Chapter 7 - Successful Interviewing

Your Interviewing Goals

- Demonstrate how your experience, knowledge, and capabilities match the qualities and skills the organization is seeking.

- Convince the interviewer of your enthusiasm for his/her company, that you will “fit in,” and that you will contribute to the needs of the organization and the position.

- Gather information that will help you decide whether you can be successful in the position and whether the company will give you the opportunity for growth and development.

Your Role

First and foremost, you should approach every interview with a positive, enthusiastic attitude that communicates, “I want to work here!” This means leaving a clear and convincing impression of who you are, what you can do to contribute to the organization’s needs, and why they should hire you instead of another candidate. Dress the part and imagine yourself as a worthy, solid candidate who deserves to work there.

Employer’s Role

The interviewer will determine whether you have the skills, knowledge, and abilities needed to be an effective member of the organization. Many employers base their decisions on their first impressions of how the interviewees respond to questions and core knowledge of the company position. If the interviewer predicts a probable fit between your qualifications and the organization’s needs, you will be invited back to the next phase of the interview process.

Interview Preparation

The interview is your chance to really shine. Careful preparation is critical to conveying a polished image. Employers will be impressed when you give specific examples of how your skills and achievements are right for the job at hand. You’ll stand out if you take the time before the interview to obtain as much information as you can about the organization and the job.

Don’t underestimate the importance of the job interview. It is the single most important part of an employer’s selection process. But there’s no need to get butterflies or sweaty palms if you’re prepared to effectively package and present your skills and abilities, work and volunteer experiences, academic accomplishments, and career interests. The pointers in this chapter will help you plan, prepare, and practice for a great interview.

However, if you are a graduate student applying for Academic jobs, please refer to the Graduate School Career Guide at career.ucla.edu/GradStudentCareerGuide for more information on how to prepare for academic interviews as they are somewhat different. What is similar is that you are trying to advocate and relate your skills, experiences and qualifications to each position.

The Interview: What It’s All About

The job interview is a two-way exchange of information between you and a prospective employer. It’s a chance to get to know each other and explore a mutually rewarding working relationship. The purpose of an interview is to determine whether you are right for the job – and whether the job is right for you.

Equally important, the interview also provides an opportunity to ask pivotal questions about the organization and the position. This will help you decide if there is a good match between your qualifications, career goals, and the position for which you’re interviewing.
**Know Yourself**

Think of yourself as the marketing representative for a very unique product. Before your “sales call,” you must be able to offer convincing proof that you are the person best qualified for the position.

Clearly defined self knowledge will help you answer the interviewer’s questions about your career goals and where you see yourself within the organization.

**Six Steps to Selling Yourself**

1. **Conduct a thorough, in-depth self-assessment.** A “Four-Year Plan” in Chapter 2, pages 18 and 19, can help you identify your most marketable skills and attributes. In addition, using your Emotional Intelligence (EQ) can enhance your chances for a successful interview. Having a Strong EQ matters just as much as intellectual ability and skillset. It helps you build stronger relationships both personally and professionally towards achieving your personal and career goals.

2. Emotional Intelligence (EQ) has many components that can facilitate success in job interviews and our work environment. EQ includes being able to recognize and regulate your emotions; increased awareness of your motivations; ability to empathize and understand employers’ needs and to be able to communicate your skills and qualifications clearly to get the attention of employers and companies; and to be able to manage conflicts better. The ability to understand what employers seek from potential employees and how can you fulfill the company’s needs can also enable you to communicate more effectively, increasing your chances for being hired. You can strengthen your emotional intelligence to enhance your communication and social skills which can help increase your chances for being hired. The box to the right will explain how you can apply your knowledge of emotional intelligence to the interview process.

### Applying Emotional Intelligence (EQ) to the Interview

**What is EQ?**

Being able to identify, use, understand, and manage emotions in positive ways to relieve stress, communicate effectively, empathize with others, overcome challenges, and defuse conflict can have a great positive impact on the interview process. Utilizing our emotional intelligence can help us be more in touch with what motivates us, determine what employers seek, and develop our thought process to be able to convey our contributions as applicable to that position.

