



SDIEA - YEAH Program
Interview Skills

Natalie Perrett

Preparing for the Interview:

Research the employer

Learn as much about the company and its reputation as you can. Start with their website read about them in the press and if possible speak to others who work there or know the company well. Know:

- The size of the company
- The products and/or services they supply
- The workplace culture
- Observe the people who work there can see what they are wearing

Now that you have done your research you will be able to prepare for your interview. Make sure you:

- Know where you are going
- Know who you are seeing
- Know what questions you want to ask
- Think about what the employer is looking for

For your interview, even if you can't afford the latest clothing or shoes, what you do wear should be neat and clean, including shoes. What you wear depends entirely on the type of job and company. If you're unsure, it's best to dress conservatively in dark pants and a long sleeve shirt. The clothes you wear should be appropriate to the position you are applying for and fit in with the workplace culture. You are not there to make a fashion statement, you are there to fit the culture and secure a job.

Avoid:

- Dirty, stained or torn clothing
- Dirty shoes
- Noisy jewellery
- Loud ties or shirts
- Sheer fabrics and low cut blouses
- Bringing large and bulky or numerous bags
- Anything else that's going to distract you or the employer

If you wear make-up or perfume, it should be applied appropriate to the workplace and fingernails should be clean and cut to the appropriate length for the type of work undertaken. Hair should be neat.

Consider what others around you at work are wearing as a guide:

- Avoid overpowering perfume or aftershave
- Clean washed and tidy hair, boys get your hair cut
- Do not smoke prior to the interview
- Avoid bright nail polishes
- Remove any facial piercings
- Ensure that any body art is covered

Preparing for the Interview:

Questions You Can Ask

Have you any questions? Of all the questions an interviewer is likely to ask, this is the one that most job seekers find the most difficult. There is no excuse to answer 'NO'. This is your opportunity to show your interest in their business and that you have done your research. Here is a list of questions you could ask, do not ask all of them, and select four or five of them that are relevant to the position and practice them.

- What are my prospects for advancement once I have demonstrated my abilities in this position?
- What are the most important things you would like to see me demonstrate in this position?
- What are the chances of an apprenticeship or traineeship if I work hard?
- What do you expect of the person who holds this job?
- What does the job involve?
- What further studying could I do?
- Where and who will I be working with?
- What training will be given?
- Could you tell me more about the business?
- What are the dress requirements?
- How soon can I start?
- When will you be making a decision?
- How will I find out? Can I call you?
-

Questions You Could Be Asked

The sorts of questions which you may be asked include:

- When have you worked in a team? How did the team organise itself? What was your role?
- Have you had to organise an event or to meet an important deadline? How did you go about it?
- When have you had to solve a problem? What was the problem? How was this resolved? What was your role?
- When has poor communication caused a problem at work or in the class? What was the communication? How could it have been improved?
- When have you had to cope with a big change in your work life or personal life? What steps did you take to cope with the change?
- What new skills and/or knowledge have you learned in the last 12 months? What helps you learn new things?
- Have you ever had to prioritise a number of tasks that needed to be completed? What steps did you use to do this?
- What software are you familiar with?

Arriving At the Interview:

Remember, your interview really begins as soon as you arrive at the place of interview. Maintaining a professional attitude even as you leave your house will not only help prevent any potentially embarrassing moments before you get to the interview, it will also keep you in a good frame of mind. Here are some tips to keep

In mind as you head to the interview.

- Know who you are going to see and ask for him/her by name
- You may be asked to wait for a little while, keep calm and take the opportunity to go over your answers to some of the questions you think you might be asked
- You are being judged from the moment you enter the premises, so always treat the receptionist with respect and courtesy as they will probably report to the interviewer on your behaviour and manners. The opinions of the receptionist and other employees often influence and interviewers judgement.

The interview the first five minutes often sets the tone for the rest of the job interview. If you can make a good impression and maintain a relaxed attitude from the outset, you will find the rest of the interview will roll right along.

