

# Preparing for an Interview



## Before You Go to the Interview:

- Research the company – know what it does, who it serves, and why you want to work there
- Prepare STAR (Situation, Task, Action, Result) stories of relevant past successes, based on the posting
- Plan how you will get there (Google Map; drive/bus to the site, in advance, if unfamiliar with the area) or set-up for an online interview (download software, create an account, consider lighting and background)

## What to Wear:

- SUIT, SUIT, SUIT!
- If you do not have access to a suit, wear a tailored pair of pants or a skirt with a dress shirt
- Make sure all clothes are pressed and wrinkle-free
- Wear low heels or flats: save your stilettos for the club
- Keep jewelry to a minimum, especially noisy jewelry, which can be distracting
- Remove any body piercings and cover tattoos (if possible)
- Go light on perfume: smell good and clean, but your scent should leave the room when you do

## Carry these items to the interview:

- Directions to the interview site and the name/contact information for the person you will be meeting
- A copy of the job posting and your resume
- A list of questions for the employer
- A list of your references (if they were not provided at the time of application)
- Professional folder, notepad & pen
- Briefcase or professional-looking shoulder bag – leave the back-pack at home!

## Upon Arrival:

- Arrive early—enter the building 10-15 minutes before your appointment
- Go to the restroom and check your appearance one last time
- Review the job posting and your prepared anecdotes
- Turn off and put away your cell phone, if you have not already done so
- Stand and greet your interviewer with a firm—not bone-crushing—handshake
- Smile, make eye contact and use names when introduced

## During the Interview:

- Try to focus on the points you have prepared without sounding rehearsed or stiff
- Relax and enjoy the conversation; learn what you can about the company
- Ask questions and listen; read between the lines
- Jot down notes (conversation topics, hiring timeline, etc.)
- At the conclusion, thank the interviewer and determine the next steps
- Ask for the interviewer's business card so that you can send a thank-you letter or email

## After the Interview:

- Send a follow-up thank you letter/email to each person with whom you interviewed, reminding them of your qualities and adding anything you forgot to mention during the interview
- If you haven't heard back regarding the hiring decision by the specified date, follow-up
- Keep the door open: be gracious if the employer chooses to hire someone else and indicate your interest in any future openings

## Behavioral Interviewing

Behavioral interviewers believe that past behavior is an accurate predictor of future behavior. They concentrate many of their questions on situations that candidates have encountered in the past. What they want to hear is an illustration of your behavior. Typical questions focus on understanding a specific situation or challenge that you have faced, which will demonstrate a particular quality or skill relevant to the position. To maximize the effectiveness of your answers, try using the STAR system:

**S = Describe a situation**

**T = Talk about a task with which you were faced**

**A = Explain the action you took**

**R = Talk about the positive results, quantifying if possible**

*Example of the STAR system:*

**Question:** Tell me about a time when you have shown initiative.

**Answer:** I worked for a summer in a small warehouse. I found out that a large shipment was due in a couple of weeks and that there was very little space available for it (situation). The rear of the warehouse was disorganized and the inventory system was outdated (task), so I came in on a Saturday, figured out how much room was needed, cleaned up the mess in the rear and catalogued it all on new inventory forms (action). When the shipment arrived, the truck just backed in. There was even room to spare and the new inventory system save us a good deal of time (results).

## Practice Answering Behavioral Interview Questions

Tell me about a time when you took initiative or demonstrated leadership.

*Situation:*

*Thinking:*

*Action:*

*Results:*

Tell me about a time when you had a conflict with someone. How did you handle it?\*

*Situation:*

*Thinking:*

*Action:*

*Results:*

*\*Tip: Describe these events as non-judgmentally as possible. Explain difficult situations using facts (not emotions) and be as succinct as possible. Discuss the event in a professional manner, and even though the result may not have been ideal, remember to also share what you learned.*