**What are the four components of EQ?**

- **Self-Awareness:** recognizing our emotions and how they affect our thoughts and actions, knowing our strengths and weaknesses, and having self-confidence in what we can offer.
- **Self-Management:** the ability to control impulsive feelings and behaviors and to manage them effectively, take initiative, follow through on commitments and to be flexible.
- **Social Awareness:** ability to understand the emotions, concerns of other people, pick up on verbal and non-verbal cues and power dynamics within a group context.
- **Relationship Management:** knowing how to develop and maintain good relationships, communicate clearly, work well in a team and manage conflict.

**Why is it important to the interview?**

These components make a drastic difference in how interviewees relate to people and the impression made on employers. It can enhance the interviewees ability to articulate their thoughts to target the organization and the contribution they can make.

**What should I do if I want to enhance my EQ?**

- Sign up for a Mock Interview Workshop to practice your interview skills with a Career Counselor.
- Make a Same-Day Appointment on BruinView™ to practice Interviewing with a counselor.
- Learn as much about the company through prior research so that you can refer your skills and qualifications to the position.
- Refer to the interviewing section in the Career Library.
3. Write down specific examples of how you've used your skills to achieve tangible and measurable results. Then, relate your accomplishments to the requirements of the position. Employers want to know your track record.

4. Review and rehearse the results of your self assessment so that you can communicate your skills and relate your experience to the specific position with ease and confidence.

5. Visit the Career Center and ask a counselor for advice and assistance if you have difficulty identifying and articulating your key attributes.

6. Participate in a Skills Assessment workshop at the Career Center or utilize a computerized self-assessment program to identify your competencies, interests, strengths, and weaknesses.

Know the Industry, Organization, and Position

Candidates who know the employer’s business and the requirements of the position are most likely to make it to the next round of interviews. Conducting research ahead of time will set you apart as a serious, knowledgeable candidate.

Industry Research

Industry research helps you understand typical career paths, identify appropriate-level positions, and gather information about salaries and working conditions in your field of interest. It also helps you get to know the competition, rank, and reputation of different companies in your field. You can utilize Bruinworks.com to search professionals working in various industries/companies of your interest. Your ability to search by individual, company, major, profession, city and state will enable you to meet individuals that you can connect with.

Company Research

Company research will help you prepare appropriate points to emphasize and questions to ask. It will also give you a head start in responding to such interview questions as:

- “What do you know about our company?”
- “Why are you interested in working for this company?”

Things you should know before the interview:

- The company’s mission
- Products & services
- Divisions & affiliations
- Financial Status
- Sales
- Locations
- Plans for expansion
- Business news.

Position Research

The job description research provides valuable clues to the kinds of questions you’ll be asked at the interview. The better you understand the position, the better you will be able to communicate your interest in the job and relate your past experiences to the job responsibilities.

Career Library Resources - Interview Resources

- 101 Great Answers to the Toughest Interview Questions
- 101 Smart Questions to Ask on Your Interview
- Adams Job Interview Almanac
- Can I Wear My Nose Ring to the Interview?
- I Can’t Believe They Asked Me That!: 110 Tips and Techniques to Quickly Prepare for a Tough Job Interview
- Information Interviewing
- Job Interviewing for College Students
- Killer Interviews: Success Strategies for Young Professionals
- Perfect Phrases for the Perfect Interview
- The Essential Phone Interview Handbook
Handling Tough Questions

A question that can throw you into a tail spin may not even faze your best friend. Anticipate what may be a tough question for you to answer. You will reduce your anxiety level if you’re ready to field the types of questions most likely to cause you to lose sleep. Here are a couple of examples for you to think about ahead of time.

“What is your GPA?”

If you have a strong GPA, this may be a routine question. It may create apprehension if you have a less competitive GPA. If you are concerned about how an employer may view your GPA, spend some time thinking about what compensating experience you may have. Formulate a non-defensive response such as:

“I managed to maintain a 2.4 GPA while working 24 hours a week, and being active in two student groups.”

“What are your weaknesses?”

Another challenging question. The best way to handle this question is to relate your weakness to one of your strengths, put it in the past tense, and explain how you have learned to compensate. For example, if one of your major strengths is meticulous attention to detail, you might formulate this type of response:

“I mentioned that one of my strengths is paying meticulous attention to detail when working with written documents. In the past, this trait sometimes caused me to come close to missing deadlines. To compensate, I have developed the habit of assigning myself an artificial deadline, two days before the project is due. On that day, I do my detailed final inspection of my product. Thus, I believe I have learned to achieve a practical balance between perfection and administrative excellence.”

