Before the Interview

Please prepare and practice your responses to the following questions, which are similar to ones you are likely to get in an actual interview. The interviewers will randomly choose from these and other questions of their own, leaving about 5 minutes for verbal feedback at the end. To get the most out of this experience, prepare for it as you would for any professional interview for a job, internship or graduate program.

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Describe a complex project or assignment you have had and your approach to completing it. What would you have done differently?
3. Describe a situation where you needed to work with a group to accomplish a specific goal. What was your role on the team and what challenges did you face?
4. Tell me about a time when you tried to accomplish something and failed. What did you learn from that experience?
5. Tell me about a time when you had to work with someone very different from you. How successful were you and would you work with that person again, if given the choice?
6. Describe a situation when you motivated yourself to complete an assignment or task that you did not want to do. Were you satisfied with the results?

During the Interview

☐ Arrive in Frazier Hall 10 minutes before your scheduled interview time. You should be dressed in business attire with a portfolio, pen, extra copies of your resume and a separate list of references that matches the layout and format of your resume.

☐ Use the basic S-A-R (Situation, Action, Results) outline and limit your initial response to two minutes maximum. If the question has a negative connotation (tell me about your biggest weakness, a time that you failed, a difficult person you had to work with, etc.) or you didn’t achieve the results you expected, be sure to include what you learned from that experience and how it has changed or will change your behavior in similar situations.

☐ Relax, be yourself and give it your best shot! This is only a practice interview, but you will learn more from this experience if you approach it like the real thing. Your interviewer will provide verbal feedback at the end and you can later discuss their written evaluation with Career Development staff.

After the Interview

☐ Promptly send a thank you note to your interviewer, whose name, contact information, note card and envelope will be provided. Express your appreciation for their time and feedback. Remember, today’s mock interviewer could be a potential employer or another valuable networking contact for your future job searches.

For questions or more information about Mock Interviews, please contact Todd Reale, Assistant Dean of Career Development, at treale@bellarmine.edu or 502.272.8242.
How to Answer the “Tell Me About Yourself” Interview Question

Don’t be afraid of this question; instead use it as an opportunity to position yourself for success.

By Lee E. Miller

When I was a human resources executive doing hiring interviews, I almost always began my interviews with candidates by requesting, “Tell me about yourself.” I did that for a number of reasons, the most important of which was to see how the candidates handled themselves in an unstructured situation.

I wanted to see how articulate they were, how confident they were and generally what type of impression they would make on the people with whom they came into contact on the job.

I also wanted to get a sense of what they thought was important.

Most candidates find this question to be a particularly difficult one to answer. That is a misplaced view. This question offers an opportunity to describe yourself positively and focus the interview on your strengths. Be prepared to deal with it. These days, it’s unavoidable. Like me, most interviewers start off their interviews with this question. A lot of interviewers open with it as an icebreaker or because they’re still getting organized, but they all use it to get a sense of whom you are.

The Wrong Response

There are many ways to respond to this question correctly and just one wrong way: by asking, “What do you want to know?” That tells me you have not prepared properly for the interview and are likely to be equally unprepared on the job. You need to develop a good answer to this question, practice it and be able to deliver it with poise and confidence.

The Right Response

To help you prepare, I spoke to a number of career coaches on how best to respond when faced with this question. Heed the career advice that follows to ace this opener:

The consensus of the coaches with whom I spoke:

- Focus on what most interests the interviewer.
- Highlight your most important accomplishments.

Focus on What Interests the Interviewer

According to Jane Cranston, a career coach from New York, “The biggest mistake people being interviewed make is thinking the interviewer really wants to know about them as a person.

They start saying things like, ‘Well, I was born in Hoboken, and when I was three we moved …’ Wrong. The interviewer wants to know that you can do the job, that you fit into the team, what you have accomplished in your prior positions and how can you help the organization.”
Nancy Fox, of Fox Coaching Associates, agrees. She notes that “many candidates, unprepared for the question, skewer themselves by rambling, recapping their life story, delving into ancient work history or personal matters.” She recommends starting with your most recent employment and explaining why you are well qualified for the position. According to Fox, the key to all successful interviewing is to match your qualifications to what the interviewer is looking for. “In other words, you want to be selling what the buyer is buying.”

Think of your response as a movie preview, says Melanie Szlucha, a coach with Red Inc. “The movie preview always relates to the movie you’re about to see. You never see a movie preview for an animated flick when you’re there to see a slasher movie. So the ‘tell me about yourself’ answer needs to directly fit the concerns of your prospective employer.”

