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The Interview

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Pre-Interview Checklist

Before the interview, be certain you have done the following:

- I have dressed appropriately (clean, pressed, no stains, tears or holes)
- I have checked my grooming (hair, nails, teeth, deodorant, light make-up, & light cologne)
- I have directions how to get to the interview location
- I know the name of the person who will interview me
- I have extra copies of my resume and letters of reference
- I have a notebook or notepad and a pen
- I have researched the industry, the organization and its competition
- I have reviewed the qualifications for the position
- I know which of my skills and experiences apply directly to the job
- I know the salary range I can expect to earn. If not check the Internet for jobs similar to the one you are interviewing for. Check O'Net Salary Finder for local wages in your area. (<https://www.onetonline.org/>)
- I have prepared a list of intelligent questions to ask the interviewer
- I have practiced answering the most common interview questions
- I have an appropriate answer to the most important question the interview will ask: "Why should we hire you instead of someone else?"
- I have the right attitude, I am optimistic, enthusiastic, and confident

INTERVIEW TIPS

Preparation is an important part of the interview process. The time you spend preparing prior to the interview will be time well spent in your job search process. The following are some tips on what you can do to prepare yourself before, during, and after a job interview.

Before the Interview

- Review the Job Specification and Position Description.
- Learn more about the department by visiting their web page.
- Review your résumé and be prepared to discuss your relevant skills.
- Decide who your references are. They should be a current or past supervisor, coworker, teacher/professor or associate who has knowledge of your work history, skills, abilities, accomplishments, initiative, education and integrity. Get permission to use their name in advance and collect their current contact information (including e-mail address).
- Bring extra copies of your résumé and a notebook.
- Dress for Success -Appearance should reflect maturity and self-confidence. Be neat, clean, and dress in good taste.
- Find out where the interview will be, obtain clear directions, and confirm the time. Plan to arrive 10- 15 minutes early.

During the Interview

- Within reason, relax! Think of the interview as a conversation, not an interrogation.
- Be enthusiastic, confident, courteous, and honest.
- Listen to the questions carefully and give clear, concise, and thoughtful answers that include examples of your skills and/or short stories that demonstrate your qualifications.
- Convey interest in the organization and knowledge of the position.
- Ask relevant questions about the job or department.
- Present a list of your references and any letters of recommendation or reference that you may have to offer.
- End the interview with a firm handshake and thank the interview panel for their time and consideration.

After the Interview

- Send a concise 1 – 3 paragraph thank-you letter within 24 to 48 hours of the interview. Reiterate your interest in the position; mention anything that reinforces you as a good fit for the job, and your contact information.
- If you are not selected for the job, it is OK to politely ask an interviewer which area(s) you could improve on in the future!¹

¹ Michigan Civil Service Commission, Career Services

INTERVIEW APPEARANCE GUIDELINES

- Appearance often determines the way people treat you - This is a natural human reaction. Unfortunately, people form impressions based on **looks** and **actions**.
- Everyone from the receptionist to the employer makes an impression about you based on how you look. If you look good, you feel good.
- Your entire appearance should be serious and professional, with just a hint of style! Dedicate time & effort in choosing your clothes- no tears or stains.
- Empty pockets, no tinkling of change or bulging pockets.
- No gum/cigarettes or coffee, even if offered. Coffee spilled can spoil the interview.
- Smile communicates enthusiasm and friendliness.
- Eye Contact- steady eye contact throughout the interview.
- A firm handshake conveys confidence and motivation.
- Wear clothing & jewelry that **does not distract** the interviewer -keep jewelry to a minimum.
- Minimal perfume & cologne: very light scent if at all--**some stick around even after you have left**.
- Leave the bright neon colors at home. Black, blue, brown, gray, white, neutral colors are good.
- Conservative: NO jeans, gym shoes, or t-shirts. Pants should fit well and not fall below the waist. If pants are too loose, remember to wear a belt.
- Clean, manicured fingernails. Do not over accessorize with rings & leave the long fingernails at home.
- Shoes: stay away from open toed or sling backs & spike heels. Make sure shoes are shined and do not have run-down heels.
- Stockings-no runs or holes, leave the mesh hose at home.
- Hygiene: Showering/bathing; teeth clean; deodorant, mouthwash, etc.
- Clothing you would wear for a night out-on-the town is NOT appropriate.
- Cover tattoos for the interview. Remove body piercings: Nose rings, eyebrow rings, tongue rings etc.
- Look in a mirror for a final check of how you look. *"Would you hire you?"*
- Get plenty of sleep the night before your interview & do not be late!
- Dress for work has become more casual in the last decade. Follow the company dress code & notice how others dress.
- Grooming: Men - beards neatly trimmed. A well-groomed hairstyle.
- Men- no unbuttoned shirts or large chains.
- Men -suit jackets and a dress shirt w/tie are always acceptable for professional interviews.
- Women-no tight fitting, low-cut tops, mini-skirts or blouses unbuttoned to the navel.
- Grooming: hair neat & styled, avoid extreme & unusual colors.
- Makeup should be light and neat. Stay away from loud heavy eye shadow & eyeliner.

