

INTERVIEWING

What do I need to know?



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What do I need to know about interviewing?

More is being required of candidates during the employment interview than ever before. Styles of interviews are more diverse and require specific preparation. Pre-employment testing is on the rise. Candidates for positions, seniors participating in on-campus interviewing, and students pursuing internship opportunities must prepare themselves for the interviewing process. In addition to purchasing a good suit and having a positive attitude, what needs to be done? This manual is designed to help you find answers to that question.

STEP 1:

Conduct a Personal Inventory - Begin to compile information about your background and analyze it.

Educational Background - What courses did you take? Why did you choose your major? What skills and background have you developed? What courses were of particular interest to you and why?

Employment Background - What positions have you had? What duties were you responsible for in each position? What skills did you utilize? What were your accomplishments? What did you learn from each position?

Volunteer Involvement - What was the goal of the organization that you volunteered for? What activity or project did you participate in? How did you personally make a contribution? What did you learn from this experience?

Extracurricular Activities - What were the names of the club, organization, or activity and the level of your participation? What offices or leadership positions did you hold? What honors or awards did you earn? What skills have you developed through participation in these activities?

Awards and Honors - What were you honored for? How competitive was the award?

Personal Characteristics - What are your greatest strengths? What examples can you give to illustrate these characteristics? What are your weaknesses? How have you learned to compensate or overcome weaknesses? What events in your life have led to the development of these characteristics?

After developing your inventory, ask yourself the following questions:

- ❖ What in my personal inventory will convince an employer that I deserve a position with their organization?
- ❖ What are the strengths, skills, and areas of knowledge that make me most qualified for a position? What makes me more qualified than a candidate with similar qualifications?
- ❖ What weaknesses should I admit to, if asked about them, and how will I indicate that I will or can compensate for them?

STEP 2:

Understand the Format of Different Styles of Interviews - All interviews are not the same and it is important to prepare for many styles of interviews.

The Screening Interview: This type of interview is increasingly being conducted over the phone. The primary goal is to verify information from your resume and gain additional information concerning your basic qualifications for the job such as: communication skills, enthusiasm, willingness to relocate, adaptability.

- 💡 *Suggestion:* Be friendly and open without volunteering information that isn't requested. If you receive a call at a time or a location in your home that will cause distractions, ask permission to call the interviewer back. This will give you time to move to a more appropriate phone. Be sure to write down significant information such as the interviewer's name and title as well as follow-up information concerning the interview.

The On-Campus Interview: This interview is similar to the screening interview in that the interviewer is trying to determine if you have the basic qualifications for the position, are genuinely enthusiastic about the opportunities provided by the position and the company, and can communicate effectively. The on-campus interview is designed to determine if candidates should be recommended to continue to be under consideration for the position.

- 💡 *Suggestion:* Preparation is very important in this interview situation. You should know what position you are interviewing for and be prepared to address your qualifications for the position briefly and specifically during the interview. Because of time limitations (generally 30 to 45 minutes), you will not be able to go into detail unless the specific questions call for it. Maintaining focus while answering questions will be important and creating an initial positive impression through body language and dress.

The Stress Interview: This type of interview is designed to force the candidate to convince the interviewer that he/she has the confidence to pursue the position even though their qualifications are being challenged.

💡 *Suggestion:* Stay calm under fire and continue to point out the positive qualifications that you have for the position. Try not to personalize the situation. This is a technique that is utilized to measure your determination and how well you handle stressful situations.

The Structured Interview: The interviewer asks each candidate the same set of questions in the same order and makes notations concerning your answers. This type of interview often gives the interviewee the impression that the interviewer is distant and more interested in completing their list of questions.

💡 *Suggestion:* Listen carefully to the questions and make an attempt to specifically address the question being asked. Additional information not related to the question being asked may not be evaluated. Often at the end of the series of questions, you may have an opportunity to offer additional information that you feel is relevant and was not covered by the questions.

The Behavioral Interview: This interview is designed to measure the degree to which candidates demonstrate traits that are considered key for success. The interviewer poses a series of real or hypothetical situations and asks the candidate how they would act in each one. Usually companies are trying to measure candidates' resourcefulness, logic, conceptual thinking ability, creativity and logical thinking.