Previews are also short but show clips of the movie that people would want to see more of later. They provide enough information about the movie so that you could ask intelligent questions about what the movie is about. Hiring managers don’t want to look unprepared by reading your resume in front of you, so Szlucha advises that you “provide them some topics to ask you more questions about.”

Highlight Your Most Important Accomplishments

Greg Maka, managing director at 24/7 Marketing, advises job seekers to “tell a memorable story about your attributes.” For example, if you tell an interviewer that people describe you as tenacious, provide a brief story that shows how you have been tenacious in achieving your goals. “Stories are powerful and are what people remember most,” he said.

One great example is that of Fran Capo, a comedienne who bills herself as “the world’s fastest-talking female.” She offers the following advice: “Whenever I go on auditions or interviews, I have a “set” opening I use. ... I tell the interviewer what I do in one sentence and then say, ‘And I also happen to be the Guinness Book of World Records’ fastest-talking female.’ Then I elaborate.” According to Capo, the main thing in anything you do is to be memorable, in a good way. Your goal when you answer the ‘tell me about yourself’ question is to find a way stand out from everyone else.

And, Be Brief

Maureen Anderson, host of "The Career Clinic" radio show, stresses the importance of keeping your answer short: “The employer wants to know a little bit about you to begin with — not your life story. Just offer up two or three things that are interesting — and useful. You should take about a minute to answer this question.”

To make sure it is succinct and covers what you want it to cover, she suggests that you “write your answer out before the interview, practice it, time it and rehearse it until it sounds natural. Then practice it some more. The goal is to tell the employer enough to pique their interest, not so much that they wonder if they’d ever be able to shut you up during a coffee break at the office.”

Rather than dread this question, a well-prepared candidate should welcome this inquiry. Properly answered, this question puts the candidate in the driver’s seat. It gives her an opportunity to sell herself. It allows her to set the tone and direction for the rest of the interview, setting her up to answer the questions she most wants to answer.

Lee E. Miller is managing director of NegotiationPlus.com and an adjunct professor at Columbia University, New York. He is a career coach, corporate trainer, negotiating strategist and professional speaker. He is the author of “Get More Money on Your Next Job … In Any Economy” (McGraw Hill, 2009) and “A Woman’s Guide to Successful Negotiating” (McGraw Hill, 2010), which he co-wrote with Jessica Miller, his eldest daughter. You can contact Lee at Lee@YourCareerDoctors.com.
Successfully Answer Behavioral Interview Questions

Many employers are now doing "behavioral interviews." Rather than focusing on your resume and reviewing your accomplishments as you have written them on paper, the behavioral interviewer will ask you open-ended questions that prompt you to describe real circumstances and your responses to them. General answers about behavior are not what the employer is seeking. You must describe in detail a particular event, project or experience, how you dealt with the situation and what the outcome was. The premise of behavioral interviewing is that the most accurate predictor of future performance is recent past performance in similar situations.

Although it may be more difficult to prepare in advance concrete answers to these questions in comparison to traditional ones, you can and should take some time to review your understanding of yourself, document your past successes and develop concrete examples of your accomplishments. Practice your responses so that they are honest, sincere and candid.

When you tell a behavioral story, the interviewer may try to sort out the details by understanding your behaviors. The interviewer will probe for more depth, detail or understanding with questions like, “What were you thinking at that point?” or “Tell me more about what you discussed with that person.” If you have told a story that is anything but honest and accurate, your response will not hold up through these probes. If you have a spouse or friend that can pose as your interviewer, it is very helpful to practice answering open-ended behavioral questions. The first ten sample questions, or some variation of them, are particularly common and important to anticipate.

- Describe a situation where have you motivated yourself to complete an assignment or task that you did not want to do.
- Describe a complex project or assignment you have had and your approach to completing it.
- Tell me about an occasion where you needed to work with a group to get a job done. What were the challenges and difficulties and how did you face these?
- Describe a situation when you or your team was in danger of missing a deadline. What did you do?
- Tell me about a time when you worked with a person who did things very differently from you. How did you get the job done? Would you work with that person again if given the choice?
- Tell me about a time when you tried to accomplish something and failed. What did you learn from that failure?
- Think about a difficult boss, professor or other person. What made him or her difficult? How did you successfully interact with this person?
- Describe a time when you successfully persuaded others to do something or to see your point of view.
- Tell me about a time when you had to use your presentation skills to influence someone’s opinion.
- Tell me about a time when you demonstrated initiative.
• Tell me about the riskiest decision that you have made. What were your considerations in making that particular decision?

• Describe your three greatest accomplishments to date.

• Tell me about a situation when you had to learn something new in a short time. How did you proceed?

