when the employer offers his/her hand.
Here’s an odd fact of life.

While everyone wants a handsome salary, almost nobody wants to discuss that salary before being hired. Few questions inspire as much dread among job seekers as: “So, what kind of salary are you looking for?”

Yet, there is no escaping questions of salary. Here are the tips to help you negotiate effectively before and during the job interview.

When replying to want ads that ask for salary requirements or a salary history, I always advise my clients to NOT answer directly, because any answer will hurt your chances.

Remember that a typical classified ad can produce hundreds of résumés. That’s a pretty big pile. And a fast way to make that pile smaller is to weed out applicants who are either too expensive (over qualified) or too cheap (under qualified).

So, in your cover letter, I would just say: “My salary requirements are negotiable.”
This shows that you have read the want ad carefully, but are choosing to dodge the issue. Most HR professionals and hiring managers I have talked to won’t take offense. On the contrary, it gives them one less reason not to call you.

What about salary questions in the interview? These require some advanced planning.

You can say: “Well, I would like to make as much as other employees with my qualifications.” (Here, you can repeat 2-3 of your most valuable skills or achievements, just to remind them of how qualified you are.) Then add: “And what is the typical salary for this position?”

Another strategy is to avoid a specific salary. Name a pay range instead. Say: “I was thinking of a salary in the $25,000.00 to $35,000.00 range, (with $25,000.00 being the lowest amount that you would accept). That way, you can name a higher figure, if they try to pin you down, yet still be able to retreat to a point that satisfies you.

Finally, information is power here. If you can back your salary request with a list of average salaries that you have obtained from the Internet or from your own phone calls, you’ll enjoy greater leverage in your negotiations.

Article by Kevin Donlin of Guaranteed Résumés, Minneapolis based résumé service. Since 1995, Guaranteed Résumés has provided résumés, Internet résumés, cover letters and job searches for clients in 44 states and 23 countries.

For more information, point your browser to http://www.grésumés.com.