The Question Not Asked

If, for example, you have an obvious physical limitation, the interviewer is unlikely to bring up the subject for fear of offending you or provoking a law suit. However, the question of whether you can do the job could be lingering in the employer’s mind. The best way to deal with this possibility is for you to introduce the discussion. You might say something like:

“If I were interviewing a person who uses a wheelchair, I might be wondering whether her disability would interfere with her ability to travel to different cities to meet with clients. Let me tell you about my study abroad experience and my extensive travel experience.”

The same principle applies for persons who are concerned about age, gender, marital status, or other discrimination concerns. Bring the issue out in the open in a non-defensive, non-accusatory manner and cite an example that will allay the employer’s unspoken concerns.

Questions Pertaining to Your Social and Political Affiliations Mentioned on Your Resume

“Describe your experience(s) working with a specific cultural, religious, political, or LGBT organization.”

When questions pertaining to your social, cultural, religious, or LGBT involvement are asked during an interview, the rule of thumb is to relate your skills, experiences, and qualifications as a result of your involvement with that organization. The focus of your answers should not be on the organization, but what you gained from the experience and how it relates to the position you are currently applying for. If you are not comfortable discussing your affiliation, consider leaving it off your resume. When addressing questions that pertain to your respective affiliation, be prepared to articulate how your experiences relate to the position that you are applying for.

Practice Your Responses

The 60-Second Sound Bite

“So, tell me about yourself.” “Why do you want to work for this company?” “Why should we hire you?” These are favorites of recruiters (often early in the interview) and killer questions if you’re not ready for them. With a well constructed opening statement, (a 60-second sound bite) it’s not difficult to turn these types of questions into your advantage in nearly any situation. Here’s how:
• Think of your response as a 60-second commercial about yourself. It should be a quick summary of your major qualifications for the position and your reasons for being interested in the organization.

• Include a thumbnail sketch of your work experience, a few key accomplishments, and what you hope to achieve in the position.

• Conclude your statement with a brief mention of personal or volunteer activities or hobbies to support your interests and track record of success.

Practice, Practice, Practice

If you know what you will say and how you will respond to typical interview questions, you will feel and appear more confident, organized, and focused. Review and practice your responses to the questions below, to the specific questions for the resume based case, and to the behavioral interviews. Here are additional suggestions:

• Prepare written answers to questions the interviewer is likely to ask.

• Get together with a friend or family member to practice your responses. Ask for constructive feedback on the quality of your answers.

• Pay close attention to any mannerisms or slang expressions that may detract from your overall presentation (e.g., “you guys,” “you all”).

• Practice in front of a mirror or with an audio/video recording device. Be aware of what your posture, gestures, tone of voice, and facial expressions are communicating.

• Sign up for a mock interview at the Career Center. Following this one-on-one practice session, a career counselor will critique your performance and offer suggestions on ways to improve your presentation and communication skills: career.ucla.edu/workshops.

Typical Questions Employers Ask Candidates

• What can you tell me about our company, our products, and our mission statement?

• What is your understanding of the position?

• What do you consider to be your greatest strengths? Your weaknesses?

• Describe what you would consider to be the ideal job.

• What would you do if members of your team weren’t doing their share of the work?

• Describe your decision making process.

• In what significant ways do you think you can contribute to our organization?

• What kind of boss do you prefer?

• Do you prefer a large or small organization? Why?

• How do you feel about working in an unstructured environment?

• Why should we hire you instead of another candidate?

• Which accomplishment are you most proud of, and why?

• Describe your most rewarding college experience.

• Who are your role models?

• How do you handle stressful situations? Give me an example.

• If one of your professors or former supervisors were to evaluate you, what would he or she say?

• Do you have anything else you’d like to tell me?

Types of Interview Questions

There are three main types of interview questions: resume-based, case, and behavioral-based. It’s not unusual for an interviewer to “mix and match” various combinations of these techniques during the course of your interview.

Resume-Based Interview Questions

The interviewer using this “question-and-answer” technique will seek to confirm your qualifications by asking you to describe in greater detail the experiences summarized on your resume. Currently, this is the most widely used method of interviewing by most companies and organizations.