• Can you tell me about a complex problem that you solved? Describe the process you utilized.

• Give me an example of a time when you had to make a split-second decision.

• Provide an example of a bad decision that you made and describe what you learned from it.

• Tell me about a time when you missed an obvious solution to a problem. What did you learn from that mistake?

• Tell me about a challenge that you successfully met.

• Describe a situation when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.

• Please tell me about one or two unpopular decisions you have made. What were the positive and negative outcomes of those decisions?

• What leadership positions have you held? Describe your leadership style. What elements of your leadership style have you changed or eliminated once you learned that these aspects were not successful?

• Give me a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.

• Give an example of when your persistence had the biggest payoff.

• How have you most constructively dealt with disappointment and turned it into a learning experience? Please give me a concrete example in your life.

• Tell me about a time when you had to conform to a policy with which you did not agree.

• Describe a situation in which you effectively developed a solution to a problem by combining different perspectives or approaches.

When answering behavioral questions, avoid the pat answers that interviewers are adept at spotting. For example, do not try to portray yourself as a person that never makes mistakes or as a person whose only failings are that you work too much, are too dedicated, too loyal, etc. Be honest about your mistakes since the experienced interviewer will be looking for “progress” and “growth,” not perfection. However, do give an example of how you learned from your mistake and how that experience has benefited you in the end.

Be concise. Limit your initial response to a question to no more than two minutes and allow the interviewer to probe for more information with additional questions. Remember the acronym “SOAR” to frame your responses.

• **Situation**—Briefly explain the problem, challenge or situation.

• **Objective/Obstacles**—Describe your goals and the obstacles to achieving them.

• **Actions**—What actions did you pursue and why? Focus on your individual efforts and contributions, but be sure to acknowledge teamwork and collective outcomes appropriately.

• **Results**—What were the results of your actions and how did you assess these outcomes? What did you learn from this experience and how has it influenced you?
Lights! Camera...

Everything you've done has led up to this day. Your checklist is complete: “interview suit”; personal grooming; extra copies of your résumé and references; enough travel time; fresh breath.

Fast-forward: You've arrived 15 minutes early at your potential new employer's office. Cool your heels, use the restroom, collect your thoughts. No gum, no smoking. You're understandably nervous, but you've practiced and know your material. Remember, you have the credentials. That's why you're here. There may be no guarantees, but there are opportunities. Focus on that and grab them.

Showtime!

Above all, you are meeting another human being, so be pleasant and polite. When invited in for your interview, make eye contact — just remember to blink, not stare. Offer a quick firm handshake, a sincere smile, and a “Very nice to meet you.” Body language can speak as loudly as words. This may seem obvious, but sit up in your chair, and look and act interested! No matter how good your résumé or work samples, poor body language might convey that you're not really interested in the job or company, or that if hired, you wouldn't work hard or fit in with the rest of the staff. You want your interviewer to feel comfortable with you. If offered anything, it's safest to politely decline. Otherwise, accept just water; it stains less.

Don't let them see you sweat.

Take a breath. Wait for your interviewer to take the lead, and then be attentive, polite and respectful. Focus on your interviewer and what's being asked. Listen carefully; the questions are likely familiar because you practiced with them. Take time to answer intelligently. Blunting is not attractive and conveys lack of self-control or preparation.

- “Why do want to work here?”
- “Tell me about yourself.”
- “What are your weaknesses?”
- “Why are you the best person for this job?”
- “If you were a tree, what tree would you be?”

Keep your answers brief, clear, positive, and relevant. Don't mumble. If nervous, try to pace your words so you don't speak too quickly. Give supporting facts, figures, and results where possible. Avoid speaking negatively and/or blaming others. Most important, DON'T PANIC or LIE! Pause. Think. Answer truthfully and as best as you can. Some questions have no right or wrong answers. They are more to help the interviewer gauge your thinking process, personality, and preferences. And no vulgarity. Period.

Remember, the interviewer is not your friend, but someone looking for the best candidate to fill a need. Their objective is to gather information to see if you are a good match. Your objective is to convince them that they need look no further because you can fill their needs. You know your strengths, so convey them with confidence. Smile and let enthusiasm work in your favor.

You should and are expected to ask well-thought-out questions about the company. Good questions and comments convey your sincere interest in the job. However, save the questions about salary, bonuses, and other benefits. Unless first raised by the recruiter, they give the wrong impression in a first interview.

Take a bow.