REMEMBER- the interviewer will evaluate whether you represent the company with your image; the way they want to be represented.



INTERVIEW DRESS GUIDELINES FOR WOMEN:

Suits w/skirt or slacks, dresses: Conservative business suit or dress, soft color—blue, navy, gray, beige, tan or brown. Stay away from bright neon colors.

Skirt lengths should be conservative; no short mini-skirts. Try to avoid wool so you do not sweat up a storm and linens because they wrinkle very easily.

Blouse/Top: Simple style, white or soft colors-no bright red. Avoid frilly and low cut necklines.

Shoes: Sensible shoes, polished pumps or medium heels in a color that matches your outfit. Black/navy blue match a large number of colors.

Hose: Neutral, avoid patterns, fishnet and lacy styles.

Purse: Small or medium size in a color that goes with your outfit. Again, black will work with most colors.

Nail polish: Conservative color or clear and clean fingernails.

Makeup. One word “MODERATE.”

Jewelry: simple, minimal. One set of earrings only. NO nose/eyebrow/or lip rings! No more than one ring on each hand. Keep bracelets simple and conservative.

Perfumes: Nothing is best; however, if you wear perfume use a very light scent

CAMW! Lansing and Charlotte Service Centers offer a Clothing Boutique



GUIDELINES FOR MEN:

Suits/Jackets: Dark blue, gray, brown, or very muted pin stripes. A good quality suit, if you can afford one, should be properly tailored and freshly dry-cleaned.

Shirts: White button-down shirts, or a very muted color, small pin stripes. Make sure the shirt is clean and pressed.

Ties: Conservative stripes or paisleys that compliment your suit. Good quality.

Shoes: Polished slip-ons or laced shoes in black, brown or cordovan. Dark socks.

Facial hair: If you have, beards/mustaches make sure they are neatly trimmed. If possible, a clean-shaven face is best.

Jewelry: No chains, bands, or necklaces showing. No rings other than wedding/college or simple style. No earrings (if you normally wear one, take it out.)

Cologne: Nothing is best; however, if you wear cologne use a very light scent

CAMW! Lansing and Charlotte Service Centers offer a Clothing Boutique

25 TIPS FOR INTERVIEWING

The interviewing stage of your job search is the most critical. You can make or break your chance of being hired in the short amount of time it takes to be interviewed. Anyone can learn to interview well, however, and most mistakes can be anticipated and corrected. Learn the following top 25 interviewing techniques to give you that winning edge.

1. Bring extra copies of your resume to the interview.

Nothing shows less preparation than being asked for another copy of your resume and not having one. You may be asked to interview with more than one person and it demonstrates professionalism and preparedness to anticipate needing extra copies.

2. Dress conservatively and professionally. You can establish your uniqueness through other ways, but what you wear to an interview can make a tremendous difference. It is better to overdress than underdress.

3. Be aware of your body language. Try to look alert, energetic, and focused on the interviewer. Make eye contact. Non-verbally, this communicates that you are interested in the individual.

4. First/last impressions. The first and last five minutes of the interview are the most important. It is during this time that critical first and lasting impressions are made and the interviewer decides whether they like you. Communicate positive behaviors during the first five minutes and be sure you are remembered positively when you leave.

5. Fill out company applications completely – even if you have a resume. Even though you have brought a copy of your resume, many companies require a completed application at the time of the interview. Your willingness to complete one, and your thoroughness in doing so, will convey a great deal about your professionalism and ability to follow through. Bring with you all details typically needed to complete a job application: dates of jobs, wages, supervisor names and contact information.