Don’t forget: the interview is a two-way exchange of information.

• Be sure to interview the interviewer.

• Ask questions to make your interview an interactive experience.
• If you’ve done your research, you’ll have formulated the organization’s “resume” in your mind.

• If you have a copy of the company’s annual report or access to their website, view this as a presentation of its skills and background.

• Always go into an interview with about four or five questions already mapped out.

Preparation Tips

• Write out and rehearse the details surrounding each item on your resume.

• Be prepared to describe in detail how a particular accomplishment or experience translates to a benefit to the employer’s organization and the position you have applied for.

Typical Resume Based Interview Questions

• What motivated you to choose your major and career field?

• What internships have you completed? What did you learn?

• Did you work while going to school? In what positions?

• Have you done any volunteer work? What kind?

• Do you have any leadership experience? Please tell me about it.

• How has your education at UCLA prepared you for your career?

• What college subjects did you like the most? The least? Why?

• What skills or qualifications do you have that would make you successful in this position?

• What are some things in your past jobs that you feel you have done particularly well?

• What do you feel needs improvement?

• What did you enjoy the most about your last job? What did you enjoy the least?

• Why did you leave your last job?

• Why did you decide to seek a position with this company, and what do you know about us?

• What are your short-term and long-range career goals, and how do you see a position with this company fitting into your plans?

The Case Interview

The interviewer will present you with a complex problem involving issues or situations that are not likely to be familiar. You will be asked to formulate a solution to the problem under tight time constraints.

Methods of presenting the case study can range from formal written documents containing considerable information to brief oral descriptions of the problem accompanied by little guidance or information. In either extreme, the interviewer will be looking for these qualities:

• Demonstrated enthusiasm for solving complex problems.

• Use of a structured, hypothesis-driven approach.

• Logical thought process and analytical rigor.

• Ability to synthesize information and draw analogies.

• Creativity accompanied by common sense and good business instinct.

• Comfort with drawing conclusions in the face of ambiguity and uncertainty.

Career Library Resources - The Case Interview

• Ace Your Case! Consulting Interviews

• Case in Point: Complete Case Interview Preparation

• Vault Guide to the Case Interview
Preparation Tips

• Figure out in advance what approach works best for you in analyzing ambiguous and complex issues. Then practice using this technique until it becomes second nature. Remember, there is seldom a single right answer.

• Demonstrating enthusiasm, logical and analytical thought processes, and comfort with ambiguity are your primary goals in case interviewing.

Case Interview Tips

• Listen to and read the introduction and case description carefully.

• Keep note-taking to a minimum and concentrate on remembering key facts.

• Ask one or two clarifying questions.

• Identify potential issues and related sub topics.

• Structure the problem by stating a hypothesis (e.g., “It sounds like a cash flow problem”).

• Pick one sub topic to probe. Develop the hypothesis. Check the appropriateness through dialogue with the interviewer. Discard if the topic appears not to be relevant; pursue if viable.

• Pick a second branch to pursue as above.

• Budget your time. Always save the last five minutes to pull everything together, summarize your conclusions, and make a recommendation or identify a plan of action.

Case Interview Resources

The UCLA Career Center Career Library has a number of resources available to help students prepare for case interviews. Visit the library, Monday-Friday 9am-5pm to review the "Vault Guide to Case Interviews" or "Case in Point" books.

Behavioral Interview Questions

Behavior-based interviewing is currently popular with a growing number of employers and builds upon the basic premise that future performance is best predicted by past behavior. The interviewer will cite an experience, skill, or attribute that the company looks for in its employees and will ask you to describe a specific time that you demonstrated that characteristic. The key word is “specific.” A person well trained in this interviewing technique will not let you get away with a general or vague answer.

Compared to a traditional interview, the behavioral interview is much more structured and probing. Its focus is on “real life” experiences and actions. A typical line of questioning might be: “Tell me about a time when you...?” You will be expected to frame your response in a three-step process by describing in detail:

1) The situation
2) The action you took
3) The result or outcome

There are other differences you may expect in a behavioral interview:

• The interviewer will ask open-ended questions to assess whether you have the skills and traits considered essential for job success.