And suddenly it's over. Regardless of how it went, offer a firm handshake, a sincere smile, and thank the interviewer for their time. Ask if you need to provide anything else. Let them know that you are very interested in the job and will be in touch. Stay professional until you've left the premises. Now go home and send the expected and courteous “Thank you” by email and snail mail. Congratulate yourself for making it. If you're hired, terrific. If not, you're now better prepared for the next interview.
The right attitude, the right action

Congratulations! You made it past the cover letter and résumé gauntlet and have landed an interview with the company of your choice. What could go wrong? Answer: Plenty.

Relax. You’ve done everything right up till now. Plus, you know the basics: What to wear; how to greet; saying thank you. Now focus on these interview tips to stand out from the competition.

Pre-interview to-do’s

Practice and preparation. Making the cut leaves some job seekers so excited that they overlook the importance of practicing and reviewing answers to potential interview questions. Big mistake. Preparation is key: Practice, practice, practice out loud, even video yourself to see how you move, until you feel confident and it feels natural.

Do your homework. Research the company, job position, and interviewer so you know what you’re talking about and asking for. Empower yourself: Read annual reports, news releases, Google the firm. Inquire if it will be a one-on-one or panel interview. Don't be caught off guard.

Proper contact. Create a dedicated email address for career/job search-related contacts. End phone out-going messages with a “Thank you.”

Know your worth. Research the average salary range so you can respond intelligently when the interviewer raises the topic of salary and benefits. Expect a 5% margin for negotiating.

The night before. Lay out your interview clothes and make sure everything is pressed and polished; ladies, bring an extra pair of panty hose. Pack only relevant items in your portfolio or briefcase: extra copies of your résumé in a stiff blue folder; pad and pen; references, if requested; business cards, if available. A sheet with previous employer contact info is helpful if you’re filling out an application. Get plenty of rest.

Be on time! Have directions. Do a dry run, if necessary, to familiarize yourself with travel time and road conditions; scout out parking to avoid additional stress. Arrive 15-30 minutes early to give yourself time to gather your thoughts. DON’T BE LATE -- it’s a killer.

The Big Day

Eat something. You should be doing the talking, not your stomach.

Watch your wait. Magazines you select while waiting can reveal your personal preferences, information that may affect the hiring decision. Instead, quietly gather your thoughts, review your answers, or read your own material.

Cell block. Turn off your cell phone.

Two-way traffic. The exchange should be a conversation. However, the interviewer is not your friend, so keep the interchange professional and watch what you divulge; answer when asked.

Communicate. Be clear about what you expect to gain if hired so that you can clearly articulate your goals and contributions to the company.

Give attention, get attention. Focus on the interviewers needs, not your own; get attention by giving it; emphasize what you can do for the company.

Back it up. Be quantitative: Give dates, examples, figures to support your points.

Manners matter. Be polite with everyone, including the receptionist. Be honest, positive, and enthusiastic even when discussing your weaknesses.

Bow out. Regardless of how things go, conclude with a sincere thank you, a firm handshake, and a gracious smile. Maintain a professional attitude even after you’ve left the premises; you never know who may be watching. And be sure to send the recruiter a written thank you on quality matching stationery within two days.

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Life is like a baseball game.
“"When you think a fastball is coming, You gotta be ready to hit the curve.” — Jaja Q

You passed the cover letter and résumé litmus tests. Now comes the third and most important step of the job search: The Interview. Everything you've done has been leading up to this moment. And while you may have all TO DO's down pat, the game isn't over yet. Errors can still keep you from scoring a home run.

Strike #1 — Before the interview no-no's

The wrong message. “hotmama@...,” “Hey, Dude! Leave a message...,” and “...here's me at Spring Break...” can leave negative impressions for recruiters emailing, telephoning, or checking social networks to learn more about job candidates. Photos, poor spelling, even blogs may reveal more about you than is appropriate. Be sure your email address is suitable for your job search. End your outgoing message with a “thank you,” and watch what you post online.

Being late. Not knowing the interview location, the best route to avoid travel delays, or a good parking place if you're driving can kill the interview before it even begins. Be safe: Do a trial run.

Fools rush in. Don't arrive sweaty and disheveled. 15 minutes before is standard to calm down and collect your thoughts. If you’re really nervous, give yourself 30 extra minutes: 15 minutes outside in your car to calm down, then walk in early.

Attire that speaks louder than your résumé. Don't accessorize to excess. Avoid heavy scents. No clothing stains or wrinkles. Ladies, wear stockings and don't try a new hairdo right before the interview: You need to feel familiar and comfortable with yourself. When interviewing for a financial firm, don't try to out-dress the suits.

Strike #2 — During the interview no-no's

No pulse. Get a grip; no anemic handshakes, please, or fist pumping. A firm, friendly handshake with a smile and eye contact is appropriate.