💡 *Suggestion:* Think about the points you want to cover in your response. Be truthful and avoid manufacturing a situation which seems to fit the answer. Prepare ahead of time by developing answers to sample questions of this nature.

STEP 3:

Research the company and the position – Company research involves finding out as much information as you can to determine if it is a place you would like to work. Company research consists of:

- ❖ Reading the company's website, press kit, annual report, and other literature.
- ❖ Talking to people who have worked there.
- ❖ Finding out what its competitors and clients say about it.
- ❖ Conducting an information interview.
- ❖ Reading any materials published in the media, including newspapers, trade publications, business indexes, and the internet.

JOB INTERVIEW TIPS

The thirty minutes or so you spend in a job interview can determine your future. Presentation of your skills, your personal appearance and preparation for the interview will influence the employer's decision about offering you a job.

PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

- ❖ Be prepared to present your qualifications and skills to the employer in a positive manner. Mentally review your accomplishments before the interview. Be ready to talk about them.
- ❖ Do some homework. Learn about the employer. Know the company's full name, locations, purpose and products. Research and find out any problems the company may have. Have some questions ready to ask the employer about his or her company.
- ❖ Know what job you're applying for and the skills it requires. An "I'll take any job" attitude suggests poor preparation and little self-knowledge.
- ❖ Know the exact time and location of the job interview. Find out the interviewer's name and how to pronounce it. Be on time.
- ❖ Take resume, portfolio, sales figures, or whatever materials you need for the interview.
- ❖ Appearance contributes to the overall impression you make and can influence the employer's decision. Dress neatly and wear attire appropriate to the job you are applying for.

BEGINNING THE INTERVIEW

- ❖ First impressions are important. Smile, shake hands firmly, and introduce yourself. Begin the conversation with small talk about the weather, pictures on the employer's office walls, etc. These are good "ice breakers."
- ❖ Throughout the interview maintain eye contact, but don't stare. Speak clearly and slowly.
- ❖ Body language conveys the way you feel about yourself. Sit up comfortably, but don't sprawl, slump over, or hold your body rigid. Also, don't let your hands betray nervousness. Don't drum your fingers or tap a pencil.
- ❖ Think positively. Lack of enthusiasm about yourself and the job gives a poor impression. Look interested and alert.

DRESSING FOR AN INTERVIEW

- ❖ It is vital to wear the proper attire to an interview, because the impression you make within the first 30 seconds will effect the duration of the interview. The following are some tips to help you look the part.
- ❖ The safest look for both men and women is traditional and conservative.
- ❖ It is also important to dress for the position you want, not the one you have. It is always better to dress too conservatively, than not conservatively enough.
- ❖ If possible, find out the dress code of the company you are visiting by asking someone in personnel about their dress code.
- ❖ Good hygiene is vital when wanting to make a good impression. Therefore, watch for bad breath, dandruff, body odor, and dirty, unmanicured fingernails.

Tips for Men

Suits:

The best colors for suits are navy and charcoal through light gray. Brown can also be acceptable. A black suit is sometimes viewed as too somber. A 2-piece suit is preferable. Belts should match and complement the shoes you wear.

Shirts:

Always wear a long-sleeved shirt that is white, cream, or pale blue; preferably a solid color without stripes.

Ties:

The tie should complement your suit, but not match it. The width of your tie should be between 2¾" and 3½". The tie should extend to your trouser belt, the size of the knot should be small, and never wear a bow tie.

Shoes and Socks:

Shoes should be black, burgundy, or brown leather, depending on the color of the suit. Socks should complement the suit – navy blue, black, gray or brown.

Accessories:

Avoid wearing religious or political insignias. Minimize your jewelry; the watch you wear should be plain and simple. A wedding band and a small pair of cuff links are appropriate. Anything else and you will be overdoing it. Remove any unusual facial jewelry. If you carry a briefcase, a leather one is your best bet. You may want to carry a leather or leather-looking notebook to hold copies of your resume, and for note-taking.

Tips for Women

Suits:

A solid or pinstripe suit is best. A conservative pants suit or a skirt with a coordinating solid black or navy jacket is also appropriate. Colors most suitable for an interview include charcoal, medium gray, steel gray, black and navy blue. The skirt should be no shorter than 2" above the knee. A one-piece business dress with a matching jacket is also acceptable. Belts should complement or match the shoes you wear.

