

According to researchers, you have less than 30 seconds to make a positive impression at an interview...

Make your 30 seconds count!

How do you make a strong first impression?

- **Look like a professional**

92% of employers surveyed said that appearance influenced their opinions about candidates. A business suit that is properly fitted is most appropriate.

- **Shake hands firmly**

This communicates professionalism and confidence. It isn't the time to crush your interviewer's hand or offer a limp, lifeless shake.

- **Maintain eye contact with your interviewer**

When the interviewer is speaking, demonstrate active listening by looking at the speaker. You shouldn't be caught looking at the floor, the room, etc.

Find out more tips like these inside the packet!

Interviewing

Resource Guide

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Behavioral Interviewing

One of the most common methods of asking questions, behavioral interviewing focuses on specific examples of past behavior as a means of predicting future behavior. Questions such as, "Tell me about a time when..." are typically asked in a behavioral interview. Use the **STAR Method** to respond to behavioral questions.

- Situation:** Discuss a specific situation or problem that you encountered
Task: Explain the task that you had to complete or the ideas that you used for resolving the problem
Action: Tell specific actions which you took, steps you followed, obstacles you had to overcome, etc.
Results: Highlight outcomes, goals achieved, accomplishments, etc.

Example: "Tell me about a time when you feel you provided exceptional customer service."

SITUATION:

"When I was working for the university's catering office, I was responsible for booking reception rooms for special events. A woman called two weeks before her daughter's wedding to cancel her reservation for the reception room. A death had occurred in the family and the wedding was postponed until further notice."

TASK:

"The customer was obviously very upset about the unfortunate circumstances and I knew it was my job to carry out the logistical procedures for canceling a room, as well as to put her mind at ease about the reception arrangements."

ACTION:

"Although deposits are generally non-refundable due to loss of revenue, I felt certain it was not too late to book another event, so I checked with my manager regarding the possibility of refunding her deposit. We were able to rebook the room with another event, return her full deposit, and I assured her we could schedule the reception whenever the family was ready."

RESULTS:

"The customer wasn't expecting to get any money back and was pleasantly surprised, as well as relieved, that canceling the reception plans wasn't a hassle. She wrote a very nice thank-you letter to my manager commending the way in which I handled the situation, and my manager complimented me for taking initiative with this customer."

Your STAR Example:

Demonstrate a time that someone in your group was not putting the same effort forth on the project as the rest of the team:

Situation: _____

Task: _____

Your Action: _____

Result: _____

For a list of common Behavioral Questions, visit www.sxu.edu, keyword: career



General Interviewing Tips



BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

INVESTIGATE the Employer. The Internet is an invaluable tool for learning about a company's products, services, benefits, philosophy, facilities, operating budget, etc.! It is also important to research the company culture and the history. Try talking with contacts inside the organization.

CREATE a profile of the position for which you are interviewing. What qualifications does this position require? What are the duties and responsibilities for this position? How do your skills fulfill the requirements/transfer to this position?

PREPARE for questions. Identify your experiences, skills, and characteristics related to the position. Formulate answers to commonly asked interview questions. Know how to identify and respond to the hidden agenda of trick questions. In addition, compile a list of questions *you will ask*.

COMPILE relevant information. Some organizations will ask you to fill out an application in addition to providing your resume. This may require information such as past addresses, phone numbers, salary history, supervisors, etc. Take extra copies of your resume, as well as a nice pen and notepad or leather folder for taking notes. If appropriate, take your portfolio.

PRACTICE. It is essential to rehearse prior to a successful interview. Career Services simulates interview scenarios through **Mock/Practice Interviews**. A Career Services staff member will provide constructive feedback to assist you in developing stronger interviewing skills. To schedule a

mock/practice interview, inquire at the Career Services Office, the module behind Pacelli Hall. You can also rehearse with friends or in front of a mirror.

DURING THE INTERVIEW

How to dress

- Make sure your shoes are polished and attire is well pressed with no stains.
- Groom yourself appropriately (showered, clean hair, clean fingernails, etc.).
- Keep jewelry and perfume/cologne to a minimum.

Making the first impression

- Arrive at least ten minutes early. Account for possible rush hour traffic.
- Introduce yourself to the receptionist and indicate who you are there to see. Remember the interview starts the moment you enter the door and doesn't end until you leave.
- Know how to pronounce the interviewer's name. Repeat his/her name when you greet him/her.