These are some suggestions to help you make sure the interview gets off on the right foot:

- Greet the interviewer, this sounds simple, but many people forget this basic courtesy
- Smile, a sincere smile can do a lot to put both of you at ease
- Introduce yourself, do not assume the interviewer already knows your name
- Shake hands firmly and warmly using the same amount of pressure as the interviewer does
- Make eye contact when speaking, on the other hand, do not stare the interviewer down either. Maintain eye contact in a way that you would with a friend during a conversation
- Stand until the interviewer asks you to sit down
- Relax and sit naturally but do not slump in your chair or lean on the interviewer's desk. Keep your hands visible, do not sit on them, cross your arms or hide them behind your back
- Be prepared to talk about yourself
- Speak in a firm, clear confident voice.
- Maintain a positive attitude throughout the interview

For many of us the first formal contact with an employer can be a scary experience. Some reminders to help you through the interview process:

- Present your resume
- Be prepared to tell the interviewer more about your education, training, skills, work experience and desirable personality traits
- Look at the interviewer, do not fidget
- Let the employer have control, answer questions sincerely and completely, and be aware of natural pauses to ask you questions
- It is okay to ask for clarification if you don't understand a question, it is better to ask for clarification and give a good answer.
- If the interviewer ever addresses a gap in your skills or knowledge, express your willingness to learn.
- Don't calm up, for most questions the interviewer wants more than a simple "YES" or "NO" answer
- Do not give long winded monologues that contain little relevant information, do not waffle on
- Be aware of why you want this job, stress your good points

Closing the Interview:

You are almost done with the interview, everything has gone well and you have answered the interviewer's questions well. You feel good about the process or maybe things did not go as well as you would have liked. Whichever is the case, make sure you leave the interview on a positive note. Many people have left an interview feeling they blew it, only to be surprised by a phone call from the employer a few days later offering them the job. You can never be sure what the other person thought of the interview so it's a good idea to take every opportunity to leave a positive impression.

Things to do as you leave the interview:

- If the employer asks to call or return for another interview, make a written note as to the date, time and place
- If the employer does not let you know when a further contact will be made, ask when you may call to know his/her decision
- Thank the interviewer for the interview and his/her time
- Shake hands when you leave
- Leave promptly when the interview has ended
- On leaving thank the receptionist

Ways **NOT** to get the job:

- Poor person appearance and presentation
- Mobile phone turned on or ringing during interview
- Not listening to the interviewer
- Ipod or MP3's visible, whether on or off
- Lack of interest or enthusiasm, in different to the job
- Over emphasis on money, interested only in what you will make not about the job
- Criticising your last employer
- Not looking at the interviewer, poor eye contact
- Limp fishy handshake
- Late to the interview
- Not expressing your thanks for the interviewers time
- Not asking questions about the and the company
- Unwillingness to go where the job is
- Conceited " know it all" answers
- Not speaking clearly, poor grammar or using slang
- Lack of planning for career, no goals set
- Lack of confidence
- Unwilling to start at the bottom
- Making excuses, hedging on unfavourable feedback in your past employment
- Lack of tact, speaking out of turn
- Behaving immaturely
- Sloppy application, resume or cover letter
- Want a job only for a short time

Interview Feedback

So why bother with interview feedback? Because interviewing is a skill, one of the most important skills you can possess. Feedback is one of the most effective tools you have to improve as a candidate.

You can use your interview feedback to focus more on the things that work, and to eliminate those things that don't. Whatever the outcome of an interview, feedback is crucial. Perhaps the biggest difference between successful and unsuccessful interviewees is their understanding of the interview process, and how different aspects of performance affect the outcome.

"If at first you don't succeed, try again". Sometimes the feedback you receive may not be positive, and the outcome may not be what you hoped for. We all meet with disappointment along the way but how you respond says a lot about your character. The best candidates take feedback from any setbacks and use it to improve.

In order to be successful at anything you have to be willing to face temporary setbacks and you often learn more from setbacks than you do from winning, because you are forced to evaluate a situation. So evaluate, improve, and then move forward.