Blouses:

Blouses should be solid in color, preferably white or cream. Steer clear of blouses that are low-cut or too tight.

Shoes:

Shoes should be closed-toe pumps with low or mid heels. The best colors to wear are black, brown and navy. Stay away from multi-colored shoes. Also, when wearing pantyhose, stick to neutral skin tones.

Accessories:

If you carry a briefcase, do not carry a purse as well. You may want to carry a leather or leather-looking notebook to hold resumes and for taking notes.

Jewelry:

When it comes to jewelry, less is more. Minimize the number of rings that you wear. Wearing a necklace and earrings are acceptable as long as they are subdued. A bracelet is also acceptable. Remove any unusual facial jewelry.

Makeup:

Natural is the key word concerning makeup. Your eye makeup, blush and lipstick should be subtle.

Examples of Appropriate Interview Attire:



Interview Do's & Don'ts

Do's:

- 👍 Arrive on time or preferably a few minutes early.
- 👍 If asked to fill out an application, do so neatly and completely. Don't attach your resume unless you're told to do so.
- 👍 Greet the interviewer by last name; if you are unsure of the pronunciation, ask the interviewer to repeat it.
- 👍 Project energy and enthusiasm; smile and shake hands firmly; look the interviewer in the eye while speaking.
- 👍 Wait until you are offered a chair before sitting; sit upright, look alert; listen carefully and respond articulately. Ask relevant questions.
- 👍 Early in the meeting, try to get the interviewer to describe the job and the duties to you so you can focus your responses on your background, skills and accomplishments that relate to the position.
- 👍 Be sincere and truthful while focusing on communicating your specific professional achievements that relate to the position.

Don'ts:

- 👎 Don't answer with a simple "yes" or "no." Explain whenever possible.
- 👎 If you don't understand a question, or need a moment to think about it – say so. Never pretend to know something or someone when you don't.
- 👎 Don't rely on your application or resume to do the selling for you.
- 👎 Don't make negative remarks about present or former employers. When explaining your reasons for leaving, communicate your rationale professionally.
- 👎 Don't over-answer questions. If the interviewer steers the conversation into controversial – or even illegal – topics, try to do more listening than speaking. Keep your responses non-committal.
- 👎 Don't inquire about salary, vacations, benefits, bonuses or retirement on the initial interview unless you are sure the employer is interested in hiring you. If the interviewer asks what salary you want, give a range based on your research of the job market, but indicate that you're more interested in the opportunity for continued learning and professional development than in a specific salary.

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The body of the interview is an information exchange. Usually the interviewers tell you about their company and ask you questions about yourself. You should volunteer pertinent information that the interviewer hasn't covered and ask questions concerning the specifics of the position and the organization. The interviewer's questions will comprise the majority of the interview. The following is a list of the most commonly asked interview questions.

Academic Background:

- How would you describe the course work you have completed, and plan to take, in your major area of study?
- Why did you choose your academic major?
- What courses did you like best? Least? Why?
- Which class project or assignment has been particularly stimulating for you?
- What critical skills have you developed in your academic preparation?
- How did your college career prepare you for this type of work?

Work Experience:

- How would you describe previous work experience?
- What have you learned from previous work experience?

Personal Characteristics:

- What examples can you give that illustrate your ability to accept responsibility?
- How do you motivate yourself?
- Where, in a work situation, have you demonstrated particular initiative and solved problems on your own?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- What kind of extra-curricular activities were/are you involved with?
- How have your extracurricular activities related to your career development?
- Why should we hire you?
- What do you do in your leisure time?

Internship Expectations:

- What do you know about our organization?
- How could your academic work be applied to an internship with this company?
- What would you like to learn from an internship here?
- What types of activities could you perform that would be profitable to this company?
- What technical skills do you bring to an internship?
- Do you have samples of your work that would be applicable to an internship in this organization?
- What kind of internship are you interested in?
- What are the most important considerations for you in choosing an internship?

Career Related:

- What do you see yourself doing five years from now? Ten years from now?
- Do you have any questions?

Creativity:

- Think about a time when you had to be very creative in solving a problem. What was the situation and how did you handle it?
- What activities have you been involved in which would develop your creative skills?
- Some creative individuals require a stimulating environment while others seem to be able to create in any situation. How would you evaluate yourself in this regard? Give me an example.

