Introduction

If you’re reading this guide, you more than likely have an interview in your near future. Congratulations! This guide will help you understand the event you’re about to experience and will help prepare you for a successful outcome. Topics covered here include:

- Interview Objectives
- Interview Formats
- Preparing for the Interview
- During the Interview
- After the Interview

Interview Objectives

As you would expect, a hiring manager wants to hire the right candidate. To make sure the right candidate is selected, an interviewer’s basic objective is to assess the extent to which you have the skills required to successfully perform the job. He/she will assess your personal skills—your general behavior and “soft skills” (communication, interpersonal skills, initiative, etc.) and your technical ability—your skills and knowledge related to the respective industry or field.

Your objective is to receive a job offer and get hired. The way to do that is to present a compelling case, demonstrating that you possess the skills and abilities to perform the job and that you’re the “right” candidate for the job and the company.

Hiring managers may use a variety of interviewing formats. The next section discusses some of the common formats.

Interview Formats

There are several types of interview formats that recruiters and hiring managers use. Opinions differ on which format results in the best selection or most productive employee. As you experience interviews, you will likely find that interviewers use a combination of formats. Some of the most common formats are presented below.

Telephone Interviews  Used for screening, telephone interviews are intended to identify the strongest candidates for advancement to the next round of interviews. They are relatively short, lasting less than one hour. Telephone interviews should be taken just as seriously as any other type of interview and require appropriate preparation.

- Be sure you have your resume and cover letter in front of you, as the interviewer probably will.
- Also, make sure your environment is such that you can concentrate on the discussion at hand. If possible, a conference room or private room should be used to avoid distractions and background noise.
- Finally, consider using a land-line telephone rather than a cellular phone to avoid dropped calls due to connectivity issues, low batteries, etc.

One-on-One Interviews  The one-on-one interview format is the traditional interview format, where one interviewer interviews one candidate. You may have a series of one-on-one interviews with several different interviewers. For example, you may have a one-on-one interview with a human resources representative, then an interview with the hiring manager and then a teammate.
Panel Interviews  In a panel interview, you will be interviewed by a panel of interviewers at one time, with the interviewers taking turns at posing questions. When answering questions, be sure to make eye contact with each interviewer to include them in the discussion, and end your response by making eye contact with the interviewer who asked you the question.

Situational Interviews  Recruiters and hiring managers using a situational interview format will ask candidates to imagine a set of circumstances and then explain how they would respond in that situation. The questions are future oriented.
- Interviewers will typically develop situational challenges that employees encounter on the job, so the more insight you can get into what the position entails, you can be better prepared.

Case Interviews  In a case interview, you can expect to be given a situation and asked to resolve the situation. The case problem is often a business situation similar to those encountered on the job. Interviewers use this interview format to evaluate analytical ability and problem-solving skills. Rather than focusing on a “right” answer, interviewers are gauging your thought process and approach to problem solving.
- Don’t hesitate to ask the interviewer questions that will enable you to understand the situation or get pertinent information that may make one solution more appropriate than another.
- Think out loud so the interviewer can get a sense of how you approach solving the problem and developing solutions.
- Many companies that use case interviews have a portion of their Careers or College Recruiting web pages where they present sample cases and help candidates understand what they can expect during a case interview.

Behavioral Interviews  The behavioral interview format has become increasingly popular, as some interviewers believe the premise that the most accurate predictor of future performance is past performance in a similar situation. Interviewers will ask you to provide an example of a time you were in a particular situation or encountered a specific challenge. These questions often start with, “Tell me about a time when…” or “Give me an example of…”. Interviewers will use your responses to evaluate your skills, abilities and interests; they also attempt to understand your ability to learn from positive and negative experiences.

Tell the interviewer about a particular situation rather than providing a general response. Keep your answer succinct and focused, while providing enough relevant detail. Preparation and practice are key. Use the list of Common Interview Questions and the Candidate Match Profile (in the Preparing for the Interview section) to develop examples and practice answering questions so your memory is refreshed regarding your experience and achievements.

The STAR Technique:  To effectively and completely answer behavioral interviewing questions, use the STAR technique.