• The interview will focus on areas that are important to the employer, rather than allowing you to bring up points that you may want to emphasize.

• The interviewer may interrupt or follow up with questions that probe for depth and detail, such as:

  “What were you thinking at that point?”

  “Tell me more about your meeting with that person.”

  “Lead me through your decision-making process.”
Preparation Tips

• Identify the skills, attributes and experiences that are highly valued by the company. Thoroughly research the company website and study the job announcement to determine the qualities they are seeking.

• Be prepared to discuss specific examples of your experiences and accomplishments that demonstrate each of these desired skills and qualities.

Strategies for Success in a Behavioral Interview

You’ll be at a distinct advantage if you’re prepared with hard evidence to demonstrate specific skills and capabilities. For example, if you have participated in a team project, be ready with stories or specific examples to describe your actions that were integral to the group’s success, such as initiative, consensus building, good communication, and leadership.

Generally speaking, behavioral-based questions will evaluate your skills and expertise in specific areas. The following are examples of questions the interviewer may ask to evaluate your potential for successful job performance.

Decision Making

• Give an example of a time when you had to make a difficult decision.

• Describe a situation when you had to defend a position or decision.

• Tell about a time when you had to be relatively quick in coming to a decision.

• Summarize a situation where you had to seek out relevant information, define key issues, and determine the steps to take to get desired results.

• Give a specific example of a time when you used good judgement and logic in making a decision.

Teamwork

• Describe a time when other members of your work team disagreed with your ideas. What did you do?

• Give an example of when you had to arrive at a compromise or guide others to a compromise.

• Tell of a situation when you worked with a colleague who was not completing his share of the project. Who, if anyone, did you tell or talk to about it? Did the manager take any steps to correct your colleague? Did you agree or disagree with the manager’s actions and why?

Analysis or Problem Solving

• Give an example of how you identified a small problem and fixed it before it became major.

• Recall a time from your work experience when your manager or supervisor was unavailable and a problem arose. How did you handle that situation?

• Give an example of a time when you were assigned to a complex project. Specifically, what steps did you take to prepare for and finish the project? Were you happy with the outcome? What would you have done differently if given a second chance?

• Describe an instance when you had to think on your feet to disengage yourself from a difficult situation.

Adaptability

• Describe a problem you faced in making the transition from college to work.

• Describe a situation in which you had to adjust quickly to changes over which you had no control. What was the impact of the change on you?

• By providing examples, describe how you can adapt to a wide variety of people, situations, and environments.

• Describe a time on any job that you held in which you were faced with problems or stresses that tested your coping skills.
Communication

• Tell of a time when your active listening skills really paid off for you.

• Have your listening and speaking skills ever helped you better understand a person or a situation? Describe.

• Tell about a time in which you had to use your written communication skills in order to get across an important point.

• Have you ever made a presentation to a large group? Describe that experience.

• What has been your most successful experience in speech making?

• Describe a situation in which you were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to see things your way.

Work Standards or Ethics

• Describe a time when you were not very satisfied or pleased with your performance. What did you do about it?

• How have you differed from your boss in evaluating your performance? How did you handle the situation?

• Have you ever disagreed with a rule or procedure? What did you do?

Initiative

• Give an example where you pushed yourself to do more than the minimum.

• Describe a project or idea that was implemented or carried out successfully, primarily because of your efforts.

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

Planning and Organizing

• How do you determine priorities in scheduling your time? Give an example.

• Describe a time on the job when you had any projects or assignments due at the same time. What steps did you take to get them all done?

• Give an example of an important goal which you set in the past. Tell about your success in reaching it.

• Describe a situation that required a number of things to be done at the same time. How did you handle it? What was the result?

Supervision

• In a supervisory or group leadership role, have you ever had to discipline or counsel an employee or group member? What was the nature of the discipline? How did you feel?

• Have you ever given feedback to someone? What did you do?

• Tell about a time when you had to fire someone. Describe how you felt.

• Have you ever had to motivate someone to do something? Describe.

Sensitivity or Interpersonal Skills

• Tell about a time when you had to be assertive.

• Give an example of when you had to work with someone who was difficult to get along with. Why was this person difficult? How did you handle the situation?

• Give an example of a time when you were able to successfully communicate with another person even when the individual may not have personally liked you (or vice versa).

