

DARTMOUTH COLLEGE

Career Services

DISCOVERY · OPTIONS · STRATEGIES

Successful Interviewing

A job interview is your opportunity to sell yourself as the best candidate for a position. It represents the culmination of many efforts on your part: clarifying your goals and interests, building a portfolio of skills and experiences, researching and identifying job opportunities, and creating a compelling resume and cover letter that gets your foot in the employer's door. The following guidelines will help you prepare for a job interview that can lead to an offer from an employer of your choice.

PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

- Research the Employer: what is the organization's mission and values? Use their own literature, search periodical indices for articles about the organization and industry, and contact "Alumni Career Advisors" who work for the organization or in the same industry.
- Research the Job: what specific skills and background experiences are required?
- Research Yourself: do you have the attributes and interests required to do this job?
Be prepared to give concrete examples to demonstrate your skills and your understanding of how those skills are necessary for the job.
- "Using Employer Literature for Successful Interviews," offers examples of how you can integrate information gained from your research on the employer and the position into your responses to employer questions and into the questions you pose.

THE DAY BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

- Decide what you are going to wear to the interview. Dress one step above what you would wear for work. See attached *Appearance Checklist*.
- If possible, schedule the interview for the time of day when you are mentally at your best.
- Prepare additional clean copies of your resume to take to the interview.
- Review questions interviewers typically ask. See attached lists of questions.
- Review your skills and interests and why the employer should select you.
- Practice, practice, practice the words and examples you will use to prove that you are the best candidate for the position.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR INTERVIEWS

- A firm handshake, enthusiastic voice and friendly smile help make a positive first impression
- Be yourself; the employer wants to see the real you
- Expand on your resume; help the employer assess your qualifications for the job
- Sell your knowledge, skills and experience; demonstrate the fit between you and the employer
- Remember: the employer is also being interviewed by you. You are both engaged in a conversation to answer this question: is this the right job and organization for you?

Interview stages

Stage I - Introduction

This stage is used to build rapport and demonstrate your self-motivation. It's natural that you might be a bit nervous; use this stage to relax and prepare for the next stage.

Stage II - Discussion

The three most common types of interviews are **Traditional Interview**, **Behavioral Interview**, and **Case Interview**. Most interviews will include traditional interview questions. See the enclosed "**Traditional Interview Questions.**"

Stage III - Closing

This is the time to ask any questions still outstanding in your mind, about the organization or the specific job, to bring up relevant experiences or skills you haven't yet discussed.

After the interview

- Write a thank you letter immediately. The letter should be typed. This represents one more opportunity to re-emphasize your interest and highlight your most relevant qualities.
- Address the letter to the primary interviewer; if others were present, be sure to get their names and include them in your letter.

Types of Interview

In a **Behavioral Interview**, the interviewer poses questions to learn how you have behaved, and predict how you might behave, under particular circumstances. These questions allow the interviewer to: gauge your interest and motivation; evaluate your decision making strategies; evaluate your work experience; assess your ability to manage your time and to plan; evaluate your leadership abilities or potential; assess your risk taking and problem solving skills; and determine your self awareness. Using the attached sheet entitled, "**Behavioral Interviewing and Performance Dimensions,**" identify 6-8 key competencies of the job and prepare 2 examples per competency to provide evidence of how you have demonstrated those competencies.

Case interviews are primarily used by consulting firms to assess how well you can dissect a problem, utilize your relational skills, and apply your creativity. Your challenge is to strategize a solution to a problem. Your responses must display your listening skills, analytical skills, interpretive skills, ability to focus on actions and results, presentation and communication skills, and personal attributes.

- Practice, practice, practice. Ask the Student Career Assistant for access to the books on case interviewing. Approach the sample cases in these books as if you were in an actual interview for a job you really wanted. Two helpful web sites on case interviewing are McKinsey & Company, at www.mckinsey.com and The Boston Consulting Group at www.bcg.com
- Bring a pen and small notebook if you wish to sketch a scenario or perform mathematical calculations.
- Ask clarifying questions before you begin and, if necessary, as you go along.
- Take time to think through your essential points and to organize your response. Do pause and mentally regroup as needed.
- In all cases, restate the problem, make certain assumptions, identify needed research and analysis, summarize and make a recommendation.

BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEWING - PERFORMANCE DIMENSIONS

Leadership

- Vision
- Values Building
- Environmental Scanning
- Strategic Planning
- Bureaucracy
- Establishing Goals and Objectives
- Policy Setting
- Strategic Issues Management
- Crisis Management
- Change Management
- External Relations and Media Control
- Cultivating Networks
- Agenda Setting
- Empowerment
- Risk Assessment

Transition Ability

- Managing Task Complexity
- Stress and Pressure Tolerance
- Ambiguity Tolerance
- Managing Uncertainty
- Willingness and Capacity to Learn
- Personal Flexibility
- Shifting Perspective

Occupational Knowledge

- International Business
- Industry
- Organization
- Functional Area
- Job Specific

Management Skill

- Organization Design
- Job Design
- Management Systems Design
- Project/Task Force Management
- Information Technology Integration
- Staffing (hiring, firing, promoting)
- Coaching and Developing People
- Mentoring
- Planning and Organizing
- Team Building
- Motivating and Delegating
- Budgeting and Resource Allocation
- Priority Setting
- Time Management
- Meeting Committee Management
- Attention to Detail and Follow-up
- Administrating
- Consulting

Interpersonal Skills

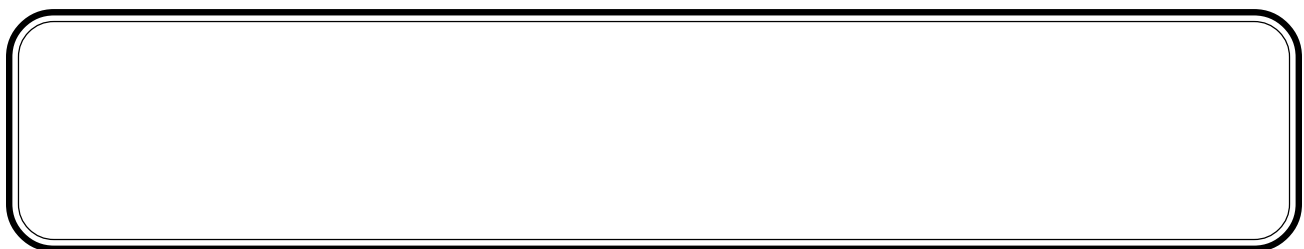
- Conflict and Confrontation Resolution
- Consensus Building
- Relationship Building
- Influence
- Selling
- Negotiating
- Awareness, Sensitivity and Empathy
- Communication Skills
- Media Selection
- Oral Communication
- Informing
- Probing
- Listening
- Feedback

Cognitive Skills

- Information Evaluation and Synthesis
- Innovation and Lateral Thinking
- Creativity
- Conceptual Thinking
- Financial and Quantitative Analysis
- Resourcefulness
- Opportunity Identification and Analysis
- Problem Identification and Analysis
- Intuition
- Problem Solving
- Decision Making

Motivation and Values

- Job Satisfaction
- Job Dissatisfaction
- Results versus Politics and People
- Competitiveness
- Proactive and Opportunistic
- Risk Taking
- Confidence
- Roll up the Sleeves Attitude
- Sense of Urgency
- Energy Level and Stamina
- Personal Drive and Ambition
- Discipline and Effectiveness
- Realism of Expectations and Ego
- Humility
- Ethics, Integrity and Trust
- Need for control or Power
- Need for Autonomy
- Accountability
- Sense of Humor



Traditional Interview Questions

- Describe your short- and long-range goals and objectives; how are you preparing to achieve them?
- What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction? Why?
- What do you see yourself doing five years from now?
- What do you really want to do in life?
- What are your long range career goals?
- How do you plan to achieve your career goals?
- What are the most important rewards you expect in your career?
- What do you expect to be earning in five years?
- Why did you choose the career for which you are preparing?
- Which is more important to you, the money or the job?
- What do you consider to be your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
- How would you describe yourself?
- How do you think a friend or professor who knows you well would describe you?
- What motivates you to put forth your greatest effort?
- How has your college experience prepared you for a career?
- Why should I hire you? Why do you want this position?
- What qualifications do you have that make you think that you will be successful?
- How do you determine or evaluate success?
- What do you think it takes to be successful in an organization like ours?
- In what ways do you think you can make a contribution to our organization?
- Describe your ideal supervisor. What qualities should that person possess?
- Tell me about a time you worked in a group where there was conflict. What did you do?
- Describe your most rewarding college experience.
- If you were hiring someone for this position, what qualities would you look for?
- Why did you select Dartmouth? What led you to choose your major?
- What college classes did you like best? Why?
- What college classes did you like least? Why?
- If you could do so, how would you plan your academic study differently? Why?
- What changes would you make in Dartmouth if you could?
- Do you think your grades are a good indication of your academic achievement?
- What have you learned from participation in your activities?
- Do you have plans for post-graduate study?
- In what kind of environment are you most comfortable?
- Describe how you work under pressure.
- Which of your past jobs have interested you most? Why?
- How would you describe your ideal job?
- Why did you decide to seek a position with us?
- What do you know about our organization?
- What two or three things are most important to you in your job?
- Give me an example of a time you showed initiative.
- What criteria are you using to evaluate the organization for which you hope to work?

Legal and Illegal Questions

Federal, state and local laws require that employers' questions, whether on an application, during an interview, or during a test, must be directly related to the job for which you are applying. **The employer is only allowed to ask questions that determine whether or not you can perform the functions of the job.** If you are asked an illegal or "out of bounds" question, you have three options;

- Answer the question, realizing that you are giving information you are not required to disclose. Consider that you might give an answer that is "wrong" in the employer's eyes.
- Ask the employer how the questions is relevant to your ability to perform the job.
- Examine the intent behind the question, and respond with information that applies to the performance of the particular job in question.

