Interview Preparation Workshop

Key to Success

One of the biggest mistakes made by job candidates is being unprepared or underprepared for a job interview.

To be better prepared for a job interview, you must:
- Conduct research
- Practice interview behaviors
- Dress for success
- Know what to expect

This workshop will make you aware of what you need to do before the interview, during the interview, and after the interview.

Key to Success

Most job seekers do not know how to prepare for an interview. Or, job seekers do not appreciate how much preparation is needed for a job interview.

These are the Key Concepts to be covered in today’s workshop.

The workshop is organized into three parts:
1. before
2. during
3. after

For additional information about Missouri Division of Workforce Development services, contact a Missouri Job Center near you. Locations and additional information are available at jobs.mo.gov or 1-888-728-JOBS (5627).

Missouri Division of Workforce Development is an equal opportunity employer/program. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. Missouri TTY users can call (800) 735-2966 or Missouri Relay 7-1-1.
Before the Interview

- This is misleading – the interview starts the minute an employer contacts you.
  - Answer the phone in a professional manner.
  - Be prepared to take notes
    - Instructions for the interview
    - Directions to the interview location
  - Rephrase the details to make sure you’ve understood the message.
- The interview continues the minute you drive or step onto the employer’s property.
  - Be professional to everyone you meet.

Before – Research

- Research the Position
  - Review the job description, job ad, or job posting
  - Review the documents you sent in response
    - Resume
    - Cover Letter
    - Application
- Research the Career Field
  - Visit O*Net Online
  - Visit the Occupational Outlook Handbook
  - Conduct a general internet search

Before – Research

- Research the Employer
  - Visit the employer’s website
  - Look for recent news stories about the employer
  - Visit the Better Business Bureau or the Local Chamber of Commerce or the local library
  - Talk to current and former employees
  - Scout out the location

- The most important work for an interview should occur well before the actual interview.
- Each contact with the employer should be considered part of the interview process.
- Provide some specific ideas for researching the employer.
- Provide some specific ideas for researching the position and the career field. Refer to resources available through the Job Center.

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• This workshop will go into some detail about each type of interview listed here.

• Many companies use phone interviews as a screening process.

• Phone screenings most often review the resume, cover letter, and other materials the job seeker sent.

• Cover some basic telephone skills.

• Panel interviews are more traditional.

• Panel interviews will have at least two representatives from the company.

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Before – Know What to Expect

* Behavioral Interviews
  - Behavioral interviews include questions about specific situations and your behaviors in those situations.
  - Prepare for situational questions.
  - Answer questions with specific examples from your past experience.
  - Tell stories that emphasize your skills and abilities.

* Demonstration Interviews
  - You may have to audition for some positions.
  - Prepare for a demonstration interview.
    - Ask for specific instructions about the topic, the environment, the people involved, and the time limit for your demonstration or presentation.
    - Ask about the equipment you will be using and ask what materials or equipment you should provide.
    - Do research on your topic or practice the skills you will be demonstrating.

* Group Interviews
  - Your interview may include other job candidates applying for the same position.
  - Prepare for a group interview.
    - Maintain composure, even if you disagree with others in the interview.
    - Demonstrate your leadership and group-communication skills.
    - Pay attention to the interviewer in charge.

- Provide some specific questions that employers may ask:
  - Why do you want to work for us?
  - Tell me about a time you disagreed with a supervisor.
  - Tell me about a time you solved a problem.

- Provide some specific examples:
  - Teachers, trainers, writers
  - Welders, mechanics, production workers
  - Computer programmers, call center staff, customer service staff

- Provide specific examples of group interviews:
  - Candidates working on a task
  - Candidates taking turns to answer the same questions
Before – Practice

- Review questions from previous interviews
  - Think about your previous experiences.
  - Talk to others about interview questions.

- Review questions from internet websites
  - Conduct a general search for interview questions – many websites offer advice for answering general and difficult questions.

Before – Practice

- Become familiar with “illegal” interview questions and how to respond to them
  - Employers should ask questions relevant to your ability to do the job
  - Employers should not ask about race, age, disability, family status, sex, birthplace, etc.

Before – Practice

- A few strategies are available
  - Answer the question.
  - Refuse to answer the question or end the interview.
  - Ask how the question is relevant to the position.
  - Provide an answer that focuses on your ability to perform the duties of the position.