• Tell about a time you had to resolve a conflict or a sensitive or personal nature.
Interview Settings

BruinView™ Campus Interviews
Recruiters from hundreds of companies and organizations conduct campus interviews for entry level career positions with UCLA graduating seniors and graduate students through the BruinView™ system (some companies also visit the campus to interview freshman, sophomores, and juniors for summer jobs and internships). The standard on-campus interview is conducted in one of the Career Center’s interview offices and lasts from 30 minutes to one hour.

The campus interview may be conducted by a human resources representative, a department or division manager, or an employee who works in the same type of position for which you are being considered. It is not uncommon for companies to send a recent UCLA graduate who is working for their firm to conduct all or part of the interview.

Like any other first interview, the campus interview is essentially a screening interview. Keep in mind it is just as important to prepare thoroughly for a campus interview as any other interview. Your performance will determine whether you will continue in the selection process.

If you pass the first round of the selection process, you will be invited to a follow-up interview which usually takes place at the company’s local or home office.

On-Site Interviews

The on-site visit may be your first contact with the prospective employer, or it may be the final step in the selection process. The on-site interview gives you a chance to tour the facility, interact with staff at all levels, learn more about the organization’s products and services, and experience the work environment and its employees.

Your initial on-site interview will generally last 45 minutes to one hour. If things are going well, it may last several hours. It is not uncommon for follow-up interviews for entry level jobs to consume an entire day. An important point to keep in mind is scheduling. Do not schedule more than two initial interviews in one day – one in the morning and one in the mid afternoon. When you receive an invitation to a follow-up interview, try to clear your schedule for the entire day so that you do not have to cut short your opportunity to present your qualifications and obtain a job offer.

Telephone & Virtual Interviews

Many employers conduct initial screening interviews, or interviews with long-distance candidates, via telephone or video conferencing software such as Skype. While these are more efficient and cost-effective methods of interviewing, they come with a different set of challenges than traditional in-person interviews. The following tips will help you prepare for and overcome some of the most common challenges.

Tips for Success

• Avoid distractions – Conduct the interview in a quiet place, where you will be free from distractions and interruptions. Be sure to turn off the ringer on all phones. If you are conducting the interview in a space you share with other people, place a sign on the outside of your door that states “Interview in Progress – Please Do Not Disturb.”

• Be prepared to answer the call at least five minutes in advance of the scheduled time.

Specifically for Telephone Interviews:

• Use a landline, if possible. If you must use a cell phone, make sure the battery is charged and you are in an area with clear reception. Don’t drive during the interview or engage in any other distractions.

• If you have call waiting, ignore it. Do not answer any other phone calls during your interview.
• Prepare notes – One huge advantage to the telephone interview is that you can refer to notes. Write down key points or examples of success stories you wish to share during the interview. Keep your resume, cover letter, and the job posting nearby for reference.

• Give focused, concise responses since you are unable to pick up on the interviewer’s non-verbal cues. During phone interviews it is difficult to pick up on how you are coming across to the interviewers or whether you are appropriately addressing the question at hand. If you are unsure, feel free to ask “Did that answer the question, or would you like me to elaborate further?”

• Dress professionally and smile – It may be difficult to convey professionalism and enthusiasm over the phone. To help you get into a professional frame of mind, wear professional attire and sit at a desk (lounging on your bed in your pajamas may not be the best idea!). To convey enthusiasm, smile throughout the interview – people can often perceive a smile over the phone.

Specifically for Virtual Interviews

• Test out your computer equipment a couple of days in advance so you have time to remedy any technical problems before the big day. Make sure your software is properly installed and that your webcam and microphone work. Do a couple test runs with family and friends so you can get feedback about how you come across on the other end.

• Sign on 15-20 minutes ahead of time to be sure you are available when the interviewer calls to reach you.

• Remember, they can see you! This means you should dress and groom yourself as you would for an in-person interview.

• Prepare your backdrop – Be sure to set up your webcam so it faces a professional-looking background. Rearrange things in your background so it appears neat and professional, or choose a location where there is only a wall behind you.

• Speak slowly and clearly since you may have to deal with technical interference or noises.

• Don’t forget to smile!