Your attitude

- Show confidence, interest, assertiveness, and enthusiasm. Do not be arrogant, aggressive, or immature.
- Be yourself. Smile, relax, and be friendly.
- Be honest in all your answers.
- Be courteous, polite, and respectful at all times.
- Allow the interviewer to lead the interview.

Verbal Communication

- Use proper grammar. Do not use "um," "like," and "you know" when you speak.
- Pause for a moment before answering, in order to formulate an organized response.
- Answer questions thoroughly by using examples and stating results.
- Express yourself succinctly and clearly. Don't monopolize the conversation or ramble.
- Make sure you answer the question asked. If a question is multifaceted, be sure to address each part.

Nonverbal Communication

- Shake hands firmly with the interviewer and anyone else to whom you are introduced.
- Make eye contact when speaking to someone.
- Always wait until you have been offered a seat, or until the interviewer sits.
- Be aware of your posture at all times – stand tall, sit up straight, and lean slightly forward in your chair during the interview. Cross your legs at you ankles when sitting.
- Beware of talking with your hands too much – fold your hands in your lap.

Your past

- Don't be evasive. While past failures need not be volunteered, don't try to cover them up. If you do have a "blemish" in your past, simply explain the circumstances around it without giving excuses or blaming others. Discuss what you learned from the situation.
- Never speak poorly about former supervisors, colleagues, or employers. If you were unhappy, simply explain that it was not a good fit.

Be attentive

- When introduced to others, remember their names.
- Pay attention. Don't ask questions about information that was already addressed in the interview.

- Ask for a business card at the close of the interview to ensure that you have proper contact information.

Negotiating Salary

- The employer should be the one to introduce this topic. It generally will be discussed during the second interview or at the time of the offer.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

- Thank interviewers for their time and shake hands firmly with a smile.
- Indicate that you look forward to hearing from them soon and welcome them to contact you if they need any additional information.
- Send a thank-you letter within 24 hours reiterating your interest in the position.
- Follow-up promptly by providing any credentials, references, transcripts, or samples of the work that might have been requested by the interviewer.



Interview Checklist and Worksheet

- Research organizations online. Look for their mission statement, company products and clients.
- Research the latest trends (e.g. salary ranges) for your intended profession. www.salary.com and www.onetonline.org are terrific resources for this!
- Develop a brief overview of who you are and your professional/academic background as it relates to the position for which you are interviewing.
- Identify *why* you want the job. Practice your response.
- Identify what you have to offer the company. Practice this statement.
- Analyze your strengths and weaknesses. Be able to state them clearly.
- Develop a list of questions to ask the interviewer.
- Select professional interview attire.
- Confirm time, day, and location of your interviews, as well as who will interview you.
- Make sure you have adequate directions. If needed, drive to the location in advance to determine how long the trip takes and to make certain you know where you are going.

Develop responses to these commonly asked interview questions:

(Use the back of this sheet if you need more space to write.)

1. What are three things about you that you want the employer to know?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

Make sure to know what skills the employer is looking for and match your skill set to the job. Use examples of how you demonstrated those skills either in your job or school work.

2. What is your greatest weakness?

Answer: _____

Make sure to keep it career/job focused, and what you are doing to improve. Example: "I haven't worked with this type of software but given my ability to learn new things quickly, I am confident I will pick it up quickly." Or, "I enjoy my work and always do my very best. I become frustrated when I don't feel others are pulling their weight. I am aware of this weakness and try to realize that we all work at our own paces. I remain positive and hope others will see my positive attitude."

3. How do you handle stress/pressure?

Answer: _____

Make sure your answer is job and career focused, rather than your personal life. For example, "When I am under pressure, I tend to focus and prioritize my responsibilities. This way, I have a clear idea of what needs to be done when, and this has helped me to effectively manage pressure on the job."

4. Tell me about yourself.

Answer: _____

Make sure to keep this focused on your career and education as it relates to the position for which you are interviewing. For example, "I am graduating from Saint Xavier University in May with a Bachelor of Business degree with an accounting major. I've learned through my courses and class projects the importance of communicating with all types of personalities. I've become very good at this and know I can bring this skill to this position."

5. Tell me about a time you showed initiative.

Answer: _____

Think about a time either through your school activities or work that you "stepped up" to take charge or did something that needed to be done without being asked to complete the task. For example, "At my on-campus job, it was my responsibility to answer the phone and transfer the call to the proper person. I noticed that the directly was out of date so I offered to research the proper names, extensions and emails and put together a new directory."