Loose lips sink ships. Avoid sharing too much personal information or just talking too much. The gift of gab may be seen as glib. Don't be so conversational that you come across as being too casual or rude. Resist the urge to be humorous or cocky. Witty, yes. Smug, no.

Be self-erasing. Modesty is not a virtue here. Confidently relay your skills and achievements, but do so without trumpeting.

Winging it. No impromptu performances! Don't be lazy. Practice beforehand, but avoid sounding stiff.

"Show me the money!" Let the recruiter bring up the topic of salary and benefits.

Being clueless. Yes, be sure you're interviewing for the right job.

Poor body language. Don't slouch, scratch, stare, chew, or smoke. Sit up; be attentive. Resist fidgeting with rings and clothing. Let your mouth do the talking, not your hands. Also, be aware of the interviewer's body language: Don't overstay your welcome.

Airing dirty laundry. No negative talk about personal woes or previous employers. Emphasize your strengths and qualities, not your weaknesses.

Missing the point. Listen carefully and understand the question before answering. Address their needs.

Failing to ask intelligent questions. Yes, you are interviewing the company as much as it is interviewing you.

Lying. Don't. Period.

Strike #3 — After the interview no-no's. You're out!

No thanks. Thank the recruiter when done. Ask about the next step. Send a thank you in writing within 48 hours. It's courtesy and indicates interest in the job.
First impressions count.

Few things have as much impact as the first impression you make for that anticipated face-to-face interview. Research shows it only takes a few seconds to make a lasting impression. That means no matter how solid your credentials, you still want to look professional.

Dressing appropriately not only gives you more confidence and credibility, it surrounds you with a sense of belonging that can help deflect the minor slips or stumbles we all can make during that critical interview or, once hired, in daily routines.

Understand the company culture.

The bottom line is about striking a balance between what is expected and still being yourself. After all, you want to be seen as a good fit in the company and for the potential job position. Avoid questionable factors that may undermine that effort. Research the company: You are the product, so package yourself appropriately. If you find the company dress code too restrictive, apply for a job elsewhere. Don't try to break the code. If you choose to fight the system, be prepared to lose.

Remember, clothing is non-verbal communication.

Don’t dress to un-impress.

For the interview, avoid frayed, wrinkled, or soiled clothing. Avoid clothes that are too short, tight, baggy, boldly colored, or trendy. Even if it's “casual Friday,” you should still look professional; it is better to be overdressed than underdressed. Limit the jewelry. No backpacks; it's briefcases or portfolios now. Generally, companies frown on visible tattoos, body piercings, and unusual hair coloring and styles. Some firms do not encourage facial hair, so keep it neat and trim if you have it.

Unless you're a character actor or in an environment that allows more casual and less “power suit” attire, quirky, over-the-top fashion statements can be distracting and even put you at a disadvantage when it comes to being taken seriously.

So, what's a job seeker to do?

Guys: Do what suits you best.

Start with business basics when interviewing:

-- a solid navy, dark gray, or black suit that FITS. Get it tailored, if necessary; add a dark blue pinstriped or conservatively patterned navy or gray suit later; select a good wool that breathes;
-- bright white dress shirt; business blue is also acceptable;
-- tasteful solid, or simple striped or patterned ties;
-- straight, spread, or button-down collars; for wide collars, tie a full Windsor knot, which should finish with a dimple;
-- leather shoes that complement your suit; choose a simple black, classic cap-toe; match with black, calf-length socks; expand by adding a good black slip-on that pairs with casual or dressy attire;
-- match your belts to your shoes; silver buckles are more reserved.

Clothes should fit the man.

A two-button jacket should be down to where your closed knuckles fall. The jacket shoulders should be the same width as yours. Trousers should touch the tops of the shoes and break slightly. Shirts should fit close to the neck with enough room to fit one or two fingers. The top of your tie should fall to your waist about where your belt is.

Remember, 1) dress for the job you want, not for the job you may already have; and 2) dress comfortably. You want to focus on the interview or the job without either you or the interviewer being distracted by what you're wearing.

Look around. If it's a conservative environment, dress conservatively. Remember the saying: “When in Rome....”

Remember, for most interviews it is better to follow this standard dress code and create a good first impression:

- Clean ironed shirt
- Neatly tied tie; no stains
- Pressed suit or jacket that fits
- Polished dark shoes
- Deodorant / anti-perspirant
- Minimal or no cologne
- Groomed head and facial hair
- Trimmed and clean nails
- Clean breath and teeth

Clothes say a lot about you. And while they may not make the man, they certainly make an impression. Make sure it's the right one.
Clothing is non-verbal communication.