Decision Making and Problem Solving:

- Would you describe yourself as being more logical or intuitive in solving problems? Give me an example that shows your style.
- Describe a major work or school related problem, which you have had to face and how you handled it.
- Think of a time when you felt that you were a part of the problem. What did you do?

Perception and Analysis:

- Have you ever worked in an environment with frequent crises? Why did the crises occur? How did you handle them?
- Describe a problem that you have handled that would help me to understand your analytical ability.
- Tell me about a significant mistake you have made and explain why you made it and what you learned from it.

Interaction:

- What does "two-way communication" mean to you? When have you successfully used it?
- Think of a time when you were new to a group. How did you establish relationships with people?
- Tell me about a time in a social situation when you "froze" and became uncomfortable.

What Employers Say About Research

Time after time, when employers are asked what job candidates can do to shine in the job interview, the response is "thoroughly research the company and be able to talk knowledgeably about it in the interview." According to employers responding to surveys conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers, candidates who have done their homework are better able to discuss how their experiences and qualifications match up with the company's needs; prepared candidates who know the company can also talk about how they can make an immediate contribution to the organization. The candidate who can do this is typically the candidate who gets the job offer.

(Source: Job Choices, 2003 Planning Edition).

BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEWING:

What is a Behavioral Interview? In a behavioral interview you will have to demonstrate your knowledge, skills, and abilities – collectively known as competencies – by giving specific examples from your past experiences. The interviewer wants to know, not that you can do something, but that you have done it. He or she, prior to the interview, will determine what competencies are required for the position. The interviewer will develop a series of questions that will allow him/her to find out if you possess the necessary competencies to perform the job. The basic premise of the behavioral interview is that past performance is a good predictor of future performance.

Skill Definitions and Sample Questions

COPING: Able to maintain a mature, problem-solving attitude while dealing with interpersonal conflict, personal rejection, hostility or time demands.

- Tell me about a time when you had to deal with strict deadlines or time demands.
- Tell me about a high stress situation when it was desirable for you to keep a positive attitude.

TOLERANCE OF AMBIGUITY: Able to withhold action or speech in the absence of important information; deal with unresolved situations, frequent change, delays or unexpected events.

- Give me an example of a time when you had to deal with frequent changes or unexpected events on the job (or at school).
- Sometimes it is necessary to work in unsettled or rapidly changing circumstances. When have you found yourself in this position? Tell me exactly what you did.

DECISIVENESS: Able to make decisions on available information and take action; make commitments and not change decisions when challenged; deal with emergencies as necessary.

- Describe a situation in which you had to draw a conclusion quickly and take speedy action.
- Tell me about a situation when you had to stand up for a decision you made even though it made you unpopular.

SPOKEN COMMUNICATION: Able to clearly present information through the spoken word; influence or persuade others through oral presentation in positive or negative circumstances; listen well.

- Tell me about a specific experience that illustrates your ability to influence another person verbally.
- Tell me about a time when your ability to listen helped you communicate better.

ASSERTIVENESS: Able to maturely express one's opinions and feelings in spite of disagreement; accurately communicate to others regardless of their status or position.

- Give me an example of a time when you had to be assertive in giving directions to others.
- Describe a time when you communicated something unpleasant or difficult to say to your manager (or professor).

ENERGIZING: Able to create positive energy (motivation) in both individuals and groups.

- Tell me about a time when you did something which helped build enthusiasm in others.
- Pick any event from the last 3 years of your life in which you were an example of high motivation for other people to follow.

POLICY AND PROCEDURES: Able to relate to routine operations in a manner that is consistent with existing solutions to problems; to conform to established policies and procedures: log work activities.

- Tell me about your experiences in documenting your work activities in a written form.
- Describe a time when you had to adopt a well-defined work routine.

ALERTNESS: Able to be attentive to all aspects of the environment while working; to monitor environment during routine activity.

- Identify a time when you were able to avoid a problem by using your ability to pay close attention.
- Give me an example of any time in your past when you were especially attentive to your environment while working.

ANALYTICAL PROBLEM SOLVING: Able to use a systematic approach in solving problems through analysis of problem and evaluation of alternate solutions; use logic, mathematics or other problem-solving tools in data analysis or in generating solutions.