6. Remember that the purpose of every interview is to get an offer. You must sufficiently impress your interviewer both professionally and personally to be offered the job. At the end of the interview, make sure you know what the next step is and when the employer expects to make a decision.

7. Understand employers' needs. Present yourself as someone who can really add value to an organization. Show that you can fit into the work environment. State specific examples. (See example #12)

8. Be likeable. Be enthusiastic. People love to hire individuals who are easy to get along with and who are excited about their company. Be professional, yet demonstrate your interest and energy.

- 9. Make sure you have the right skills.** Know your competition. How do you compare with your peers in education, experience, training, salary, and career progression? Mention the things you know how to do really well. They are the keys to your next job.
- 10. Display ability to work hard to pursue an organization's goals.** Assume that most interviewers need to select someone who will fit into their organization well in terms of both productivity and personality. You must confirm that you are both a productive and personable individual by stressing your benefits for the employer. State examples of your qualifications and be honest. (See example #12)
- 11. Market all of your strengths.** It is important to market yourself, including your technical qualifications, general skills and experiences as well as personal traits. Recruiters care about two things—credentials and personality. Can you do the job based on past performance and will you fit in with the corporate culture? Talk about your positive personality traits and give examples of how you demonstrate each one on the job. Be honest.
- 12. Give definitive answers and specific results.** Whenever you make a claim of your accomplishments, it will be more believable and better remembered if you cite specific examples and support for your claims. Tell the interviewer something about business situations where you actually used this skill and elaborate on the outcome. Be specific and be honest.
- 13. Don't be afraid to admit mistakes.** Employers want to know what mistakes you have made and what is wrong with you. Don't be afraid to admit making mistakes in the past, but continuously stress your positive qualities as well, and how you have turned negatives into positive traits.
- 14. Relate stories or examples that heighten your past experience.** Past performance is the best indicator of future performance. If you were successful at one company, odds are you can succeed at another. Be ready to sell your own features and benefits in the interview. State specific examples of when/how you were successful. Be honest.
- 15. Know everything about your potential employer before the interview.** Customize your answers as much as possible in terms of the needs of the employer. This requires that you complete research before the interview about the company, its customers, and the work you anticipate doing. Talk in the employer's language. Review the position description.
- 16. Rehearse and practice interview questions before the interview.** Prior to your interview, try to actually practice the types of questions and answers you may be asked. Even if you do not anticipate all of the questions, the process of thinking them through will help you feel less stressed and more prepared during the interview itself.

- 17. Know how to respond to tough questions.** The majority of questions that you will be asked can be anticipated most of the time. There are always, however, those exceptional ones tailored to throw you off guard and to see how you perform under pressure. Your best strategy is to be prepared, stay calm, collect your thoughts, and respond as clearly as possible. Be honest.
- 18. Translate your strengths into job-related language of accomplishments and benefits relevant to the needs of the employers.** While you no doubt have specific strengths and skills related to the position, stress the benefits you are likely to provide to the employer. Whenever possible, give examples of your strengths that relate to the language and needs of the employer.
- 19. Identify your strengths and what you enjoy doing.** Skills that you enjoy doing are the ones that are most likely to bring benefit to an employer. Prior to the interview, know what it is that you enjoy doing most, and what benefits that brings to you and your employer.
- 20. Know how you communicate verbally to others.** Strong verbal communications skills are highly valued by most employers. They are signs of educated and competent individuals. Know how you communicate, and practice with others to determine if you are presenting yourself in the best possible light.
- 21. Don't arrive on time – Arrive Early!** No matter how sympathetic your interviewer may be to the fact that there was an accident on the freeway, it is virtually impossible to overcome a negative first impression. Do whatever it takes to be on time, including allowing extra time for unexpected emergencies.
- 22. Treat everyone you meet from the moment you enter the parking lot as important to the interview.** Make sure you are courteous to everyone you meet, no matter who they are or what their position. The opinion of everyone can be important to the interview process.
- 23. Answer questions with complete sentences and with substance.** Remember that your interviewer is trying to determine what substance you would bring to the company and the position. Avoid answering the questions asked with simple “yes” or “no” answers. Give complete answers that show what knowledge you have concerning the company and its requirements. Let the interviewer know who you are.
- 24. Reduce your nervousness by practicing stress reduction techniques.** There are many stress-reducing techniques used by public speakers that can certainly aid you in your interview process. Practice some of the relaxation methods as you approach your interview, such as taking slow deep breaths to calm you down. The more you can relax the more comfortable you will feel and the more confident you will appear.
- 25. Be sure to ask questions.** Be prepared to ask 1-4 questions relevant to the job, employer, and the organization. These questions should be designed to elicit information to help you make a decision as well as demonstrate your interest, intelligence and enthusiasm for the job. Do NOT ask about money, benefits or time off.