Clothes say a lot about you: Your values, economic status, savviness, and more. So when interviewing, how do you keep your own individual style and personality while still being seen as a good fit for the company?

Keep it professional. Avoid frayed, wrinkled, or soiled clothing. Avoid clothes that are too short, tight, baggy, boldly colored, revealing, or trendy. No flashy jewelry. Also, most companies frown on visible tattoos, body piercings, and unusual hair coloring and styles.

Back to basics.

Begin with the basics: well-styled, understated outfits. Nothing provocative or sexy. Start with a canvas of grays and blacks that look good and fit well. Classic, conservative skirt suits are always the safest route. Even if business casual is the company code, it's better to be over- rather than underdressed for the interview. Skirts should be about knee-length. Wear neutral toned hose for a well-groomed look even if it's warm outside.

Research the company: Some places are sexist when it comes to pantsuits at interviews. Otherwise, these outfits make good wardrobe foundations and alternatives to the formal suit. Coordinate the above with a simple white, ivory, or business blue blouse. Don't accessorize to excess, only for a finished look. Keep the focus on your abilities, not your attire. And whenever possible, buy quality, versatile fabric like wool. It lasts longer, looks better, and breathes for comfort.

You can put together a good interview ensemble without breaking the bank by setting and sticking to a realistic budget. Observe and analyze others. Enlist the input of a sales associate, family member, or friend to guide and help you work within your budget. Consider consignment shops that offer professional and quality attire.

The color of success.

Where corporate palettes are not necessary, choose garment colors that flatter your features and complement your skin tones. If it's rainy or dark outside, consider a silk accent scarf or broach to highlight your face and brighten the day for a more memorable effect.

Let's makeup.

Use understated makeup to gently enhance your look, not devour it. Save the raccoon eyes mascara for after-hours fun. Regarding perfume, don't set your atomizer on "stun." Some people are allergic to perfume, so try a lightly scented bath soap instead.

Nails hammered.

Killer-length, brightly decorated fingernails may make for great conversation at parties, but can draw negative attention during an interview or in the corporate workplace. Modest manicures work best.

Baubles, bangles, and beads.

Think conservative and subtle: Jewelry should complement and enhance for a polished look. Nor should jewelry be audible, so avoid bangles that jangle and distract.

When interviewing, keep it simple; showcase your sense of style by reducing clutter. When in doubt, remember that less is more.

Scarves, handbags, and shoes.

Scarves can customize your basic wardrobe with a quick dash of color and texture. Shoes and handbags should match up and be stylish but simple. Wear closed toe shoes with flat or moderate 1 1/2” heels. Choose a briefcase or portfolio in place of a purse.

Know the company's culture. After all, you are joining a group.

Remember the saying, “When in Rome....”

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Why be fluent in body language?

Studies show that body-language, a.k.a. non-verbal cues, accounts for over 50% of our in-person communication, more than words and tone of voice combined. In fact, just roll your eyes and you'll send a silent but very clear message. Conscious or not, body language often reveals what we are thinking and feeling, something smart detectives—and interviewers—notice. Your résumé may be filled with credentials, but are you as impressive in person as you are in print?

Beyond the firm handshake.

You know the drill: Clean finger nails; show up on time for the interview; give a proper introduction; and answer questions succinctly. However, just as vital is knowing what non-verbal communication and behavior can undermine your candidacy.

Limp or lethal? Avoid dead fish handshakes that make you seem weak. No bone-crushers either; it's an introduction, not an altercation. Handshakes should be your only physical contact.

Don't slouch. It suggests lack of interest, nervousness, unpreparedness, low self-esteem, lack of enthusiasm. Instead, sit up, chin up, and lean forward slightly to convey alertness and interest. Don't, however, sit on the edge of the seat and appear tense and stiff.

Never cross your arms. Unless you're interviewing to be a bouncer, crossed arms convey a closed, defensive attitude, arrogance, or detachment. Also, gentlemen, putting your hands in your pants pockets when standing looks sloppy and makes you seem complacent and too casual.

Hands off. Keep hands away from your face, nose, and neck. Don't scratch your head, twirl your curls, rub your neck, shrug, clean your nails, or touch your nose. These movements can project uncertainty, nervousness, even dishonesty.

No charades. Excessive gesturing is distracting. Less movement can convey a quiet confidence andsteadiness. Rest hands on your knees, in your lap on your portfolio, or relaxed at your sides. Don't play with jewelry. Use hands only to emphasize a point. And no pointing with your index finger.

