

The Traditional Interview

Interviewing is an interactive process that allows you, the candidate, and your interviewer, the employer, an opportunity to meet, exchange information, and evaluate whether or not there's a fit between you both. Your job is to personalize your cover letter and resume, by talking in-depth about your experiences, skills, and goals, and how they relate to the employer. The employer will evaluate your knowledge about yourself and the employer, your attitude, your confidence, your appearance, and your ability to do the job.

Before the Interview

In order to interview successfully, prepare in advance. Conduct in-depth research about the organization. Read the job description carefully and list the skills required in the ideal candidate. Use this information to analyze your interests, skills, and values, and how they compare to the organization's needs. For each skill required, think about how you gained that skill and where you've demonstrated it. For each item on your resume, be prepared to talk about what you did and its significance. Review sample interview questions and consider how you might answer them.

During the Interview

The interview will likely have a definite beginning, middle and end. Many interviews will run something like this:

- Introduction: The interviewer greets you and gets a first impression of which they will seek to confirm or reject throughout the interview. Provide a firm handshake and a smile. Stand up and (later) sit straight. Project a positive, confident image, and be sensitive to your own and the interview's body cues. Establish a rapport with the employer through your conversation, attitude, and awareness.
- Their Questions: The interviewer will ask questions designed to get you to talk about your experiences and background. They may start off asking you to tell something about yourself. Answer with information about you that explains why you are there talking with them. Describe your interest in the organization. Give your answers a general theme, which you can summarize easily or elaborate on, if necessary. Back up your answers with examples that demonstrate your abilities and skills. Relate them to the employer. Keep your answers clear and concise.
- Your Questions: Generally, the interviewer will give you an opportunity to ask questions about the organization and the job. Demonstrate that you've done research on the organization and want to learn more.
- Closing: The employer should confirm what the next step is in the interviewing process. If they don't, ask when you may expect to hear from them. Conclude the interview by asking for a business card and reiterating your interest in the position.

After the Interview

Follow up within a few days after the interview by sending a thank you note to your interviewer. Personalize it with something discussed in the interview, which supports your fit with the employer or job. Take notes on what you learned from your interview and apply it to future interviews. If you don't hear from the employer within the specified time, call to inquire about your status and restate your interest.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

"Tell me about yourself."

"Why are you interested in working for _____?"

"What are a few of your strengths? Weaknesses?"

"How does this position fit into your career goals?"

"What has been the biggest challenge you've faced and how have you met it?"

"How will you contribute to this organization?"

"Describe a time you worked as a part of a team and how you helped the team succeed."

"What leadership experiences do you have?"

"How did you choose this major and why?"

"Give an example of a time you dealt with a high-pressure situation."

"What have you learnt from your past jobs?"

"How do you manage stress?"

"What do you see yourself doing five years from now? Ten years from now?"

"What do you expect from a job?"

"How do you organize and plan your projects?"

"What's a typical day like for you?"

"When have you shown initiative and willingness to work?"

"How would your boss describe you?"

"Why did you choose U.Va.?"

"What do you know about this organization?"

"What interests you in our products/services? How would you improve them?"

"What style of boss do you prefer?"

"What motivates you?"

"What did you like most/least about your last job?"

"How would you describe your work style?"

"Describe your biggest accomplishment."