S: Describe the **Situation**
T: Describe the **Task** presented
A: Describe the **Action** you took (if describing a group interaction, focus on your specific action)
R: Describe the **Result** of your action (this is an opportunity to explain what you learned, if the result was not as positive as desired)
Interview Formats, Continued

Lunches, Dinners, Tours and Information Sessions  Just as interviewers may use a combination of interview formats, they may also conduct interviews over lunch or dinner, include a tour and/or information session as part of the recruiting process.

- Brush up on your dining etiquette by attending an etiquette dinner (offered during the Spring and Fall semesters by VCU Business Career Services), and/or researching dining etiquette. Remember, this is a continuation or part of the interview and you'll be evaluated. So, don't eat the french fries with your fingers and don't order a “messy” entrée.
- A tour may be offered as part of the interview process. If you sense that this may be the case, inquire about appropriate clothing—particularly shoes, contacts and colognes. Some industries involve complex manufacturing processes that require “clean room” environments where certain items are not allowed for safety and quality reasons.
- Some industries regularly incorporate information sessions as part of the interviewing process. Such sessions are intended to educate interested applicants on just what they can expect when working there. Topics can include information about the work environment, shifts, safety restrictions and more. They key here is, you'll be interacting with other potential candidates. Maintain your professionalism and respect as you interact with your competition.

Preparing for the Interview

You’ve invested time and effort searching for a job. Further your investment by properly preparing for your interview. The following section will help you understand what inquiries to make when the interview is scheduled, research focus areas, questions to anticipate and more.

Pre-Interview Inquiries  When scheduling your interview, try to get as much information as you can to help you prepare. Some of the following suggestions may seem excessive, but having the information can divert mishaps like a late arrival or non-admittance to the interview facility due to lack of proper identification.

- Interview format—one-on-one, panel style, etc. If the interview will involve a tour, ask about wardrobe restrictions/requirements.
- Interviewers—names and titles of the individuals with whom you will be meeting.
- Logistics—obviously you’ll need to know the date, time and location. But don’t forget to ask about parking and whether there is a specific building number and/or entrance.
- Security—some organizations have strict security enforcement policies and require visitors to check in and out at a security station. You may also be required to produce photo identification.

Pre-Interview Research  Before your interview, conduct research on the career field, employer and position.

- Know current trends in your chosen field. Newsletters and web sites off professional organizations related to your field can be helpful resources. Wetfeet.com, Rileyguide.com and Vault.com are just a few of the web sites devoted to career field and employer research.
- Read the employer’s printed materials and web site. Become familiar with the mission of the organization and be prepared to talk about why you want to work for this particular organization.
- Know the position description well. Be prepared to talk about your interest in the position and how you are qualified for it. Use the Candidate Match Profile tool discussed further in this section to help align your qualifications with the position.
Preparing for the Interview—Pre-Interview Research, Continued

Attire
Your professional appearance is an important part of the first impression you will make on the interviewer. Being appropriately dressed demonstrates that you are professional and well prepared to make the transition from campus to the work environment.

Each industry has its own dress code. Fields such as law, banking and accounting frequently have a stricter set of guidelines than advertising, retail and sales, which allow more casual dress. Remember that you should dress more formally for the interview than you would dress once you are in the job. Expect to be more formally dressed even than your interviewer. The level of formality you project shows that you understand the importance of the situation and respect the person you are meeting. When in doubt, making a conservative clothing choice for your interview is usually the safest.

### Recommendations for Women
- Conservative, dark suit (knee length skirt or pants).
- Avoid low riding pants and tight clothing.
- Collared, button-down blouse or modest scoop neck top. Avoid camisoles, low cut and/or sheer tops.
- Comfortable shoes—flats or low heels.
- Wear plain, non-patterned hosiery.
- Conservative makeup and nails (clear or very sheer nail polish).
- Minimal jewelry (avoid dangling or large earrings; simple studs are best). No nose or tongue piercings.
- Avoid perfume or scented lotion.
- A small purse and padfolio are suggested.

### Recommendations for Men
- Conservative, dark suit (navy, black, grey; pinstripe or solid).
- Ironed shirt in a conservative color (white, blue)
- Tie with understated pattern.
- Matching belt and shoes, dark socks to mid-calf.
- Conservative, lace-up dress shoes, cleaned and polished.
- Hair cut, shaven, well groomed. Avoid aftershave or cologne.
- No jewelry.
- A padfolio is suggested.

**Common Interview Questions**
Listed below are some common interview questions with tips for answering them. As you prepare for your interview, it is not necessary to memorize answers; rather, practice talking about yourself, your skills, and your experiences so that you are prepared to answer a variety of questions.

**Personal Questions:** These questions target your interests, qualities, goals, strengths and weaknesses.
- Whenever discussing weaknesses or failures, be honest and give examples of real weaknesses. Focus on how you work to compensate for or improve those weaknesses, and what you have learned from your failures.
- When telling an employer about yourself, focus on relevant information. Think about your qualities, experiences, skills, and achievements that will be important to the employer.

1. Tell me a little about yourself. (Keep your answer career oriented.)
2. What are your strengths? Weaknesses?
3. What causes you stress and how do you handle it?
4. Give me three adjectives that describe you.
5. What do you consider your greatest accomplishment?
6. Who is your role model and why?
7. Who have you been a role model to and why?
8. What do you like to do in your spare time?
9. Why are you interested in this position?
10. Where do you see yourself in five years?
11. How do you define success?
12. How do you feel about working nights and weekends for special events and activities?
Preparing for the Interview--Common Interview Questions, Continued

**Employer Information:** These questions are about your knowledge of the employer and your interest in the organization.

1. What do you know about our company/organization?
2. What do you know about this position?
3. Why do you want to work in this field/for our company?
4. What are the most important features you are looking for in a job/supervisor?
5. What type of steps do you take to stay informed of new developments within your career field?
6. What can you contribute to our organization?

**Education:** These questions focus on your classes and campus involvement.

- Anticipate difficult questions. Do you have a withdrawal or failing grade on your transcript? If so, be prepared to explain those. Take responsibility for your grades. Focus on what you learned from the situation and discuss how you have improved your study skills and ability to prioritize.
- Be prepared to elaborate on anything on your resume. Don’t include a student organization on your resume if you did not have meaningful participation in the organization.

1. How did you decide on your career/field/major?
2. What classes have you enjoyed the most/least during college and why?
3. How have the activities that you have been involved with during college influenced you?
4. Do you have future plans of furthering your education?
5. What campus activities were you involved with?
6. Explain… (a poor grade or another failure).

**Experience:** These questions allow you to discuss your work experience, volunteer and community service experiences, leadership roles, student organization involvement, or any other experience that is relevant to the position.

- Use specific examples to support your answers.
- Avoid talking negatively about previous employers or supervisors.
- Think broadly about your experience. Classroom experiences provide you with relevant skills and can provide some great examples that will support your answers.

1. Tell me about a time when you had to influence someone to accept your idea.
2. Give me an example of a time when you had to make an important decision and how you came to that decision.
3. What type of supervision do you prefer?
4. What is your personal style of supervision?
5. Tell me about a time when you had to work with a difficult person and how you handled it.
6. Tell me about your position with__________ and the valuable skills you learned.
7. Please give me an example where you demonstrated the ability to be an effective member of a team.
8. Give me 3 reasons why I should hire you.
9. How would your co-workers/supervisors describe you?
10. What did you like the most and the least about your last place of employment?
11. What relevant experience do you have?
Preparing for the Interview--Common Interview Questions, Continued

Case/Technical Questions: These questions usually involve a business scenario or logic problem, to which you are asked to respond. There may even be role-playing involved, with the interviewer role-playing the client.

- If you don’t know the answer, demonstrate your resourcefulness. What resources would you use to solve the problem? How would you find the answer?
- Ask for a moment to gather your thoughts before you answer.
- Ask questions. Business case studies should be interactive discussions.
- Your thought process is more important than the end result; talk through your approach to solving the problem.

1. What would you do if…?
2. You have a three liter bucket and a five liter bucket. How will you measure out exactly 4 liters of water? Assume you have an endless supply of water and no markings on the buckets. (this is a logic problem)
3. Estimate the market for light bulbs in Australia. (focus on the process, not the result)

Behavioral Interview Questions: The premise of behavioral interviewing is that the most accurate predictor of future performance is past performance in a similar situation. Behavioral interview questions ask you to provide an example of a time you were in a particular situation or encountered a specific challenge.

- To effectively and completely answer behavioral interviewing questions, use the STAR technique.

  S: Describe the Situation
  T: Describe the Task presented
  A: Describe the Action you took (if describing a group interaction, focus on your specific action)
  R: Describe the Result of your action (this is an opportunity to explain what you learned, if the result was not as positive as desired)

1. Give me an example of a time when you had to deal with a difficult co-worker or fellow student on a project. How did you handle the situation? What were the outcomes?
2. Tell me about a time when you had to persuade someone to see your point of view. What tactics did you use? What were the outcomes? What did you learn?
3. Tell me about a time when you had a list of things to do and your supervisor/instructor came to you and said “I need this project/assignment completed by 5 o’clock.” How did you handle the situation?
4. Tell me about a time you were involved in a project with a group.
5. Give me an example of a time when you had to supervise someone.
6. Tell me about how you keep yourself organized so to meet deadlines or goals.
7. Give me an example of a time where you failed to meet a goal. What did you fail to do? What were the consequences? What was the outcome?
8. Give me an example of a time when you used creativity to complete a project, work with someone else, or develop a new idea.
9. Describe a time when you were a team leader. Who did the team consist of, and what did you do to help your team be successful?
10. Describe a time when you were assigned a task but were provided little direction for how to complete the task. What steps did you take to complete the task? What was the outcome?
11. Describe a time when a co-worker or student approached you and criticized your work. How did you handle the situation? What was the outcome?
12. Provide me with an example of a time when you had to motivate others. What were the outcomes?
13. Tell me about a time when you had to make a difficult decision that affected those with whom you worked. What was the outcome?
Preparing for the Interview--Common Interview Questions, Continued

**Atypical Interview Questions:** Employers occasionally add unusual questions to see how well interviewees are prepared to think on their feet.

- Don’t spend too much time preparing answers to these questions. They are unusual and hard to predict.
- Be flexible and don’t act surprised.
- This is your chance to be creative and show your (professional and appropriate) sense of humor!

1. If you were a fork, knife, or a spoon, which would you be and why?
2. Why are manhole covers round?
3. Sell me something in this room, anything.
4. If you were a tree, what kind would you be and why?
5. If the tables were turned, how would you interview me?
6. What did you do poorly in your last position or on your last project?

**Candidate Match Profile**  As mentioned earlier, to make sure the right candidate is selected, a recruiter’s basic objective is to assess the extent to which candidates have the skills required to successfully perform the job. Your objective is to present a compelling case, demonstrating that you possess the skills and abilities to perform the job. The Candidate Match Profile is a tool that can help you develop that compelling case and effectively convince the recruiter that you are the “match” for the job and the company.

This tool is explained on the following page, along with a blank template for convenience.
Human Resources has a role in every company. When it comes to recruiting, HR professionals are searching for talent that will ensure their firm’s competitive position in the marketplace. How do you convince recruiters that you are the solution to their talent needs? By creating your Candidate Match Profile. In just 3 steps, you will have content for your resumes, cover letters, and elevator speeches and can tie it all together in your interviews.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employer’s Needs</th>
<th>Your Skills</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Using the job posting, list the specific skills and requirements</td>
<td>For each skill/ requirement, assess how well you meet the need</td>
<td>For each skill/ requirement, list at least 1 example of how you demonstrated the skill/ requirement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rating Scale</td>
<td>Turn weaknesses into Gold Nuggets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+ Strength</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Meet the Need</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Weakness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Step 1  Step 2  Step 3

**Tips**
- Don’t sell yourself short, but be realistic
- Turn weaknesses into Gold Nuggets
  - Demonstrate reflection, desire to change and action taken
  - Use for interviews – “what do you consider your weaknesses?”
- Do the work to get the benefits
  - While only 3 steps, they aren’t necessarily quick steps
  - Leverage employers’ feedback that ‘students need to practice’. Do the work to get the benefits.
  - Differentiate yourself by being able to confidently articulate your elevator speech and easily recall examples

**Exceed Recruiters’ Expectations**
- Understand and align with recruiters’ objectives of hiring the right candidate. (Translated, “If I select the right candidate I get more money and advancement opportunities”)
- Use the job posting to create your Candidate Match Profile
- Differentiate yourself by mining for Gold Nuggets
- Use your Candidate Match Profile to feed your resumes, cover letters, elevator speeches and interviews

Use the following template to create your Candidate Match Profile.
### Candidate Match Profile Template

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employer’s Needs</th>
<th>Your Skills</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Using the job posting, list the specific skills and requirements</td>
<td>For each skill/ requirement, assess how well you meet the need</td>
<td>For each skill/ requirement, list at least 1 example of how you demonstrated the skill/ requirement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rating Scale</td>
<td></td>
<td>Turn weaknesses into Gold Nuggets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ Strength</td>
<td>✔ Meet the Need</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Weakness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Step 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 2</th>
<th>Step 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Step 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Step 3

<p>| |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
During the Interview

Before Your Big Opportunity

• Be sure you know the directions to your destination. Take into account traffic volume, depending on the time of your interview. If possible, driving to the destination before the day of your interview is recommended.
• Review your resume, cover letter and any correspondence you have exchanged with the employer.
• Get enough sleep the night before, eat breakfast and arrive early.
• Bring a professional padfolio and pen, as well as copies of your resume to the interview.
• Leave bags behind; purse is acceptable.
• Turn off your cell phone or leave it behind. If you forget to turn off your cell phone, do not answer a call or text message during your interview. If your phone rings, turn it off and apologize.

First Impressions  The employer’s first impression of you is strongly influenced by your non-verbal behavior.

• When the employer greets you, smile and make eye contact. Offer a firm handshake, web-to-web with one pump. Avoid the pitfalls of handshakes—the limp, dead fish handshake; the bone crusher; the vigorous shaker; and the pincher.
• During the interview, sit at the back of the chair so that you are comfortable and have the support needed to maintain good posture throughout the interview.
• Use people’s names. It creates rapport, and helps you remember their names. Always use titles (Ms., Mr., Dr.) until invited to use first names. Err on the side of being too formal, rather than too casual. Use “Ms.” for women (instead of Miss or Mrs.), unless asked to address them otherwise.

Questions To Ask  Be prepared to ask questions at the end of your interview. Asking questions shows genuine interest and enthusiasm for the job and the company you are applying to. This is also your opportunity to “interview” the interviewer, to determine your own fit for the position.

Research the company ahead of time to develop some ideas for questions. Avoid asking questions that are answered on the company’s website or in company literature. Your questions should demonstrate that you have prepared for the interview and have done your research.

Plan to ask three or four questions, but prepare about ten questions since some of your questions may be answered during the interview. Be respectful of the interviewer’s time by asking a few thoughtful questions, rather than many superficial questions. Wait to ask your questions until the end of the interview, or until asked by the interviewer if you have any questions. Remember to let the interviewer run the interview.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topics to Consider Asking About</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Culture and philosophy of the company</td>
<td>Vision or future growth of the company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training and learning environment</td>
<td>Technology used by the company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership development</td>
<td>Communication within the company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor programs</td>
<td>Social, work/life balance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
During the Interview, Continued

Sample Questions to Ask
1. How would you describe the culture of the organization?
2. What do you like best about the company/organization environment?
3. What qualities do people seem to have who have done well in this department/organization?
4. What opportunities exist for advancement?
5. What is a typical day like in this position?
6. Is there anything else I should know that would help me understand the position?
7. Why is this position available?
8. How many people have held this position in the last three years? (If it seems like there has been high turnover, ask for an explanation, but carefully select your wording. Consider something neutral like, “was there something in common about the departures?”.)
9. Do you most often promote internally or externally?
10. Does this organization encourage personal and professional growth? How?
11. What are the opportunities you see for this department/organization in the next year?
12. What are the typical hours of this position? Will overtime, night or weekend work be required?
13. What new tasks or responsibilities do you see someone in this position taking on?
14. What are the challenges that need to be faced? What types of challenges does this particular position offer?
15. What type of supervision would I receive in this position?
16. How did you start with the company/organization?
17. What do you like about working for this organization? How would you compare it to others you have worked for?
18. What are the greatest strengths of this company?
19. What would you change about this organization if you could?
20. How well do departments interact with each other?
21. Will the company continue to be competitive? How?
22. Is your organization quick or slow to adopt new technology?
23. What type of growth do you foresee in the next few years? Why?
24. Where in the company do you hope to be in five years? (A good way to sense potential growth.)

Illegal Questions Questions about any of the following topics are illegal and should not be asked during an interview.

- Age
- Disability
- National origin
- Family
- Race
- Gender
- Religion or creed
- Relationship issues

Most interviewers (especially Human Resources representatives) are aware of illegal questions and hopefully you will not encounter these questions. If you are asked questions about any of these topics, it is probably because the interviewer has not been appropriately trained to know that these are illegal questions. You have several options for responding...

Option 1: Refuse to answer or ask for the relevance of the question. Select your wording carefully. Consider something non-challenging, like “can you help me understand how this information will be used in the selection process?”. The risk of refusing to answer is the possibility of embarrassing the interviewer and negatively impacting your candidacy.

Option 2: Answer the question. The decision to answer the question is a personal one. Consider your comfort level with the question, as well as the implications of answering the question.

Option 3: Answer the real question behind the question. This is not always easy to identify. By asking if you plan to have children, perhaps the employer is trying to assess your commitment to your career by determining what other responsibilities you have. Rather than responding to the direct question, you could assure the interviewer that you prioritize your career and have been successful at balancing your career with your other responsibilities.
During the Interview—Illegal Questions, Continued

Ask yourself what the question tells you about the workplace. Did the motivation behind the question just seem like a genuine effort to get to know you better? Did the question make you uncomfortable enough to cause you to question the values and culture of the company? If so, this is valuable information as you make your own assessment of the fit of the position.

Before Leaving the Interview When you sense the interview is nearing an end, you will want to accomplish these specific things:

- Summarize your strongest qualifications for the job in a final statement.
- Express your enthusiasm for working for the organization.
- Thank the interviewer for his/her time.
- Make sure both of you agree on what the next step will be. For example, after inquiring about when the hiring decision will be made, ask the interviewer if it’s okay if you follow up with him/her the following day.

After the Interview

If the interviewer didn’t give you his or her business card, be sure to ask the receptionist for the correct spelling of the interviewer’s name and title so you can write the follow-up thank you letter. If there was more than one interviewer, be sure to get each person’s information so you can send individual thank you letters.

Thank You Letters

- Send one! Thank you letters following interviews are an expected courtesy; however, many applicants fail to send them. Simply sending a thank you letter will make a positive impression on the employer.
- Send a thank you letter within a day or two after every interview for any kind of job or graduate school. Send individual letters to each person who interviews you.
- Express appreciation for the interviewer’s time and consideration of you as a candidate.
- Refer to aspects of your discussion during the interview that further confirmed your interest in the job and/or company, or that increased your confidence that you are a good fit for the position.
- Reiterate your interest in the position. Employers will not assume that you are excited about the opportunity. It is your job to tell them that you are excited.
- Continue to address the employer formally (e.g., Dr. Wyatt) unless you are invited to use his/her first name. Signing an e-mail with a first name only is an invitation by the employer to address him/her by the first name. Signing an e-mail with both first and last names is not an invitation to use the person’s first name. Err on the side of formality. It demonstrates respect and good manners.
- If your previous correspondence with the employer has been via e-mail, it is appropriate to send a thank you letter via e-mail. A handwritten thank you note on a note card, or a typed thank you letter is the most professional and courteous method of sending a thank you; however, it is better to e-mail a thank you letter than to not send one at all.
Sample Thank You Letter

Taylor Johnson  
123 Neighborhood Road  
US City, State 12345  
(000)-111-2222

February 28, 20XX

Dr. Jean Smith  
General Manager  
Evergreen Industries  
123 Main Street  
US City, State, 23456

Dear Dr. Smith:

Thank you very much for interviewing me yesterday for the business analyst position in the consumer products division. I enjoyed meeting you and learning more about your operations and expansion plans.

The interview strengthened my enthusiasm for the position and interest in working for Evergreen Industries. I believe my education and internship experiences fit nicely with the job requirements, and I'm certain I could make a significant contribution to the firm.