Before the Interview

Take a Test Drive to Increase Your Comfort Zone

Before your interview, drive to the interview site (or take whatever public transportation you will use on the interview day). If possible, take your test commute at about the same time of day you would be traveling on the day of the interview and note the time it takes to get there. On the day of the interview, allow plenty of extra time so that you arrive at your destination 10 to 15 minutes early.

Know Where to Park

Find out where to park on your test drive. In the case of fee-based parking, contact the company in advance to find out whether they validate parking for persons interviewing with the firm. If so, get specific instructions on where to park and procedures to follow. If you will be parking on the street, be sure you have an adequate supply of change for the meter.

What to Wear

What to wear depends somewhat on the industry and company culture. As a general rule, your interview attire should be equivalent to that worn by senior managers.

• Make sure your chosen outfit is ready to step into the day of your interview. You don’t need the stress of a missing belt or unpolished shoes at the last minute.

• Minimize fragrances (e.g., perfumes, colognes, after shaves) and pay attention to fresh hygiene and good grooming. Clean nails, breath, and hair are important final touches to your polished and professional image.

• Remember, your work potential may be judged by the attention you give your appearance.
Day of the Interview

When You Arrive

If you arrive more than 15 minutes early, wait in your car. Use the extra time to review your resume and organize your thoughts.

• About 15 minutes prior to your scheduled time, go into the building, enter a restroom, and check your appearance. Now you’re ready for your appointment.

• Check in with the receptionist. Be friendly and polite to everyone you meet. You don’t always know who may be involved in your evaluation.

• Greet the interviewer with a smile and a firm handshake. Maintain good eye contact and demonstrate your enthusiasm and confidence throughout the interview.

Interviews most often begin with small talk about the weather, traffic, or some recent public event. Soon, the conversation will shift to a more serious vein and you will be asked an open ended question, such as “Why are you interested in our company?”

As your interview continues, the interviewer will ask you to fill in details. Do not hesitate to volunteer information or ask for clarification.

The Questions You Ask an Employer Should:

• Give you a better understanding of the duties and expectations of the job.

• Show a genuine interest in the company, yet not be so basic that they lead the interviewer to believe you have not researched the company.

• Help you prepare for your follow up interviews.

Just for Ms. Bruin

• Pants suits and skirt suits are acceptable.

• For skirts or dresses, no shorter than knee-length.

• Suit or tailored dress: conservative style and color.

• Top or blouse: Solid color with plenty of chest coverage.

• Shoes: Flats or conservative heels (no more than 2” high, with closed toes), in a dark or neutral color.

• Accessories: minimal jewelry. Carry a leather portfolio for carrying your resume and other important papers.

Just for Mr. Bruin

• Suit: two-piece suit of medium blue or darker color.

• Shirt: long-sleeved shirt in solid white or blue. If you opt for blue, keep its shade much lighter than your suit jacket.

• Tie: a conservative pattern or solid color.

• Shoes: polished dress shoes in a dark color.

• Socks: choose a solid dark color that either matches or complements your suit trousers.

• Accessories: keep to a minimum. A leather portfolio for carrying your resume and other papers is appropriate.
It is not appropriate at an interview to ask questions that deal with salary, vacation, and other benefits. If an offer is made, there will be ample time to discuss these issues.

Questions for the Interviewer

• How does this position fit into the overall organizational structure?
• What percentage of time would be devoted to each of the responsibilities of the position?
• What challenges or opportunities are associated with the position?
• What is the nature of the training program and supervision provided to new employees?
• How does the company measure performance? When are evaluations scheduled?
• What are the backgrounds of other employees I would be working with in this position?
• What is the management style and corporate culture?
• What are the characteristics of your most outstanding employees in a similar position?

The Close of the Interview

After you have finished your questions, you will probably hear a comment similar to, “Well, if you don’t have anything else, that should be all for today. Thanks for coming.” This is an opportune time to make a strong close by summarizing your qualifications and expressing your interest in the position. Be sure to get a business card from the interviewer so you can send a thank you note the next day.

Before leaving the interview, be certain you understand the next step. Will the interviewer contact you? Will you make the next move? It is appropriate for you to take the initiative to set a time frame for getting a response.

Sample Closing

Here’s a sample script to get you started on your own personalized closing:

“This sounds like an exciting opportunity – just the kind I am looking for. I believe my (insert your most relevant strengths and experience here) make me an ideal candidate for this position. I look forward to becoming a member of your team.