- Tell me about a time when you were systematic in identifying potential solutions to a problem.
- Describe a time when you were proud of your ability to solve a particularly challenging problem.

GOAL SETTING: Able to define realistic, specific goals and objectives; to prioritize objectives.

- Tell me about a time when you took the initiative to set goals and objectives, even though you were not prompted or directed by others to do so.
- What have been your experiences in defining long-range goals? Give me a specific example.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION: Able to write clearly and effectively present ideas and to document activities; to read and interpret written information.

- Give me an example, which illustrates the extent of your written communication skills.
- Tell me about the most complex information you have had to read--perhaps involving research you had to complete.

COMMITMENT TO TASK: Able to start and persist with specific courses of action while exhibiting high motivation and a sense of urgency; willing to commit to long hours of work and make personal sacrifice in order to reach goals.

- Give me an example of a specific time in which you found it necessary to give long hours to the job.
- Tell me about a time when you were a driving, highly motivated worker.

INTERACTION: Able to communicate with others in a warm and helpful manner while simultaneously building credibility and rapport.

- Tell me about a time when you were able to build rapport with someone, even when the situation was a difficult one and the odds were against you.
- Give me an example of a time when you made a special effort to treat another person in a way which showed your respect for the other's feelings.

PERCEPTIVITY: Able to interpret verbal and non-verbal behavior, to develop accurate perception and understanding of others' feeling, needs, values and opinions; to be sensitive to and aware of personality differences.

- Tell me about a time when you were able to step into another person's shoes in order to discover their unique perspectives.
- Tell me about a time which shows your savvy in "reading" another person.

ORGANIZATION AND PLANNING: Able to organize or schedule people or tasks; to develop realistic action plans while being sensitive to time constraints.

- Give me an example of a time management skill you have learned and applied at work (or school).
- Give me an example from your working history (or college experiences) that demonstrates your ability to organize tasks.

CREATIVITY: Able to develop unique and novel solutions to problems; use intuition and a new way of thinking to give birth to new ideas; to present information in an attention-getting and interesting manner.

- Tell me about an idea that you produced through combined hard work and intuition.
- Give me an example of a time when one of your insights or innovations was particularly well-received by others.

VERSATILITY: Able to modify one's own behavioral style to respond to the needs of others while maintaining one's own objectives and sense of dignity.

- Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a difficult person at work.
- Describe a time when you adapted to different types of people.

READING THE SYSTEM: Able to recognize and use information about organizational climate and key individuals to accomplish legitimate organizational goals; be aware of the importance of timing, politics and group processes in managing change.

- Tell me about a time when you were successful in discovering a person's "hot button" and using that knowledge to bring about an important change.
- Describe a time when your understanding of political dynamics at work was put to good use.

TEAM BUILDING: Able to work with people in such a manner as to build high morale and group commitments to goals and objectives.

- Tell me about a time when you were a member of a high performing team.
- Give me an example of a time when you confronted a negative attitude successfully with the result of building teamwork and morale.

DECISION MAKING AND PROBLEM SOLVING: Able to take action in solving problems while exhibiting judgment and a realistic understanding of issues; able to use reason, even when dealing with emotional topics.

- Describe a situation in which you used good judgment in solving a problem.
- Tell me about a time when you were able to remain objective even though you were emotional about a particular problem.

LEADERSHIP: Able to influence the actions and opinions of others in a desired direction; to exhibit judgment in leading others to worthwhile objectives.

- Give me an example of a time when you used either power or persuasion to guide another person to a worthwhile objective.
- Give me an example of a time when you used facts and reason to persuade another person to take action.

Do You Have What it Takes?

What do employers look for in candidates? Of course, the first thing they look for is the ability to do the work involved. But they also look for a number of “soft skills” and qualities. In a competitive market, being able to demonstrate that you have these could mean the difference between getting the job, or losing out to another candidate.

According to employers, the top 5 “soft skills”/qualities they seek are:

1. Communication Skills – verbal and written
2. Honesty/Integrity
3. Teamwork Skills
4. Interpersonal Skills
5. Motivation/Initiative

(Source: Job Outlook, 2003 National Association of Colleges and Employers).

KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK THE INTERVIEWER

- ❖ What are your expectations for new hires?
- ❖ What are some examples of the best results produced by people in this position?
- ❖ What are the company's future plans and goals?
- ❖ What are the opportunities for personal growth?
- ❖ Identify typical career paths based on past records. What is the realistic time frame for advancement?
- ❖ How is an employee evaluated and promoted?
- ❖ Tell me about your initial and future training programs.
- ❖ What are the company's plans for future growth?
- ❖ What makes your firm different from its competitors?
- ❖ What are the company's strengths and weaknesses?
- ❖ How would you describe your corporation's personality and management style?
- ❖ Describe the work environment.
- ❖ Why do you enjoy working for your firm?
- ❖ How much travel is normally expected?
- ❖ How frequently do you relocate professional employees?
- ❖ How does your company feel about employees pursuing graduate degrees?
- ❖ How often are performance reviews given?
- ❖ How much input does the new person have on geographical location?

LEGAL AND ILLEGAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

◆ *National Origin*

Undesirable Inquiry: Are you a U.S. citizen? Where were your parents born? What is your “native tongue”? Where were you born?

Recommended Inquiry: Are you lawfully employable full time in the United States either by virtue of being a U.S. citizen or by having authorization to be employed from the Immigration and Naturalization Service and the Department of Labor? What languages do you read, speak, or write fluently? (If related to job performance).

◆ *Age*

Undesirable Inquiry: How old are you? What is your date of birth?

Recommended Inquiry: Are you over the age of 18?

◆ *Marital and Family Status*

Undesirable Inquiry: What is your marital status? How many children do you have? What child care arrangements have you made?

Recommended Inquiry: Travel is an important part of the job for which you are interviewing. Would you be able and willing to travel as needed by the job? Would you be willing to relocate if necessary?

◆ *Organizations*

Undesirable Inquiry: List any clubs or social organizations to which you belong.

Recommended Inquiry: List any professional or trade groups or other organizations that you consider relevant to your ability to perform this job.

◆ **Handicaps**

Undesirable Inquiry: Do you have any handicaps or disabilities? Please complete the following medical history. Have you had any recent or past illnesses or operations? If yes, list and give dates. What was the date of your last physical exam? How is your family's health? General inquiries that would elicit information about handicaps or health conditions that do not relate to job performance.

Recommended Inquiry: Do you have disabilities that would prevent you from performing the job? If yes, based on a description of the available position, which job duties would you be unable to perform because of a physical, mental, or medical disability? Please describe for purposes of assessing any accommodations that could be made. Are there any jobs or types of jobs for which you should not be considered because of a handicap or health condition? Are you willing to undergo a preemployment physical exam? Do you understand that any offer of employment is conditional based on the results of a preemployment exam? The results of such exam will be kept strictly confidential, except that medical/safety personnel may be informed if emergency medical treatment is required, and supervisors and managers may be informed regarding any necessary accommodations that may be made to your job duties because of the results of the medical exam.

◆ **Arrest Record**

Undesirable Inquiry: Have you ever been arrested?

Recommended Inquiry: Have you ever been convicted of _____? (a crime that is reasonably related to the performance of the job in question)

◆ **Personal**

Undesirable Inquiry: What is your sex? What is your height and weight?

Recommended Inquiry: Are you able to lift a 50-pound weight and carry it 100 yards, as that will be part of the job for which you are interviewing?

◆ **Military**

Undesirable Inquiry: If you have been in the military, were you honorably discharged?

Recommended Inquiry: In what branch of the Armed Forces did you serve? What type of training or education did you receive in the military?

FIFTEEN KNOCKOUT FACTORS - (Reasons why candidates receive rejection replies)

- 1) Lack of proper career planning--purposes/goals ill defined--needs direction
- 2) Lack of knowledge of field of specialization--not well qualified--lacks depth
- 3) Inability to express thoughts clearly and concisely--rambles
- 4) Insufficient evidence of achievement or capacity to excite action in others
- 5) Not prepared for the interview--no research on company--no presentation
- 6) No real interest in the organization or industry--merely shopping around
- 7) Narrow location interest--unwilling to relocate later--inflexible
- 8) Little interest and enthusiasm--indifferent--bland personality
- 9) Overbearing--overaggressive--conceited--cocky--aloof--assuming
- 10) Interested only in best dollar offer--too money conscious
- 11) Asks no, or poor, questions about the job--little depth and meaning to questions
- 12) Unwilling to start at the bottom--expects too much too soon--unrealistic
- 13) Makes excuses--evasiveness--hedges on unfavorable factors in record
- 14) No confidence and poise--fails to look interviewer in the eye--immature
- 15) Poor personal appearance--sloppy dress--lacks sophistication

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF A THANK-YOU LETTER

This is one of the most important yet least used tools in a job search. It is used to establish goodwill, express appreciation, and/or strengthen your candidacy. The basic rule of thumb is that everyone who helps you in any way gets a thank-you letter.