Thoroughly Research the Potential Employer

Many companies have their own homepage, where you can read their mission statement, find out about their long-term goals, read press releases, and view corporate photos. Don't limit your research only to company controlled information.

The internet (Google searches, YouTube videos) can be a valuable investigative tool. You may find both positive and negative information about a company. Use your best judgement about the information. For example, your search could uncover negative comments from a past employee who has been terminated and positive feedback from current employees.

Examples of sites you can use to research a company:

- Glassdoor-www.glassdoor.com
- LinkedIn-www.linkedin.com
- The Muse-www.themuse.com
- Company Social Media Pages-Facebook, Twitter, Instagram



A SITE VISIT IS A TWO- WAY STREET

Many employers will welcome you to visit the site before you decide to accept a job. Remember, you are there to evaluate the employer and to determine if your expectations are met. Check out the *job content, company culture and values, organizational structure, and lifestyles (both at work and at leisure)*. Take note of how the employees interact with one another, and size- up the physical environment.

After the interview, attempt some sort of closure! If YOU decide the job is right for you, don't be afraid to tell the employer that you feel there is a good fit and you are eager to join their team. What do you have to lose by being honest? The employer is interested in hiring people who want to be associated with them. How will they know your level of interest if you fail to voice it?

Preparing for a Phone Interview

An employer may contact you to conduct a phone interview. This is also sometimes call a pre-screen interview. They may ask basic questions that pertain to the job description to determine if you are a fit for the position.

- Basic Screen-The recruiter or HR Manager will “filter” out candidates who are not a good fit for the position.
- On-the-spot Interview- This is an extended version of the basic screening interview. Because this is an unscheduled phone call, they are likely to ask, “Is this a good time to talk?” Part of the job search process is to be prepared for an interview that includes a phone interview as well.
- Pre-arranged interview- This is a scheduled appointment for the phone interview. The employer will call at the specified time.

With a phone interview, there are no visual cues. You are not able to see the face of the person interviewing you. You will want to make sure you listen carefully to each question and answer accordingly. Pauses in between questions is normal as the interviewer may be jotting down notes or deciding which question to ask next. It may also be hard to hear each other. Be aware of your surroundings, move to a quiet space where you won’t be interrupted.

Preparing for Video or Skype Interviews

While phone interviews are still popular, many companies are also using video interviewing programs such as Skype, Google Hangout, Apple’s FaceTime, etc. as a follow-up either to a qualifying phone interview or in place of a phone interview.

Here are some tips to make sure your video interview is a success:

- Well before the interview, go to the site that will handle the call and download the app. Make sure you are logged in and ready to do the interview **before** the interview.
- Get the ID or username of the person you are connecting with. This will ensure you are connected and ready to go by the time of the interview.
- Make sure your webcam is working
- Dress professionally
- Make sure there are no distractions during the interview. Turn off the TV, put pets in a quiet area, etc. Silence any other phones that may be a distraction.
- All other interview tips still apply.

Digital Interviews

Another form of technology that employers use to conduct interviews is a digital interview. Here’s how it works: the recruiter or hiring manager will send you a link to a web site. This will require a webcam. When you log in, you are given a prompt that the first question is coming. The question is asked by the system – for example, “Tell me about a time when you had a difficult customer, and how you handled the situation?” The system will give you 30 seconds to think about your answer, and then you will have about 2 minutes to give your answer to the camera. Your answers are captured digitally and stored on the company’s system. ²

² Life Skills Education

Targeted or Behavioral Based Interviewing

Many organizations now use an interview method called Targeted Selection to determine the best candidate for a job. The major principle of Targeted Selection is the past behavior is a good predictor of future behavior. The interview works the same way; interviewers ask candidates about their past behavior in order to assess how they will perform on the job in the future.

Questions to ask yourself

To help you develop information about “you,” ask yourself these questions

Your Qualifications

- What qualifications do you have that relate to the position?
- What skills or abilities have you developed recently?
- What are some examples from a previous job where you've shown initiative?
- What have been your greatest accomplishments?
- What is important to you in a job?
- What motivates you in your work?
- What qualities do you find important in a manager or a coworker?