If the last sentence seems too aggressive for your style, substitute:

“I am looking forward to the next step in your selection process.”

Questions to Help Assess Your Interview

• Did I have a solid understanding of the company or position and was I able to effectively communicate that to the interviewers?
• Did I communicate my qualifications, interests, and passion clearly and effectively?
• Which questions did I excel in answering?
• Which questions were challenging for me to answer?
• Was my interaction with the interviewers positive? How could I improve in the future?
• Do I have the names of the people who interviewed me from business cards, contact information, etc.?
• Do I know the next steps of the interview process?
• What are the skills or experiences that I would like to re-iterate in my thank you letter?

Following the Interview

It pays to be proactive in your follow up activities. After your job interviews, keep in touch with the interviewers. Even if you don’t get a job offer, the relationships you establish may lead to further referrals, more interviews, and potentially a job offer that truly meets your expectations.
Example of Thank You Letter

Kahrear Scentor
321 Belmont Ave., #106, Los Angeles, CA 99999, (555) 555-5555   Kahrear@ucla.net

May 27, 20XX

Ms. Joanna Lastname
Human Resources
Wealth Management Fictious Name
12345 Wilshire Blvd., Sixteenth Floor
Century City, CA 99999

Dear Ms. Lastname:

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to meet with you and discuss the Financial Analyst position. I enjoyed speaking with you and learning more about Wealth Management Fictious Name and your department. [Insert something specific you learned during the interview that particularly interested or excited you.]

My enthusiasm for the position and interest for working for Wealth Management Fictious Name were greatly strengthened as a result of our interview. I am confident that my academic background and work experience provide a good fit with your requirements of the job. I can tell that _____ and _____ are qualities you value in an employee and I believe I have demonstrated those through [insert a brief recap of an accomplishment or experience you discussed during the interview].

Please feel free to contact me at (555) 555-5555 or by email to Kahrear@ucla.net if you would like me to provide you with any additional information. Thank you again for the interview and your consideration.

Sincerely,

Kahrear Scentor
Kahrear Scentor
Thank You Letter

Always send a thank you letter to each person on the interview committee within 24 hours of an interview. It is a professional courtesy that demonstrates your enthusiasm and appreciation for the opportunity to interview. It may seem trivial but a thoughtful letter can sometimes be the difference between getting the job or not.

The letter may be sent via email or a handwritten thank you note.

• Thank the interviewer for his or her time and interest in meeting with you and explaining the position.

• Reiterate the skills, strengths, and abilities you can bring to the job.

• Refer to something specific you discussed in the interview to remind them of your conversation.

• Perhaps describe how your interest was intensified after learning something specific from one of the questions you asked at the end.

• Express your interest in the position.

Maintain Contact

• Give the interviewer a few weeks to receive your letter, then make a quick phone call to express your continuing interest in the company. Ask if you can provide additional information to assist in the decision-making process.

• Keep in touch with the interviewer on a regular basis (depending on the decision-making process) until you know the status of the hiring decision.

• Hang in there! If someone else is selected and you felt that you had good rapport with the interviewer, continue to maintain contact. “No” might simply mean they found another candidate who they believe is a better match for that particular position. If the employer knows you are still interested, they may invite you to an interview for another position.

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Consulting, Tues. Sept. 30
Prep for Fall Recruiting, Wed. Oct. 1
Law, Wed. Oct. 22
MBA, Tues. Oct. 28
Gap Year (All Majors), Thurs. Nov. 6
Summer Programs for Pre-Med/Health Students, Thurs. Nov. 13
Job Search Strategies, Last Chance This Quarter, Tues. Dec. 2

Winter 2015
Internship Search, Wed. Jan. 7
Engineering/Technology/Consulting, Tues. Jan. 20
Government & Public Policy, Tues. Jan. 27
Entertainment, Mon. Feb. 2
Public Health, Thurs. Feb. 5
Allied Health (Optometry, Physical Therapy, Audiology, Occupational Therapy), Tues. Feb. 10
Nursing, Thurs. Feb. 19
Pharmacy, Wed. Feb. 25
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Humanities/Social Science, Tues. Feb. 11
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