

CBAT Career Services: INTERVIEWING SKILLS OVERVIEW

1. The Art of Interviewing:

- Know yourself, your resume, the company. RESEARCH!!!
- Know the company's needs. RESEARCH!!!
- Demonstrate how you can add value to the organization by fulfilling needs or solving problems.
- PREPARATION is key!

2. Interview Structure:

- Greeting; firm handshake!
- Small Talk: "Nice weather we're having." "How about those Bucs?"
- Lower Order Questions: Easy questions, requiring little thought to answer.
- Higher Order Questions: More difficult questions, requiring self knowledge and thought.
- *Your* Questions: Memorize 3-5 good questions to ask the employer; write in portfolio in case you forget them.
- Ask, as the interview ends: For business card(s) and timeframe for decision making.

3. Interviews MUSTS:

- Shake hands firmly. Two firm pumps.
- Sit erect.
- Maintain good eye contact.
- Indicate through body language that you are engaged in the conversation.
- Keep your hands in your lap.
- Listen.
- Speak slowly and enunciate your words.

4. Types of Interviews:

- Behavioral Interview: Employers view past behavior as an indicator of future performance. These questions ask you to share details about your life experiences in various situations. Use the **STAR** (Situation-Task-Approach/Action-Result) method for answering behavioral based questions.
- Serial Interview: Sequential interviews with several people; make each person feel as if he/she is a key player in the decision making process.
- Group/Panel Interview: Make eye contact with everyone in the group, focusing on the person who asked the question; this technique is frequently used by organizations that focus on team based decision making.
- Stress Interview: A test to assess your ability to perform under pressure. "Sell me this pen." This technique is more common in the sales environment.
- Case Method Interview: Requires the candidate to offer a solution (step-by-step) to an industry specific problem in order to evaluate the candidate's problem solving and analytical abilities. Not as common. *Example*: A chain of grocery stores currently receives its stock on a decentralized basis. Each store deals independently with its

suppliers. The president of the chain is wondering whether the firm can benefit from a centralized warehouse. What are the key considerations in making the decision?

5. Interview Questions—General Suggestions:

- Be very familiar with behavioral based interview questions and methodologies.
- Make your answers relevant to the position you are interviewing for.
- Structure your answers; don't go off on a tangent.
- Listen. Take great care to *answer the question you are asked*.
- Practice—and then practice again. Don't memorize your answers. Video-taped mock interviews help you truly see yourself in an interview setting.

6. Interview Attire:

MEN

- Single-breasted navy, charcoal gray, or black two piece suit. A subtle stripe or pattern is acceptable
- White, long-sleeved oxford cloth shirt
- Conservative tie
- Dark socks that, when you are seated, will remain above the pants cuff
- Belt or shoes of matching color, typically black or cordovan. Well polished shoes
- Professional briefcase or portfolio instead of backpack
- Minimal cologne
- Neat hair style
- No more than 1 ring on each hand
- Professional watch, especially one without an alarm that may sound during the interview
- Trimmed and clean finger nails
- Good hygiene!
- Remove body piercing, including earrings, and cover tattoos
- No chewing gum!
- Don't reek of tobacco!

WOMEN

- Skirted suit with skirt length appropriately at or just above the knees. Suit jacket can be single or double-breasted. Pant suits are also acceptable
- Navy, charcoal gray or black are the preferred suit colors
- White, off white or light cotton or silk blouse with conservative necklines and hidden or conservative buttons
- Low to medium leather heel with closed toe. NO CLOGS, PLEASE!!!!
- Neutral hosiery
- Moderate amount of jewelry or accessories--no more than 1 ring on each hand
- Professional briefcase or portfolio instead of backpack or purse
- Minimal makeup and perfume
- Trimmed fingernails with conservative color, if any
- Good hygiene!
- Neat hair style with hair pulled back from face
- No chewing gum!
- Don't reek of tobacco!