Your Career Goals

- What would you like to be doing five years from now?
- How will you judge yourself to be a success?
- How will you achieve success?
- What type of position are you interested in?
- How will this job fit in your career plans?
- What do you expect from this job?
- When can you start?

Your Work Experience

- What have you learned from your past jobs?
- What are/were your major responsibilities?
- What specific skills used in previous jobs relate to this position?
- How does your previous experience relate to this position?
- What did you like most/least about your last job?

Your Education

- How has your education prepared you for this position?
- What were your favorite classes/activities at school?
- Why did you choose your major?
- Do you plan to continue your education?

Targeted or Behavioral Interview Questions

Some employers are using a Targeted or Behavioral Interview/Selection Process. These employers determine the set of skills or characteristics, which they need for the position. The questions they ask help draw upon past experience to predict future behaviors that are consistent with those skills or characteristics. There are examples of Targeted Behavioral Skills and Practice Interview Questions below.

Organization Skills

- Tell me about a project you had to plan for school or work. What steps were involved? What was the outcome?
- Describe a circumstance when you had several things to do in a limited time. What led up to the situation? How did you handle it? What was the outcome?
- Tell me about a time you had to work at a fast pace to meet a deadline.
- Tell me about a long or short-term plan you developed for your department.

Interpersonal Skills

- Describe a time when you had to deal with the public. Who was involved? What did you do? How did those involved respond?
- Give me an example of a time when you helped solve a problem within a group. What precipitated the problem? What action did you take? What was the outcome?
- Tell me about the way in which you worked with your direct reports/team members to develop new and creative ideas to solve business problems. Give me an example.
- Tell me about a time that you decided to take a risk that you later regretted.
- Tell me about a time that you inspired someone to work hard to do a good job. How did you do that?

Technical Skills

- Describe the most difficult problem you have ever faced at work or school. What steps or actions did you take to solve the problem? What results were achieved?
- Give me a situation in which you have been able to use a newly acquired skill or knowledge. What was the particular skill or knowledge? What was the situation? What was the outcome?
- What software packages have you used in your job?

Communication Skills

- Tell me about a situation when something you said or wrote was misunderstood. What did you do to resolve the situation? What was the result?
- Describe a situation in which you misunderstood something a supervisor or teacher wrote or said. Why did the misunderstanding occur? What were the results?
- What approaches have you used in presenting to different audiences? Give me specific examples.
- On occasion, we all wish we could change how we interact with customers. Tell me about a recent interaction you wish you could change.

What is the best way to answer those questions?

The easiest way to compose your response is to tell it as if you are relating a story to a friend. One preferred method to do this is to use **S.T.A.R...**

S.T.A.R. in Action

Question:

Tell us about a time that you had to learn something in a short period of time. How did you learn it?

Answer:

Situation/Task

“Several months ago my boss asked me to cover the duties of the executive secretary for one week. This included accessing and updating the on-line agenda book for the Chief Executive Officer. This was a newer and completely different system to the one that my boss used. I had only one day to become familiar with the system before taking over...”

Action

“I asked the executive secretary for a short training session on the system prior to her departure. Then I obtained a copy of the system and practiced using it in the day leading up to my coverage. I obtained a copy of the system manual that I read over and kept for reference. I also obtained the name of another person in the company who could help with difficulties should they arise. During the week, I referred to my manual and the on-line help functions when questions arose.”

Result

“I used the system for the week, and was able to successfully change and update the CEO’s schedule. The CEO thanked me for my help and efficiency. Although, there is still more to learn, I now feel confident that I can operate both on-line agenda systems effectively. I have successfully filled in for the executive secretary twice since then.”

Group or Panel Interviews

Many companies are changing their hiring practices to bring others into the process, and due to time constraints, this often means holding panel interviews instead of individual job interviews. At some point in your career, you'll most likely have to go through a panel interview.

To be successful in panel interviews, you'll want to slightly modify your preparation as well as your communication style during the actual interview. Here are seven tips:

1. If possible, find out who will be in the interview. Get their names, and titles- This will help you gain a better understanding of what will be important to each person. Are they in sales, service, marketing, operations, research and development, finance, process improvement, HR, etc.? Make sure you bring a resume for each person on the panel.