Stay grounded. Men, crossing your legs, especially resting an ankle on a knee suggests complacency and arrogance. Keep both feet on the ground. Women, it's okay to cross your ankles, just keep your knees together. Also, avoid pointing your feet or leaning toward the door; it suggests a desire to disengage and leave.

Blink! It's not a game of chicken. Maintain eye contact, but don't stare; it can be unnerving for the other person. Equally, lack of eye contact can suggest dishonesty. Don't stare out the window; you may appear uninterested and bored or distracted. Thinking? Look down, or risk being mistaken for rolling your eyes.

Keep your distance. Literally. Do not invade your interviewer's space. In the U.S. keep at least 20”–24” apart. Never sit or lean on their desk, either.

Don't shake, rattle, or roll. Or fidget, tap, shuffle your feet, and drum your fingers.

No fumbling. Have your papers ready and in order to avoid rummaging. Clip together any handouts for easy access.


Perception is everything. Give an interviewer the wrong impression and you may cross the line from appearing confident to arrogant, and sabotage your job search.

Also, it can take work to appear relaxed and poised, so practice answering questions in front of a mirror or video yourself in a mock interview. You might be surprised by your bad habits and tics. However, once you're aware of them, accept the need for change and act accordingly.

Body language: Actions do speak louder than words. And the interviewer is listening.
Gratitude is the best attitude for success.

If you think the interview process ends with the handshake at the end of the meeting, think again! Despite your good credentials, possibly even a great interview, a follow up thank you (or lack thereof) can still make or break the deal.

Why? Because the primary purpose of a thank you is to: 1) show your enthusiasm and interest in the position; and 2) acknowledge the interviewer's time. The first keeps you in the forefront for consideration. The second shows you have good manners and character traits.

Until hired, your goal is to continue to differentiate yourself from the other candidates. A thank you is another opportunity to make a good impression.

Sign it. Seal it. Send it.

Be prompt. Send a thank you within 24, max 48, hours of the interview. Employers notice because promptness demonstrates enthusiasm, interest, and attention to detail — all desirable qualities in a potential employee. A late thank you won't have the same impact, but is still better than none; you never know whose path you'll cross again.

Keep it brief. Don't rehash the interview, and no witty repartee. Be respectful, confirm your interest, remind the recruiter of your qualifications, sum up what you gained from the meeting, and thank the interviewer for taking time out of their schedule.

PROOF! Check spelling and grammar just as you did for your cover letter and résumé. Get the names and titles right: Is it “Smith” or “Smyth,” “Rodriguez” or “Rodrigues”? Call or check the company Web site if you're unsure. Keep the format easy to read, the paragraphs short and to the point. Overall it should look professional, be clear, and sound sincere.

Remember, a thank you is the most valuable personal expression you can give.

Thank the Academy

Thank everyone who helped in the interview process: The contact who gave you the lead or introduction; the assistant who took extra steps on your behalf; each and every interviewer you met with. Multiple thank yous may seem like a lot of work, but it's a small price to pay for a JOB!!

Address each note individually. Similar language in each is fine; use your judgment. Thank those who conducted a phone interview: He/she took the time; so should you.

And send a thank you even if you've accepted another position; it's only courteous.

Type it? Write it?

There are two schools of thought: Interview thank yous are a form of business, not personal, communication. Therefore, one school believes it should be typed, not handwritten. The other school believes the latter provides a more personal expression. Both are effective. The solution: It depends on the company and situation, and may be a judgment call.

Email? Snail Mail?

Again, two schools of thought.

Email is faster and more convenient; a faster response/receipt can keep you ahead of the competition. Email can be perfectly acceptable for technology companies or casual environments. However, quality stationery matching your cover letter and résumé is more formal and demonstrates extra effort.

Don't fax your thank you. It lacks both professional polish and a personal touch. Plus, it looks blurry, especially if the recipient's toner is running out.

In the end, use judgment; tailor your note to the recipient. Or ask your career counselor. Regardless of the medium, take time to craft an effective reply. In an age of speed and technology, an old-fashion thank you is never obsolete.

CollegeCentral.com/bellarmine

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Three Keys to Successful Interviewing

By Kelly Robinson

Fall recruiting season means job interview time. And you can’t get a job offer without an interview. Your success comes down to answering this question: Do you have the right tools, resources, and attitude?