When used to follow up on employment interviews, thank-you letters should be sent within 24 hours to everyone who interviewed you. If it is not possible or appropriate to send a thank-you letter to everyone you met during the interview, then send a thank-you letter to your host or to the highest ranking manager you met with a request to extend your appreciation to the entire group. Also, be sure to send thank-you letters to each of your contacts who granted you information interviews and to people who provided references for you.

Make your thank-you letters warm and personal, and use them as an opportunity to:

- ❖ Express your sincere appreciation.
- ❖ Reemphasize your strongest qualifications. Draw attention to the good match between your qualifications and the job requirements.
- ❖ Reiterate your interest in the position. Use the opportunity to provide or offer supplemental information not previously given.
- ❖ Restate your appreciation.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF AN ACCEPTANCE LETTER

Use this letter to accept a job offer, to confirm the terms of your employment (salary, starting date, medical examinations, etc.), and to positively reinforce the employer's decision to hire you. Most often, an acceptance letter follows a telephone conversation, during which the details of the offer and the terms of employment are discussed.

An Acceptance Letter provides you with the opportunity to:

- ❖ Confirm, accept, and reaffirm your employment decision.
- ❖ Confirm logistics.
- ❖ Express your appreciation for the opportunity.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF A WITHDRAWAL LETTER

Once you accept a position, you have an ethical obligation to inform all other employers of your decision and to withdraw your employment application from consideration. Your withdrawal letter should express appreciation for the employer's consideration and courtesy.

It may be appropriate to state that your decision to go with another organization was based on having better person/job fit for this stage in your career. **Do NOT say that you obtained a better job!**

Follow these guidelines when sending a withdrawal letter:

- ❖ State your decision, and provide an explanation.
- ❖ Express appreciation for the employer's consideration and courtesy.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF A REJECTION LETTER

Employers aren't the only ones to send rejection letters. Candidates may have to decline employment offers that do not fit their career objectives and interests. Rejecting an employment offer should be done thoughtfully. Indicate that you have carefully considered the offer and have decided not to accept it. Also, be sure to thank the employer for the offer and for consideration of you as a candidate.

In rejecting an offer, you can demonstrate your professionalism:

- ❖ Acknowledge the offer.
- ❖ Show thoughtful consideration.
- ❖ Express appreciation.

(Source: Job Outlook, 2004 National Association of Colleges and Employers).

On the following pages, you will find examples of four different types of letters for appropriate responses to a job interview or position offer. Examples include:

- ❖ Thank-You Letter
- ❖ Acceptance Letter
- ❖ Withdrawal Letter
- ❖ Rejection Letter

SAMPLE LETTERS

(Source: Job Outlook, 2004 National Association of Colleges and Employers)

THANK-YOU LETTER (Modified Block Format)

Richard Ramirez
2913 Baxter Road
Virginia Beach, VA 23465

January 25, 2004

Mr. Foster Walker
Director, Editorial Services
Atlantic Publishing
1220 Warwick Avenue
Newport News, VA 23607

Dear Mr. Walker:

I want to thank you very much for interviewing me yesterday for the associate editor position. I enjoyed meeting you and learning more about your publications.

My enthusiasm for the position and my interest in working for Atlantic Publishing were strengthened as a result of the interview. I think my education and internship experiences fit nicely with the job requirements, and I am sure that I could make a significant contribution to the firm over time.

I want 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 contact me at 804/685-5555 or r-rameriz@aol.com if I can provide you with any additional information.

Again, thank you for the interview and your consideration.