Inquiry Area	Illegal Questions	Legal Questions
National Origin/Citizenship	Are you a US citizen? Where were you/your parents born? What is your native language?	Are you authorized to work in the United States? What languages do you read, speak or write fluently? (This question is legal only if this ability is related to job performance.)
Age	How old are you? When did you graduate from college? What's your birth date?	Are you over the age of 18? 21?
Marital/Family Status	What's your marital status? Whom do you live with? Do you plan to have a family? When? How many kids do you have? What are your childcare arrangements?	Would you be able and willing to relocate if necessary? Would you be able and willing to travel as needed by the job? (This is OK as long as it is asked of all applicants.)
Affiliations	What clubs or social organizations do you belong to?	List any professional or trade organizations you belong to that you consider relevant to your ability to perform this job.
Disabilities	Do you have any disabilities? Please give dates of any recent or past illnesses or operations. When was your last physical exam? When did you lost your eyesight? How?	Can you demonstrate how you would perform the following job-related function? As part of the hiring process, after a job offer has been made, you will required to undergo a medical exam, the results of which will be kept confidential.
Arrest Record	Have you ever been arrested?	Have you ever been convicted of _____? (The crime named should be reasonable related to the performance of the job in question.

Appearance Checklist for Interviews

The initial impression you create from your appearance in an interview can have considerable impact on the interviewer's overall evaluation of your suitability for a position. Dress and grooming play major roles in creating what is called your "halo effect." In other words, if you stand out in this area, you may stand out in others. Dress professionally to project a professional image. Counselors, Alumni Career Advisors, and pictures in employer literature can help you identify what clothing is appropriate in various professions.

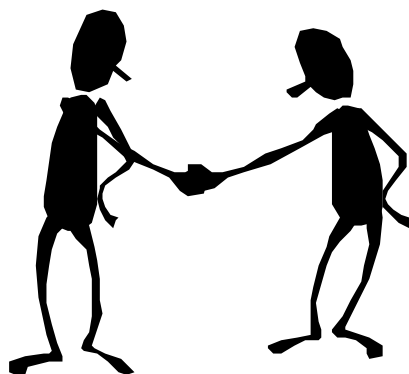
WOMEN

- Suit or tailored dress of moderate color
- Neutral (or a color close to your suit) hosiery
- Flats or pumps
- Light perfume, if any
- Clean hair – and under control
- Deodorant
- Clean nails – no chipped polish
- Attaché case or handbag – not both
- Limited and simple jewelry
- No chewing gum or smoking
- Fresh breath

MEN

- Suit or sports jacket and slacks (gray, navy, black)
- Over the calf socks
- Polished shoes
- Fresh shave, no fragrant aftershave
- Neat hair
- Deodorant
- Clean nails
- Attaché case
- No sagging coat lining
- No chewing gum or smoking
- Fresh breath

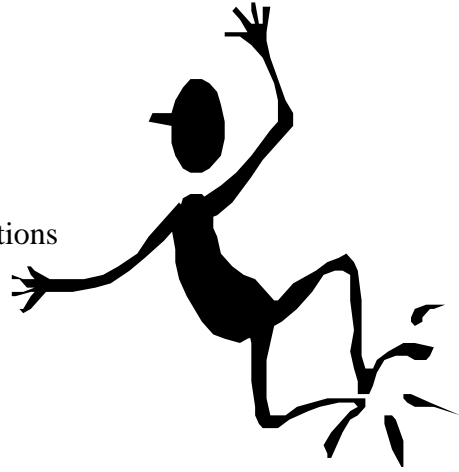
Statistics confirm that applicants who look professional are hired faster, get better jobs and may even start off with better salaries. When in doubt, assume a more conservative appearance. Remember, posture is also part of your appearance. Stand tall, sit relaxed, be attentive and speak up. The candidate who enters the room, look directly at the interviewer and participates right away, gives a very different impression from the person who sits, hands folded, in a corner waiting to be spoken to.



While some of these tips may seem to be common sense, silly or funny, candidates tend to forget them often enough to make employers remind career counselors to advise students on the dress protocols of a professional interview.

Ace the Interview

- Dress for success
- Know the employer's organization & the job
- Show interest and enthusiasm
- Make eye contact with the interviewer
- Ask relevant questions about the job
- Have an assured, confident and positive attitude
- Be clear and articulate; give clear responses to questions
- Practice a firm handshake
- Show an appropriate sense of humor
- Have a purpose or goal in mind
- Understand your industry or field
- Be flexible and open-minded
- Display varied, well-rounded interests
- Be respectful
- Show a positive approach to past experiences
- Show relevant examples of how you've demonstrated skills in previous experiences



Blow the Interview

- Have a poor personal appearance
- Have no knowledge of the company, career or job
- Lack interest and enthusiasm; ask no questions
- Fail to look at the interviewer when speaking
- Have an overbearing, know-it-all attitude
- Fail to express self clearly
- Have limp, "dead fish" handshake
- Show little sense of humor
- Show lack of purpose and planning for career
- Show lack of knowledge of field
- Reveal intolerance or strong prejudices
- Show narrow interests
- Give indefinite responses to questions
- Be cynical & discourteous