2. Brainstorm the questions each person might ask- Based on their role in the company, think through the types of questions they might ask you during the interview.

3. Introduce yourself to each person- When you show up for the panel interview, approach each person and introduce yourself while shaking his or her hand. Ask for a business card from everyone, so you can place these in front of you in the order in which they're sitting. If they don't have business cards with them, write down their names on a piece of paper (in the order in which they're sitting) and have this in front of you during the interview. That way, you'll know who you're addressing as you answer questions.

4. Modify your communication style- In an individual interview, you would respond to questions by answering the person directly. However, in a panel interview, you need to be careful not to exclude the rest of the panel during your comments. Look directly at the person asking the question and begin by answering to them, making eye contact. Then, look at the other panel members as you finish the rest of your comments, so each person feels included in the conversation.

5. Demonstrate that you're making connections during the conversation- *Instead of just* answering each person's question, see if you can make connections and demonstrate your active listening skills. Let's say that one panel member asked you to walk them through your process for creating a successful promotional program. Then, a little while later, someone asks you to "tell me about a time when something went wrong with a promotion you were running." You could refer back to your other answer by saying something like: "Joe, when you asked me to walk you through my process for creating a promotional program, one of the key steps I mentioned was to obtain feedback from the sales team and test the program from beginning to end with several members. Early in my career, I didn't realize the importance of obtaining feedback before rolling out a new sales promotion. I once tried to..." then tell how you didn't include that step, what happened, and what you learned from your mistake.

6. Modify how you ask questions at the end of the interview- Just like you would for an individual interview; come prepared with your list of potential questions to ask at the end of the interview. Then, see if you can relate any of your questions back to what was discussed during the panel interview. For example, if one of the interviewers asked you to tell them what you know about the company's key competitors, you might

relate back to that with one of your own questions, such as: “I know we discussed some of the company’s main competitors, but I’m curious to know what each of you see as the biggest threat to the growth of the company. Is it a competitor, or is it something else?”

7. Follow-up with each person- The interview thank you note is not dead. In the case of a panel interview, it means you should send a personalized thank you note to each member of the interview panel.³

³ Forbes

TRADITIONAL JOB INTERVIEW QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Unlike Behavioral-Based Interview Questions, which draw upon past experiences, the answers to this set of questions can be more easily rehearsed. You should know the answers to these questions since they will not change much from interview to interview. Read through the list, take the advice and apply it to your own experiences.

- **Tell me about yourself.**

This is the most often asked question in interviews. You need to have a short statement prepared in your mind. Be careful that it does not sound rehearsed. Limit it to work-related items unless instructed otherwise. Talk about things you have done and jobs you have held that relate to the position you are interviewing for. Prepare a script that includes the information you want to convey. Begin by talking about past experiences and proven success. Next, mention strengths and abilities.

- **What experience do you have in this field?**

Speak about specifics that relate to the position you are applying for. If you do not have specific experience, get as close as you can.

- **What do you know about this organization?**

This question is one reason to do some research on the organization before the interview. Find out where they have been and where they are going. What are the current issues and who are the major players?

- **Why do you want to work for this organization?**

This may take some thought and your answer certainly should be based on the research you have done on the organization. Sincerity is extremely important here and will easily be sensed. Relate it to your long-term career goals.

- **Explain how you would be an asset to this organization.**

You should be anxious for this question. It gives you a chance to highlight your best points as they relate to the position being discussed. Give a little advance thought to this relationship.

- **What have you done to improve your knowledge in the last year?**

Try to include improvement activities that relate to the job. A wide variety of activities can be mentioned as positive self-improvement. Have some good ones handy to mention.

- **What kind of salary are you looking for?**

A loaded question that you may lose if you answer this first, so do not answer it. Instead, say something like, "That's a tough question. Can you tell me the range for this position?" In most cases, the interviewer is taken off guard. Do research in advance to have a figure ready when needed.

- **Are you a team player?**

Be sure to have examples ready. Include specifics that show you often perform for the good of the team rather than for yourself.

- **Have you ever had to fire anyone? How did you feel about that?**

This is serious. Do not make light of it or in any way that seem like you like to fire people. At the same time, you will do it when it is the right thing to do. When it comes to the organization versus the individual who has created a harmful situation, you will protect the organization. Remember firing is not the same as layoff or reduction in force.

- **Have you ever been asked to leave a position?**

If you have not, say no. If you have, be honest, brief and avoid saying negative things about the people or organization involved.