Sincerely,

Richard Ramirez

Richard Ramirez

SAMPLE LETTERS

(Source: Job Outlook, 2004 National Association of Colleges and Employers)

ACCEPTANCE LETTER (Full Block Format)

Audra Nappi
1507 North Lake Shore Drive
Chicago, IL 60606

April 24, 2004

Mr. Jack Wisniewski, Division Manager
Data International Corporation
1212 Corporation Lane
Northbrook, IL 60022

Dear Mr. Wisniewski:

I am writing to confirm my acceptance of your employment offer of April 20 and to tell you how delighted I am to be joining Data International in Northbrook. The work is exactly what I have prepared to perform and hoped to do. I feel confident that I can make a significant contribution to the corporation, and I am grateful for the opportunity you have given me.

As we discussed, I will report to work at 8:00 a.m. on July 1 and will have completed the medical examination and drug testing by the start date. Additionally, I shall complete all employment and insurance forms for the new employee orientation.

I look forward to working with you and your fine team. I appreciate your confidence in me and am very happy to be joining your staff.

Sincerely,

Audra Nappi

Audra Nappi

SAMPLE LETTERS

(Source: Job Outlook, 2004 National Association of Colleges and Employers)

WITHDRAWAL LETTER (Full Block Format)

Heather Ferguson
725 University Place, #321
Evanston, IL 60208

April 20, 2004

Melissa Lang, Ph.D.
Executive Director
The Northlight School of Performing Arts
8989 Wagner Road
Glenview, IL 60025

Dear Dr. Lang:

I am writing to inform you that I am withdrawing my application for the program coordinator position with the school. As I indicated in my interview with you, I have been exploring several employment possibilities. This week I was offered an administrative position with a local city government and, after careful consideration, I decided to accept it. The position provides a very good match for my interests at this point in my career.

I want to thank you very much for interviewing and considering me for your position. I enjoyed meeting you and learning about the innovative community programs you are planning. You have a fine school and I wish you and your staff well.

Sincerely,

Heather Ferguson

Heather Ferguson

SAMPLE LETTERS

(Source: Job Outlook, 2004 National Association of Colleges and Employers)

REJECTION LETTER (Block Format)

Melody Taylor
1216 Emerson Street
Skokie, IL 60208

March 15, 2004

Mr. George Duvall, Manager
Sales and Marketing Division
Colonial Properties, Ltd.
1700 Colonial Parkway
Williamsburg, VA 23176

Dear Mr. Duvall:

Thank you very much for offering me the position of commercial leasing agent with Colonial Properties. I appreciate your discussing the details of the position with me and giving me the time to consider your offer.

You have a fine organization and there are many aspects of the position that are very appealing to me. However, I believe it is in our mutual best interests that I decline your kind offer. This has been a difficult decision for me, but I believe it is the appropriate one for my career at this time.

I want to thank you for the consideration and courtesy given to me. It was a pleasure meeting you and your fine staff.

Sincerely,

Melody Taylor

Melody Taylor

Candidate's Name: _____

This form is used to help students improve their interviewing skills. Your cooperation in completing this form is appreciated. Please check the box that most closely reflects the candidate's performance in each general category. Comments are extremely helpful to students. A space is provided for any candid comments about the candidate. Try to emphasize behaviors and specific points both pro and con. Thank you.

APPEARANCE Grooming, manners, posture, dress	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Marginal <input type="checkbox"/> Poor Comments:
PREPARATION Knowledge of company/field Knowledge of position opening Asked pertinent questions	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Marginal <input type="checkbox"/> Poor Comments:
COMMUNICATION Delivery and animation/fluency Presentation of ideas Grammar and vocabulary	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Marginal <input type="checkbox"/> Poor Comments:
DIRECTION Well-defined goals Confidence in abilities Realistic and practical	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Marginal <input type="checkbox"/> Poor Comments:
MATURITY Decisiveness, leadership, self-reliance, judgment	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Marginal <input type="checkbox"/> Poor Comments:
SINCERITY Genuine attitude, honesty, sincerity	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Marginal <input type="checkbox"/> Poor Comments:
PERSONALITY Enthusiasm, initiative, energy level, motivation	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Marginal <input type="checkbox"/> Poor Comments:
QUALIFICATIONS Academic preparation, work experience, position match	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Marginal <input type="checkbox"/> Poor Comments:
OVERALL EVALUATION	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Marginal <input type="checkbox"/> Poor Comments: