

INTERVIEWING

COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON CAREER CENTER | CAREERCENTER@COFC.EDU

PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

RESEARCH THE EMPLOYER

- Having done some background research on the company shows that you are truly interested in, and enthusiastic about, interviewing with that company.
- The more you know about the job/company/industry, the better able you will be to determine whether the job and company “fit” your career goals and interests.
- Having an understanding of the company and the job will help you better address questions during the interview.

It's important to have an understanding of the:

History of the organization
Mission/Vision/Values
Services or products
Organizational structure
Size of the organization
Prospects for growth

Sales, assets and earnings
Corporate philosophy
Reputation
Standing in the industry
Competitors
Recent developments

Research by visiting the organization's website, LinkedIn, and social media pages. It's also important to learn information about the company from external sources. Consider doing a web search using a major search engine like Google, and read through news articles related to the company. Use the Employer Research link under Helpful Web Links on the Career Center website.

PREPARE FOR QUESTIONS

Although you cannot anticipate every question that the employer will ask, it's helpful to formulate answers to commonly asked questions (see handout). In doing so, be mindful of your experience and skills related to the position. Consider participating in a mock interview at the Career Center, or practice online using InterviewStream available on the Career Center's website. Also, develop strong questions to ask the employer to better understand if this role is a good fit for you.

MAKING A GOOD FIRST IMPRESSION

- Plan appropriate attire. Typically business casual to business professional is appropriate.
- Plan to arrive 10-15 minutes early. Account for possible traffic congestion.
- Prepare printed copies of your resume to give the interviewers.
- Introduce yourself to the receptionist and indicate whom you are there to see. The interview starts the minute you enter the building and doesn't end until you exit.
- Pay attention to the interviewer's name and repeat his/her name when you greet him/her.

- Show confidence, interest, assertiveness, and enthusiasm. Do not be arrogant, aggressive, or immature.
- Be yourself. Smile. Be friendly (but not “chummy”), not stiff or aloof.
- Be courteous, polite, and respectful at all times.
- Allow the interviewer to lead the interview.

NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

- Shake hands firmly with the interviewer and with anyone else to whom you are introduced.
- Make eye contact when speaking to someone.
- Wait until you are offered a seat or until the interviewer sits.
- Be aware of your posture – stand tall, sit up straight, and lean slightly forward in your chair.
- Beware of talking with your hands too much.

ANSWERING QUESTIONS

- Use proper grammar. Avoid using “um,” “like” and “you know.”
- Think about your answers before speaking. It’s okay to pause and collect your thoughts before answering.
- Express yourself clearly and succinctly and keep your answers to-the-point.
- Make sure you answer the question asked. Validate or repeat the question if necessary to make sure you understand what is being asked. Avoid volunteering more information than you are asked for
- Avoid sounding as if you have memorized answers to questions – the interview should be a natural flow of conversation. If you sound too “rehearsed” your interview will not be effective.
- Explain how you would accomplish a task rather than just saying that you could do it. Use specific examples to exhibit your strengths, skills, and abilities.
- Admit a “mental block” if you can’t think of an answer.
- Don’t be evasive. While past failures or problems need not be volunteered, don’t try to cover them up. If you do have a “blemish” in your past, simply explain the circumstances without giving excuses or blaming others. Discuss what you have learned from the situation.
- Never speak poorly about former supervisors, colleagues, or employers. If you were unhappy, simply explain that it was not a good fit.
- Don’t discuss personal issues or problems during the interview.

ENDING THE INTERVIEW

- Indicate your interest in the position.
- Summarize, giving specific examples of your knowledge, skills, and abilities, why you would be a good candidate for the position.
- Ask for a business card at the close of the interview to ensure that you have proper contact information.
- Thank the interviewer(s) for their time and shake hands firmly.
- Indicate that you look forward to hearing from them soon and welcome them to contact you if they need any additional information.
- Send a thank-you letter within 48 hours reiterating your interest in the position.

- If you do not hear from the employer within the time frame indicated, make a follow-up phone call to let him/her know you are still interested in the position and to find out if there are additional questions you might address.