- **Why should we hire you?**

Point out how your assets meet what the organization needs. Do not mention any other candidates to make a comparison.

- **What is your greatest strength?**

Numerous answers are good; just stay positive. A few good examples that should pertain to the job opening: Your ability to prioritize, your problem-solving skills, your ability to focus on projects, your professional expertise leadership skills and positive attitude.

- **What would your previous supervisor say your strongest point is?**

There are numerous good possibilities: loyal, energetic, a positive attitude, good leadership and team player, resourceful, creative, self-starter. Be careful with this it could come back to haunt you IF these are not true

- **Tell me about a problem you had with a supervisor.**

This is the biggest trap of all. This is a test to see if you will speak ill of your boss. If you fall for it and tell about a problem with a former boss, you may blow the interview right there. Stay positive and develop a poor memory about any trouble with a supervisor. Be as honest as you can.

- **Tell me about your ability to work under pressure.**

You may say that you thrive under certain types of pressure. Give an example that relates to the type of position applied for.

- **Describe your management style.**

Try to avoid labels. Some of the more common labels like progressive, sales clerk or consensus can have several meanings or descriptions depending on which management expert you listen to. The situational style is safe, because it says you will manage according to the situation, instead of one-size fits all.

- **Are you willing to work overtime? Nights? Weekends?**

This is up to you. Be honest.

- **Would you be willing to relocate if required?**

You should be clear on this with your family prior to the interview if you think there is a chance it may come up. Do not say yes just to get the job if the real answer is no. This can create many problems later on in your career. Be honest at this point and save yourself future grief.

- **What have you learned from mistakes on the job?**

Here you have to come up with something or you strain credibility. Make it small. An example would be working too far ahead of colleagues on a project and thus throwing off coordination.

- **Tell me about a time when you helped resolve a dispute between others.**

Pick a specific incident. Concentrate on your problem solving technique and not the dispute you settled.

- **Describe your work ethic.**

Emphasize benefits to the organization. Things like “determination to get the job done” and “work hard but enjoy your work” is a good description.

- **Do you have any questions for me?**

Always have some questions prepared. Look through their web site and mission/vision statements. Questions prepared where you will be an asset to the organization are good. “I looked at your company web site and was impressed with all the information available. “Or “How soon will I be able to be productive?” In addition, “What type of projects will I be able to assist on?” are examples.

How to handle questions about being terminated?

I left my last job without giving my two-week notice.

I was upset with the new management, their lack of compassion and just took-off without letting anyone know. I worked for this company for five years.

How can I handle this at an interview?

This is never a smart career move, however, it's water under the bridge and time to move on...Unfortunately, most employers will ask you "why you left your last job during the interview process" (this is one of their favorite questions.)

When answering this question: try to avoid giving too much information. do not offer answers to questions not asked!

- Be sure to be honest
- Tell them what you have learned

How to handle questions if you have a criminal background?

When they see what you wrote on your application, they might ask you to tell them a little more about the nature of your offense. Be prepared for this and practice ahead of time how you will answer.

- **Don't** provide any details about your offense. This protects you and shows respect if there is a victim to your offense
- **Do** put the offense in the past by saying something like:
 - "When I was young and foolish"
 - "Back when I was living (somewhere else)" If different from where you live now.
 - "Many years ago..."
- **Do** bring them into the present by telling them how you have changed and what kind of person you are now.
 - "Now that I have completed treatment/been sober/been clean for years"
 - "Now I have a family to take care of"
 - "I have learned from my mistakes, and don't hang around that crowd any more"⁴

⁴ CareerBuilder

SAMPLE QUESTIONS TO ASK THE INTERVIEWER

Do you know what a company is really like before you work there?

Interview the company...

1. How did this position become available?
2. Has this position experienced high turnover? If so, why?
3. How and when are new employees evaluated?
4. What is this company's vision?
5. What will my workplace look like & what type of environment will I work in?
6. Would you describe this position as "challenging"? Why or why not?
7. Generalize the work and educational experience of other employees I would work with.
8. What are the unique or hidden responsibilities to this position that I would not assume from the title?
9. How many additional people would my supervisor manage?
10. How would you describe the ideal employee for this position?
11. What are the company's goals in the years to come?
12. Can you describe the company culture?
13. What are some weaknesses at this company?
14. What do you like best about your job?
15. If you could, what would you like to change about your job or the company?