- This may be a good place to offer some sort of handout with possible interview questions or refer people to specific online resources.

- If you answer an illegal question, you are revealing info the employer doesn’t need and shouldn’t know.

- If you refuse to answer, you may jeopardize your chance at the position.

- Redirect the question/answer to information related to your ability to do the job. This will take some tact.
**Before – Practice**

- Participate in Mock Interviews
  - Practice in front of a mirror – watch for nonverbal communication.
  - Record yourself and critique your performance.
  - Practice with friends and family and ask for suggestions.
  - Set up a more formal practice – Job Centers will assist in mock interviews.

**Before – Dress for Success**

- Because you want to look your best at an interview, take time to prepare your clothing.
- Consider these factors when choosing what to wear at a job interview:
  - Be conservative.
  - Be comfortable.
  - Be clean.

- Offer some specific suggestions for practicing an interview.

- The way you dress for an interview sends messages to the employer.

- Conservative dress is best.

- Provide specific suggestions for clothing for men and women.
Before – Dress for Success

- Be Comfortable
  - Avoid clothing that is too tight or too loose.
  - Wear comfortable (and clean) shoes – you may get a tour of the facilities.
- Be Clean
  - Wear clean, wrinkle-free clothing.
  - Avoid perfume and cologne.
  - Avoid smoking and eating/drinking before an interview.

Before – Other Tips

- Set out clothes, documents, instructions, etc. before the day of the interview.
- Get a good night’s sleep before the interview.
- Arrive at the interview location 10-20 minutes early.
- Go to an interview alone.
- Turn off electronic devices (or leave at home).
- Know the name of the person or department conducting the interview.

During – Be Friendly

- Greet people with a smile and/or handshake.
- Repeat a person’s name when you are introduced.
- Don’t sit down until the interviewer indicates a seat.
- Be prepared to make small talk – most interviewers will “break the ice” with talk about the weather, your drive to the interview, etc.

- Clothing that makes you uncomfortable may make you more nervous or self-conscious.
- Clean clothing and good hygiene is also important.
- Don’t wait for the last minute to get ready for an interview.
- If you have made it to the interview, the employer thinks you are qualified for the job. The employer is looking for soft skills – how the candidate interacts and communicates with others.

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INTERVIEW PREPARATION WORKSHOP
Instructor’s Guide

During – Be Professional

- Use appropriate and correct language.
- Don’t speak negatively about past employers.
- Don’t reveal confidential information about yourself or past employers, clients, etc.
- Don’t chew gum or eat; think carefully if a beverage is offered.

During – Be Thorough

- Make sure you understand the question – ask for clarification or rephrase the question if you are unsure.
- Answer the question fully but don’t add too much unnecessary information. Have examples and specific instances to share.
- Ask questions of the interviewer – this gives you a chance to show off your research and knowledge.

During – Be Nonverbal

- Maintain good eye contact with the interviewer(s).
- Avoid nervous behaviors – rocking, tapping, shifting, leg-shaking, etc.
- Use natural hand movements and gestures, but avoid choppy and large gestures.
- Sit up straight.
- Smile.

- Be very careful about the information you share with the employer.
- This is where the preparation pays off.
- Remind participants that interviews will have periods of awkward silence – interviewers often take notes during an interview. Don’t feel the need to fill up the silence with more talk.

- Provide some suggestions for questions to ask the interviewer(s).
- Avoid talk about salary. If it comes up, be prepared (you should have researched appropriate salaries for certain positions).

- Nonverbal communication is very important. Sitting through mock interviews will make you aware of your nonverbals and how to make them more effective.

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After – Follow Up

- Follow up with correspondence.
  - Shows courtesy.
  - Gets your information on the hiring manager’s desk one more time.
  - Gives you a chance to revisit a question you might have answered poorly.
  - Gives you a chance to add information you may have missed during the interview.

- Following up with a thank you gets your name on the interviewer’s desk one more time.

- Most candidates don’t follow up, but most employers expect a follow-up.

After – Document

- Make notes for future reference.
  - List names of people who conducted the interview.
  - Make note of your strengths and weaknesses.
  - Make note of unusual interview questions.
  - Write any other thoughts or “If I could do over…”

- Add value to your follow-up; this is a chance for a ‘do over.’

Questions

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• You should make notes for future interviews. This will help you be better prepared for the next interview.

• Ask for questions or comments from your audience.