

The Interview

You never get a second chance to make a first impression, so make sure your interview skills are practiced and polished before you get in front of a prospective employer.

Before the interview

- Ask yourself why the employer would want to hire you
- List the great skills and abilities you would bring to the particular job you've applied for
- Confirm that your list is accurate with your friends, family, or YMCA employment counsellor
- Always do your homework by researching the company and the position as much as possible
- Write out and memorize a list of questions you want to ask the employer

Anticipate interviewers' commonly asked questions – and have responses ready

- How did you hear about the job and what made you interested? This is where your research on the job and company will come in handy
- Tell me about yourself. When responding, speak in more detail about the information listed on your resume
- Where do you see yourself in five years? Be honest. Try to provide a response that shows your commitment to personal and team growth
- Tell me what your strengths and weakness are. Focus on your good qualities and be honest without sounding too over-confident
- What previous experience and/or skills do you bring to the job? Remember, this is your chance to market yourself. You have done your homework and now it is time to showcase it
- Do you have any questions about the job? Use the list of questions you have prepared. Don't forget to get feedback in advance from friends, family, and your YMCA counsellor

Preparation of the Interview

- Research the company
- Know the name of the person you are to meet
- Dress appropriately for the interview, "one step up" from what is required on the job
- Make sure you are well groomed
- Leave yourself time to get to the interview and still be early
- Take a copy of your resume, paper and a pen
- Practice answering questions that you may be asked in front of a mirror
- Be able to describe your strengths, skills and abilities by giving examples
- Prepare questions to ask the interviewer

The Interview

- Your interview starts as soon as you get off the bus or out of your car
- Make sure you are 10 -15 minutes early
- Be polite and courteous to everyone you meet
- Don't chew gum, eat, drink coffee, or smoke
- Be positive, enthusiastic, energetic and professional
- Don't be too familiar and don't fidget
- Look confident, maintain good eye contact, offer a firm handshake
- Don't sit down until you are asked to
- Don't rush through the interview, take time to think and answer the questions, don't give yes and no answers, provide relevant information
- Reflect your skills and abilities in your answers; be honest
- Don't criticize anyone, make excuses, be aggressive or indecisive
- Be aware of verbal and non-verbal cues, know when the interview is over
- Thank the interviewer for their time; ask when they will be making a decision and if you can contact them

Follow-up

- If you told the interviewer you will call, make sure that you do
- Write a thank you letter or email to the interviewer
- Make sure that employers can get in touch with you, and don't leave inappropriate greetings on your voice mail, equally annoying are long messages and music

Questions to Ask

- What would be my duties and responsibilities?
- What would be the hours of work?
- Will there be overtime?
- Will I require any special training before starting the job?
- Will I require any special clothing? (ie uniform, safety boots)
- Does this company offer training?
- Who will I be reporting to?
- How soon would I be able to start if I am hired?

Questions Employers Should Not Ask

- Are you married? Do you have a boyfriend?
- How old are you?
- What church do you attend?
- Have you ever been arrested?
- What nationality are you?
- What political party do you support?
- What is your sexual orientation?
- Do you suffer from any illnesses or diseases?
- How much do you weigh?

Discrimination is **ILLEGAL**. Employers should know the law, but some don't and some ignore it. If you are uncomfortable or sense the employer is discriminatory tell your teacher.

Interview DOs

- Dress a bit more formally than you would on an average day
- Make eye contact with the person who will be interviewing you
- Introduce yourself. Don't wait
- Smile, be pleasant, and show your enthusiasm
- Listen closely and respond clearly. It is okay to pause to think about your answer
- Be honest when answering a question
- Summarize by recapping and stating your genuine interest in the job
- Make sure you arrange a time to call back for a follow up
- Sell yourself by being yourself. Never over exaggerate your abilities
- Breathe and relax. Remember that the interviewer also wants you to shine

Interview DON'Ts

- Whatever you do, never be late. If you think that you are running into a time problem, call and explain your situation immediately. You may want to ask if you should reschedule
- Do not fidget in your chair or with your hands or your hair. Try and mimic the person's body position across from you
- Do not lie. Always tell the truth even if you think it might jeopardize you getting the job
- Do not eat or chew gum or candy during the interview
- Do not say anything bad or negative about past employers or colleagues – ever
- Do not be aggressive or too timid

After the interview

Reviewing your experience after the interview is over is a critical step to learning and improving your interview skills. Mentally review what you think you did well – and not so well. Make notes on what you would do differently the next time. You may also want to send a thank you card or note.

Your YMCA employment counsellor can help you every step of the way. Never be afraid to ask for help, because that is our job.