Try some of these questions on for size:

What type of growth and advancement opportunities does this position and the company offer?

This tells the hiring manager that you have a long-term vision for your future with them and that you're not just looking for a paycheck; you're looking to secure a career.

What exactly are the job responsibilities?

You've read the job description for the position; however, it's always good to confirm what the actual duties will be. You don't want to start your new job as an Engineer and find you're responsible for the daily coffee/donut run and answering the phones.

What would my first project be if I were hired?

This may give you a specific idea of what you can expect when you walk in the door/office that first day after being hired. It can also give you a "heads up" as to what will be expected of you, letting you build on those features during the interview.

Are continuing education and professional training stressed?

This shows your willingness to learn new skills and adapt to new challenges or ideas. **ADAPTABILITY** is extremely important in today's unpredictable economy and this skill could be crucial in retaining your job in company *reorganization*.

What is the company culture?

This will reveal those "intangibles" of a company that have nothing to do with professional experience or required education. If you need a traditional office/cubicle environment to stay focused and get the job done, you may want a more quiet traditional setting. If you know someone who works for the company, ask him or her about the atmosphere and traditions. Are they laid-back, or do they micro-manage?

What made you choose this company?

Hearing why a current employee chooses to work for the company may give you some insight into some of the strengths and opportunities within the organization.

When will a decision be made?

Knowing this will help you determine the timing of your interview follow-up activities. Send out the thank-you letter within 24-48 hours.

May I contact you if I have other questions?

This is a good question to wrap up the interview; it keeps the door open for further communication.

Common Interview Mistakes to Avoid

Want to know what **NOT** to do at the Job Interview? Learn from the mistakes of others:

DO NOT arrive late for the interview. Your interview starts as soon as you step out of your car onto the company's property.

DO NOT bring friends or children to the interview; attend interviews alone.

DO NOT state you are late because the directions you were given were not good. For directions go to www.mapquest.com or search the location on Google, Bing, etc.

DO NOT do your company research while at the interview by asking, "What do you guys do here?"

Research the company: The Internet is the best source of information.

DO NOT apply for a job unless you are qualified. You should have a connection to the company's requirements and the skills they need. Check out the culture to see if you will fit in.

DO NOT use the interviewer's desk as yours, and don't lean forward into their space.

DO NOT answer questions with a simple "yes" or "no"; expand a bit and give examples.

DO NOT ramble on-and-on, or give personal information, stick to answering the questions asked.

DO NOT leave your cell phone on, and NEVER answer your cell while interviewing.

DO NOT call the interviewer by his/her first name, or use the wrong name.

DO NOT badmouth your current or former employer; think of the skills you acquired you can bring to them.

DO NOT mention salary at the beginning of the interview.

DO NOT reply "No" when asked, "Do you have any questions?" Do your homework; visit the company website and know their mission/vision statement. Be armed with questions; check out our resource area here at Capital Area Michigan Works!

DO NOT forget to send a Thank-You Letter. Ask for a business card for correct information.

RATE YOURSELF AFTER THE INTERVIEW



IF YOU WERE INTERVIEWING YOU!

When the interview is over and you've left, the hiring manager will evaluate your interview.

How would YOU evaluate YOUR interview? 1= excellent 2= good 3= fair 4= poor

Appearance: 1 2 3 4

Your grooming, hygiene and dress.

Ambition: 1 2 3 4

Your determination. Did you demonstrate the desire to succeed?

Alertness: 1 2 3 4

Your ability to understand and identify important issues. Did you demonstrate that you could hit the ground running?

Attitude: 1 2 3 4

Your enthusiasm, eagerness, outlook, and approach. How well did you demonstrate a positive attitude?

Composure: 1 2 3 4

Your confidence and ability to handle difficult questions. Did you demonstrate self-control?

Conversation: 1 2 3 4

Did you speak clearly and concisely without trying to control the interview?

Experience: 1 2 3 4

Your qualifications. Did you demonstrate that you could perform the duties the job requires?

Knowledge: 1 2 3 4

Your knowledge of the job or field. Did you demonstrate that you're familiar with the work?

Sociability: 1 2 3 4

Your warmth and friendliness. (People hire people they like.) Were you friendly?

Stability: 1 2 3 4

Your ability to fit in, do the work, and be consistent. Did you demonstrate stability?

How do you think you did overall? 1 2 3 4