



Basic Interview Guidelines

Ready Reference ♦ G-1

College of Engineering, Architecture & Technology ♦ Career Services

At last! This is the event you have worked so hard to achieve – the job interview. The interview is your greatest opportunity to sell the skills and qualities that you have to offer an employer. Doing well in your coursework, being involved in activities, building a strong network, and developing an effective resume and cover letter are all very important in the job search process. However, the job interview is the most critical link in the hiring process. Learn to use it to your advantage by following the guidelines in this Ready Reference.

Three Simple Steps to a Successful Interview

1. Prepare
2. Practice
3. Sell

In an interview, the “winners” exhibit confidence and enthusiasm about the career opportunity. Through their words and behavior, they demonstrate self-confidence and a strong work ethic. The interviewer feels they will be capable of doing the job with little training or supervision.

Prepare

- Understand and know yourself. What are your strengths and development areas? What are your career and life goals? Self-assessment is a highly valued skill in today’s work environment.
- Understand and be prepared for the interpersonal dynamics of the job interview. Look at the job interview as an open exchange of information between you and the interviewer. The interviewer is as interested in your interpersonal skills and interactions as the qualifications you bring to the interview.
- Be knowledgeable about the position, organization, and community before you go into the interview. A little research will go a long way in the job interview.
- Adjust your e-mail address and voice mail messages. You are now moving from a college environment to a professional environment. The rules are different. wildbeast@nomail.com and “Hey dude, leave a message when you hear that machine do its thing” are not appropriate when an employer wants to contact you.

~95% of students could benefit from mock interviews, yet only 5% participate in these activities.

Practice

- Participate in mock interviews. Contact CEAT Career Services to schedule a 1-on-1 interview.
- Tape record and/or videotape mock interviews, noting annoying verbal or body language habits.
- Practice your responses. Although every interview is different, it is easy enough to know the different types of questions you will be asked in an interview and practice your responses in advance.

60% of people don’t get the job they want because they don’t sell themselves in the interview.

Sell

- Most interviews begin with the question, “Tell me a little about yourself.” Use this open-ended question to sell your skills, abilities, and qualifications to the interviewer.
- Demonstrate enthusiasm, a positive attitude, and a strong interest in the position. There can be no substitute for these first impression qualities in an interview.

- Show what you can do for the organization beyond your qualifications or your “hard skills.” Employers are increasingly interested in candidates with a high EQ (Emotional Quotient). High EQ people exhibit strengths in five areas: self-awareness, ability to manage emotions, motivating oneself, empathy, and social competence. Exhibiting and discussing these qualities throughout the interview process will give you an important edge.
- Listen for “trick questions” such as “What’s your greatest weakness or development area?” First and foremost, be honest. We all have development areas. Be specific in terms of how you are working to improve these areas.

First Impressions are Critical

- Dress Appropriately.
- Be early. Plan your trip and parking arrangements in advance.
- Turn off your cell phone.
- Make all correspondence neat and error-free. Have CEAT Career Services proof it.
- Make small talk. Look for a connection to the interviewer, such as a common interest.
- Treat the receptionist or administrative assistant with the same respect you would the interviewer.

According to a recent survey, 91% of executives from the nation’s largest companies consider their administrative assistants’ opinions of candidates an important part of the selection process.

The Art of Answering Questions Effectively

- Take your time. Use pauses and silence to formulate your answers.
- Don’t wing it. Prepare in advance.
- Answer the questions directly and concisely.
- Back up your assertions with concrete, real-life examples.

Your Turn to Ask Questions

- In advance, write down big-picture questions that address large organizational issues, such as company goals, educational philosophy, etc. Refer to these as necessary.
- Do not, in the first interview, ask any questions related to salary, vacation, holidays, or other benefits. These kinds of questions are best addressed at the point of the job hire.

Panel Interviews: When You’re Interviewed by More Than One Person

- Respond to each member of the group on an individual basis. Refer to each person by name whenever possible.
- Don’t ignore anyone. Maintain good eye contact with all members of the team.
- Take your time, just as you would in a 1-on-1 interview.

The Follow-Up

- Send a thank-you note to each person in the interview.
- The note can be handwritten on a thank-you card or a standard typed letter. Less than 20% of candidates send a follow-up or thank-you. Be one of them!
- Free thank-you cards are available in the CEAT Career Services office.

Make the Difference!

Given two candidates with similar qualifications, the candidate that demonstrates good grooming, direct eye contact, courtesy, enthusiasm, confidence, and a down-to-earth, positive attitude will always be hired first. Remember to be yourself and enjoy the experience.

Qualities Valued in a Job Interview

- *Honesty/Integrity*
- *Enthusiasm*
- *Verbal Skills*
- *Listening Skills*
- *Sense of Humor*
- *Strong Work Ethic*