

SECTION 2: Interview Preparation & Etiquette

INTERVIEWING SUCCESS

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

Points to consider when preparing for the interview:

- First identify what you have to offer an employer. Think of examples or stories in which you clearly demonstrated your skills, values and interests relevant to the position.
- Research career field, job, and company. Since the primary goal of the interview is to show how well your qualifications match the employer's requirement/needs, this research is crucial. What should you know?
 - Skills and personal qualities required for position
 - Trends, major issues in the field
 - Realistic salary for position
 - Organizational characteristics such as:
 - Size, location(s) and structure of organization
 - Past, present and projected growth
 - Types of clients and products/services offered
 - Relationship of organization to its competitors
 - Major executives in company
 - Management philosophy and style
- Identify questions you may be asked** and questions that you consider particularly difficult and prepare your responses/stories.
- Prepare questions **TO ASK**** during the interview.
- Make sure you find out who will interview you, how to get to the interview, etc.
- Prepare materials to take to the interview (e.g., resume, work samples, transcript) well in advance of your interview date. **Students are now required to bring an unofficial transcript to all on-campus interviews.** Please be sure to download a current copy of your unofficial transcript from [Patriot Web](#) and bring it to your interview.
- Critique your professional image and prepare your interviewing outfit, accessories, hair style, etc.

** See *Moving On* for suggested questions you may be asked and questions to ask during the interview.

DURING THE INTERVIEW

Remember your goals in the interview are to share information about yourself, to gather information about the employer, and to make a decision about whether YOU would like the job. Be aware of both your non-verbal and verbal communication skills.

The 4 stages of the Interview:

1. First impression

- a. Be on time
- b. Smile, eye contact, and handshake
- c. Introductions

2. Inclusion

- a. Breaking the ice
- b. Building rapport
- d. "Tell me about yourself"

3. Information exchange

- a. Relate your qualifications to employer needs
- b. Demonstrate your skills/competencies with specific examples or stories
- c. Be concise and positive
- d. Using the STAR formula will help you remember how to compose your responses to interview questions and contribute to your interview success:

S = describe the SITUATION

T = describe the TASKS you performed

A = explain what ACTIONS you took

R = highlight the RESULTS

- e. Questions for you to ask in the interview
- f. Prepare for salary questions

4. Closure

- a. Express your continued interest in the position/organization
- b. If possible, summarize your qualifications
- c. Ask what the next step is and/or the time frame for making hiring decisions

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

- Use each interview as a learning experience
- Think about what went well and what could be improved
- Write & send your thank you letter within 24-48 hours
- Consider the pros and cons of the position and the organization
- Make a list of other information you might need to help you evaluate an offer

ADDITIONAL INTERVIEWING TIPS

- The final preparation needed before an interview involves getting psychologically ready. For some people this might mean increasing their understanding of their rights in an interview; for others it might be working on relaxation techniques or firing up their **confidence**.
- What you tell yourself (your attitude) about the interviewing situation will influence your assertiveness and sense of confidence.
- Most interviewees are nervous. You may make mistakes. No interview is perfect.
- Confidence **can** be developed through practice! Ask your friends and family or your career counselor to practice with you.
- For additional information and resources about interviewing, salary negotiation, and dressing for success:
 - Attend interviewing workshops and events
 - Visit the Career Library (University Career Services)
 - Visit <http://careers.gmu.edu/AtoZIndex/index.cfm> (A-Z Index)
 - Use the *Perfect Interview* software to practice your interviewing skills
 - Read ***Moving On: A Guide for Career Planning & Job Search***
 - Schedule an appointment with your career counselor

Dress for Success: Use your Appearance as a Professional Tool

General Guidelines

It is expected that you will dress more formally for the interview than you might once you get the job.

- Dress conservatively/formally to show respect, even if the company's dress code is more casual.
- Limit jewelry worn; remove jewelry from facial/body piercing. Limit visibility of tattoos.
- Nails and hair should be clean and neat; keep hair away from face.
- Keep clothes and accessories in good condition, and properly fitted.
- Keep shoes polished, no scuffs or worn heels.
- Fragrance and make-up should be natural and not detract from your professional message.
- Carry a good quality pen.

Women:

- Keep accessories simple
- Wear hose with skirts
- Typically arms are covered
- Avoid clothes that are too tight, too baggy, too short, or too revealing
- Choose to carry either a purse or a briefcase

Men:

- Shirt sleeves show ¼" to ½" below suit coat sleeve
- Never button the bottom button of your suit jacket
- Tip of tie should reach to end of the belt buckle.
- Wear a tee shirt under a dress shirt.

Dressing on a Tight Budget

- Purchase clothing with multi-use potential
- Shop when you have the time, and work within a budget
- Invest in classic, well-made items
- Look for matching items, e.g., skirt and pants that match a jacket, for versatility.
- Invest in lightweight wool, washable matte jersey, or rayon and cotton blends
- Your best "neutral" colors will depend on your personal coloring and personal style.
 - Dark gray and navy
 - Pearl gray, stone, steel blue, camel and celery
- Use skirts, blouses and sweaters in different combinations to create different effects.
- Select ties, scarves, and jewelry to add variety and communicate professionalism.