

TIPS

for College and Career Interviews



PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

- **Research the college/company**
 - Practice tying information you know about your interviewer's organization into your answers
- **Rehearse what you are going to say**
 - Always be prepared for a wide variety of questions
 - Anticipate the concerns and reservations of an interviewer and prepare answers to refute their hesitations
 - Practice speaking confidently and charismatically; be authentic
 - Rehearse sample interview questions with a friend.
- **Practice your body language**
 - Be conscious of how your body language portrays you to others
 - Practice your posture and avoid sullen expressions
- **Lay out an outfit beforehand**
 - Keep it professional; it is better to be overdressed than underdressed
 - Your image makes the first impression on the interviewer(s), and is what will be remembered
- **Make copies of resume and list of references**
 - The list of references should have a minimum of three contacts
 - Interviewers can misplace papers; it is best to have an extra copy and not need it, then to need a copy and not have one
- **Be timely—plan when and where you are going, how much travel time is needed, and directions to the location**
- **Avoid staying up late the night before an interview; get a full eight hours of sleep**
- **Do not over think the interview**

DURING THE INTERVIEW

- **Arrive at the interview site at least 15 minutes early**
- **Remember the interviewer's name and use it during the interview**
- **Stay calm**
 - When you are stressed, your body releases hormones that can impair the ability to think clearly and counting deep breaths is a great way to calm nerves and focus
- **Avoid skipping breakfast, lunch, and/or dinner**
- **Do not bring food or drinks to the interview**
- **Be truthful**
 - 66 percent of interviewers will not consider candidates they believe are dishonest

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

- **Send a thank you email or note card within 24 hours of the interview**
 - Thank the interviewer for his/her time and restate your interest in the college/job
 - Provide a follow-up response to a key question during the interview to set yourself apart from the other candidates
- **Do not second guess your actions and responses or ask yourself "what if" questions to compromise your self-esteem**

INTERVIEW ETIQUETTE

- Turn off mobile devices completely; do not even place on vibrate mode
 - Remember, for the moment, nothing is more important to you than the interview
- Eat no less than an hour before the interview; it will give you energy and time to brush your teeth
- Make eye contact and remember to smile
- Give a firm handshake and introduce yourself
- Be prepared for some small talk, but do not overdo it
- Stand or sit up straight; it shows that you are interested in the conversation
- Avoid fidgeting
- Do not appear arrogant; do not boast
- Do not interrupt the interviewer
- Listen carefully to the questions being asked; take time to phrase your responses; do not be afraid to ask him/her to repeat the question
- Feel free to ask your own questions—it shows your interest in the college/job
- At the end of the interview, thank the interviewer for his/her time

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS/ANSWERS

- “What are your strengths and weaknesses?”
 - Sample Answer: “I strongly believe that my greatest strength is my work ethic. When working on projects, I do not just want to meet deadlines. Rather, I prefer to complete the project well ahead of schedule. I feel that my management skills could be stronger, and I am constantly working to improve them.”
 - Hint: It is important to be honest when answering this type of question. When stating your strength, do not appear overly confident. When stating your weakness, inform the interviewer that knowing your own weakness allows you to know exactly what you must improve to become a better leader.
- “What past accomplishments are you most proud of?”
 - Sample Answer: “Through a career and technical student organization (CTSO) called the Technology Student Association, I have accomplished much and excelled in many ways, such as participating in STEM-related competitions at the state and national levels. Competing, as well as placing first at the national level in Prepared Presentation, has allowed me to improve my communication and presentation skills.”
 - Hint: Be humble when answering this question. Perhaps choose accomplishments that are relevant to the college or job. Explain why you are most proud of these accomplishments.
- “Who is your role model and why?”
 - Sample Answer: “An important role model in my life has been my high school TSA advisor. My advisor is a positive presence in our school, and always knows how to brighten students’ day. He empowers people to work their hardest and strive to become better leaders. I have learned communication, organizational, and presentation skills through his examples.”
 - Hint: Consider the different people who have had an influence on your life. They may include parents, teachers, and other adult mentors. Choose someone who is appropriate for the situation, and who truly inspires you. Be honest, and tie your role model’s influence to how they have prepared you for this experience.