I would like to reiterate my strong interest in the position and in working with you and your staff. You provide the kind of opportunity I seek. Please feel free to call me at the telephone number listed above if I can provide you with any additional information.

Again, thank you for the interview and for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Taylor Johnson
After the Interview, Continued

Follow-up  As suggested earlier, before leaving the interview, get a clear understanding of next steps. After thanking the interviewer for his/her time and reiterating your interest and qualifications, ask when he/she anticipates making a hiring decision. Then ask if it’s alright if you follow up with a phone call or email the following day.

Be sure to keep the commitment to call or email the interviewer on the day agreed upon. Remind the interviewer about your recent interview and that you’re following up as agreed. Ask if a hiring decision has been made. You will likely encounter one of the following. Regardless of the scenario, it’s always appropriate to thank the interviewer for the opportunity and consideration. Even in a “no thank you” situation, respect and professionalism must be maintained.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Recommended Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You will get an answer that you did get the job</td>
<td>Congratulations! Express your excitement, gain your composure and find out the details—when you can expect a written offer, potential start date, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You will get an answer that you did not get the job</td>
<td>It’s okay to express your disappointment. It’s also okay to ask for feedback. See the Requesting Feedback section for how to handle this.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A decision has not been made yet, but a follow up date is suggested</td>
<td>Reiterate to the interviewer that you are still interested and briefly emphasize your qualifications. Commit to following up on the suggested date.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A decision has not been made yet, and a suggestion for a follow-up date is not made</td>
<td>Similar to the above, reiterate your interest and emphasize your qualifications. Ask if you may follow up again in a few days or a week. Gain agreement on the date and then follow up again.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Requesting Feedback  Admittedly, this is not an easy task. It takes tact to ask in such a way that isn’t threatening or challenging. It also takes courage to hear potential criticism, especially when you think you did your very best in the interview.

There are a number of reasons why applicants are not selected for jobs. Rather than using energy to dwell on the possible reasons, it’s better to direct that energy toward moving forward. Here are some tips on soliciting feedback from the interviewer:

- First, understand that the interviewer is under no obligation to provide feedback.
- Be careful with your tone. You want to come across as being sincerely interested in receiving feedback while respecting the hiring decision. Here’s an example of making the request to the interviewer:

Hello, this is _____. I want to thank you again for taking time to interview me recently for the ____ position. I’m disappointed that I won’t be working with you in this capacity, but I certainly respect the decision. As I continue to seek employment, I was wondering if you could share any feedback with me on possible shortcomings observed during my interview. I certainly would appreciate your professional insight, but understand if you’re unable to do this.
After the Interview—Requesting Feedback, Continued

- At this point, the interviewer may respond that he/she is unable to provide feedback. If this happens, tell the interviewer that you understand. Keep the door open by expressing your desire to work for the company and you look forward to another possible opportunity. Thank the interviewer for his/her time and say goodbye.

- If the interviewer does provide feedback, take it graciously. Again, he/she is providing the feedback as a courtesy. If you’re unclear on the feedback, ask if he/she can elaborate or give an example. As the conversation continues, it’s okay to ask if there’s any additional feedback or recommendations, but be respectful of the interviewer’s time. Thank the interviewer for his/her time and express your appreciation for making the decision to give feedback. As with the above example, keep the door open by expressing your desire to work for the company and look forward to another possible opportunity and end the conversation.

- The trick with handling rejection is to not get too discouraged. Pick yourself up, dust yourself off and keep looking, taking feedback into consideration. The right opportunity for you is out there.

Common interview Mistakes

Avoid the following actions that can negatively impact your interviewing efforts.

- Mistaking stiffness for professionalism
- Not developing rapport
- Talking poorly about past employers
- Trying to take over the interview
- Forgetting/not using names
- Not listening
- Appearing arrogant/know-it-all
- Providing general, rather than specific answers
- Behaving too casually during lunch, a tour or less formal parts of interview or with someone you know
- Sounding rehearsed/memorized
- Ruminating on poor answers
- Not treating every interaction with employer as part of interview
- Not communicating your excitement and motivation
- Not sending a thank you note