BUSINESS CASUAL: General Rules

MEN:

- Not expected to wear ties

- Business or sports jacket is appropriate
- Stylish, solid colored pants
- Long-sleeved solid or striped dark shirt
- Dark socks
- Matching belt and shoes

WOMEN:

- Business skirt or pants
- Conservative blouse or sweater
- Blazer or vest is appropriate
- Flat or low heels
- Neutral hosiery
- Belt, scarf, and accessories should remain understated

NON-BUSINESS CASUAL ATTIRE:

- Jeans, tennis shoes, tight or short skirts, t-shirts and sweatshirts
- Business casual does not apply to grooming standards. (*Your appearance should remain neat and respectable. This includes nicely pressed clothing, polished shoes, and conservative accessories.*)
- **Interview Dress web site designed specifically for college students:**
www.symsdress.com

7. Alternative Interviews:

- Telephone or Videoconference: Don't smoke, chew gum, or drink. Speak clearly. Use formal address unless otherwise directed. If called on your cell phone while driving, pull over and establish a different day/time for the interview.
- Lunch/Dinner Interviews: May be part of an entire day of interviewing on site during a company visit.

8. Lunch and Dinner Interview Tips:

- Screen the restaurant ahead of time if possible.
- Do not go to the interview hungry; the meal is part of the interview process.
- Order food that is easy to eat; **do not order an expensive entrée or alcohol.**
- Use your manners; "thank you" and "please" will score you points AND the recruiters are watching.

9. Meal Etiquette:

- Liquids are on the right and solids are on the left.
- Use silverware, working from the outside in.
- Place your napkin in your lap once all in the party are seated.
- Remember lessons from Mom: Elbows off of the table, chew with your mouth closed, and don't talk with your mouth full.
- Break off pieces from your roll, eating one bite at a time.
- Place your napkin in your seat or on the arm of your chair if you must leave the table during the meal.
- Place your knife and fork at the 4 o'clock position when you have finished eating.
- Place your napkin next to your place when you are done eating.
- Remember to thank the employer for the meal; follow up with a thank you letter, reiterating your interest in the position.

10. The On-Site Interview or Company Visit:

- Research, research, research. Make a T chart with skills/responsibilities of the position on left and your “hits” in terms of areas of knowledge, skills, and abilities on the right. Be ready to market yourself based on what you would bring to the organization—VALUE ADDED.
- Focus on what makes you unique as a candidate.
- Google names of staff members who are listed on your “interview itinerary.”
- Make sure that you answer questions consistently; on site interviews are typically panel or serial.

11. The Company Visit: Expenses and Arrangements:

- Most office visits are pre-paid and pre-arranged by the company.
- ALWAYS keep receipts, even if the company pre-pays.
- ALWAYS carry cash for incidental expenses such as cab fare and tips.
- Bring a credit card for emergencies and car rental if necessary.
- Make sure you have the contact name and phone number as well as directions to the facility. Make a trial run to the facility the night before the interview, if possible.
- If traveling by plane, wear interview attire on the plane in case your luggage gets lost. Better yet, bring carry on luggage.
- Ask hotel staff about luggage storage if you know that you will miss the posted check out time.

12. The Company Visit: What to Look for During the Visit

- Observe human interactions; how do employees interact with each other?
- Evaluate how the work environment “feels.”
- Evaluate the corporate culture; how does this dovetail with your work personality?
- ***Remember, you are evaluating the company as a prospective employer just as much as they are evaluating you as a candidate.***

13. As the Company Visit Closes:

- Make sure that all of your questions have been answered.
- ALWAYS ask for business cards so you can write and *send your thank you letters within 24-48 hours*. Make your letters personal; try to mention something from the interview that will help the interviewers remember who you are.
- ALWAYS ask about the timeframe for decision making.
- **NEVER ask questions about salary, vacation, or other benefits**, unless the interviewer raises these topics. (You should, however, know what the salary range is for the position you are interviewing for within a specific geographic area.)
- If you receive an offer during the company visit (which is uncommon), ask for at least *one week* to think about it. *Always ask for time to carefully evaluate any offers you receive.*