Tools

- **Interviewing attire**: Invest in a suit, matching shoes, and appropriate accessories. If you can afford it, purchase two suits so that you’re prepared for multiple rounds of interviewing.
- **Resume**: If your resume takes more than 30 seconds to review, doesn’t showcase accomplishments, or is riddled with typos, interviews won’t follow. Ask a counselor in the campus career center to review your resume before you start the application process.
- **Reference list**: The candidate who can present a list of references at the interview has the edge in receiving an offer than the candidate who faxes the information a few days later. Assemble your reference list before the interviewing process so you’re prepared.
- **Interviewing skills**: Do you know the questions employers expect you to answer? Just as important, do you know the questions they want you to ask? Assessing yourself (skills, attributes, strengths, areas of improvement) and researching the company (culture, size, products, services) are critical assignments.

Resources

- **On-campus recruiting program**: Register with your career center’s on-campus recruiting program, which coordinates company interviews with graduating students during the fall and spring semesters. Interviews may not start until October, but registration often begins within the first few weeks of school. Don’t procrastinate or you could miss out. More companies interview during the fall than the spring.
- **Job fairs**: Many companies use campus job fairs for screening candidates, because they allow recruiters to meet with hundreds of potential interviewees in one day. Navigating a job fair involves strategy. For tips on succeeding at a job fair, check out this [job fair article](http://www.jobweb.com) on JobWeb.
- **Networking and informational interviewing contacts**: Meeting people in your profession is critical in the job search, especially for creative and nonprofit fields. Networking and informational meetings lead to job interviews later. To build your contact list, start with your inner circle (family and friends) and work your way outward (professors, supervisors, alumni).
- **Career events (on and off campus)**: What opportunities exist for meeting company representatives? Does the career center and alumni office co-sponsor a networking event? Does the English department sponsor a career day for writing majors? Is your college partnering with other local colleges to showcase the region’s graduating students? Use all resources to get face time with company representatives. If job openings are available, and you present yourself positively, interviews will follow.
Attitude

- **Communication style**: Are you presenting yourself as a college student just hoping to get a job or an adult eager to enter the world of work? A solid versus a shaky handshake; appropriate eye contact versus none at all; speaking clearly versus talking low. If your cues are keeping you from receiving offers, a career counselor can offer suggestions.

- **Expectations**: Students sometimes expect job offers to come simply because they have earned a college degree. Today’s job market is more competitive than ever, and other attributes such as poise and professionalism can make or break the interview. After your on-campus interview, the recruiter will meet with 10 more candidates who are earning the same degree as you. What separates you from the rest?

- **Diligence**: Do you send thank-you notes and follow-up correspondence? Are you approaching your job search as you would a final class project? The amount of work put into a job search impacts the interviews (both quality and quantity) you can expect.

- **Confidence**: Your resume may make you the most qualified candidate on paper. But that’s why companies conduct interviews. You’ll have a shot at being the most qualified candidate in the room only when you believe it for yourself and demonstrate this fact to the company representative.

### Mock Interview Rubric

*by Amy Raphael*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Excellent interview: You should get a job offer!</th>
<th>Average interview: You could get called back, but it is not certain.</th>
<th>Interviewing skills need significant improvement: You would not get this job.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>First Impressions</strong></td>
<td>Your appearance is professional—you are wearing a business suit. You greet and shake hands with your interviewer correctly. Your conversation is enthusiastic and engaging.</td>
<td>You look nice but you do not wear a suit. Your greeting is appropriate but you forget to shake hands with your interviewer. Your conversation is enthusiastic and engaging.</td>
<td>Your attire is not professional—you wear jeans or shorts to this interview. You do not greet or shake hands when you meet your interviewer. Your conversation is not energetic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interview Content</strong></td>
<td>You are knowledgeable about the organization and position you are interviewing for. You display poise and confidence. You relate your skills to the job very well.</td>
<td>You are knowledgeable about the position but not the organization you are interviewing with. You display adequate confidence in your answers. You state your skills but do not adequately relate them to the job.</td>
<td>You are not knowledgeable about the position or organization you are interviewing with. You are not confident in answering questions about yourself. You do not state the skills you have to do this job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interview Skills &amp; Techniques</strong></td>
<td>You have excellent eye contact with your interviewer without staring. Your language and grammar is appropriate. You do not use um or and. You speak at the right speed.</td>
<td>You have adequate eye contact with your interviewer. Your language and grammar are adequate. You say um or and a few times, but not enough to disrupt the interview. You talk a little too fast or too slow.</td>
<td>You look at the floor or ceiling when speaking. Your grammar and language are not appropriate. You say um or and too many times. You talk too fast or too slow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Closing</strong></td>
<td>You successfully convey your interest in this position. You ask appropriate questions to the interviewer. You thank the interviewer.</td>
<td>You convey some interest in the position. You are not prepared to ask any questions. You thank the interviewer.</td>
<td>You do not show any interest in this position. You do not ask any questions. You do not thank the interviewer.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>