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Many job seekers approach the interviewing process with a sense of apprehension or fear of the unknown, but employment interviewing is simply a focused, goal-oriented exchange of information between two people. Impressive resumes and cover letters will get you employment interviews; however, the interview itself will typically be the most significant aspect of the employment process.

In its most basic form, the employment interview is an opportunity for applicants and employers to mutually evaluate the fit between the applicant's qualifications and the position being considered. In fact, according to Merriam-Webster, the word "interview" comes into our language from the Latin "inter video", which means literally, "to see about each other." Thus, it is important to keep in mind that interviewing involves a mutual exchange of information based on two-way communication. It is not designed to be a process of inquisition or interrogation. The 'fit' should go both ways, so the interview is also your opportunity to ask questions of the employer!

Objectives of the Interview

Although many books and hundreds of studies have been published on the interviewing process, no set recipe for a successful interview exists. However, its objectives are to:

- Expand on information contained in your resume
- Supply information to the employer that is not contained in your resume (e.g., personality, oral communication skills, general style)
- Gain additional information about the organization and the position you are considering
- Provide an opportunity for both parties to discuss the possibility of employment

To make a strict list of "do's" and "don'ts" would diminish your individuality and tend to promote an artificial approach to the interview. You are unique, and you have specific qualifications and experiences to relate to employers. The success of the interviewing process is a reflection of the extent to which you effectively present your unique qualifications to employers. To merely show up at an interview, hoping that your resume or application will do all your talking for you, is not enough. Rather, you must be an active participant in the exchange of questions, answers, and impressions. Generally, the more conversational this exchange of information, the better.



Types of Interviews

Broadly speaking, there are two basic types of interviews. The screening interview is usually rather general and is relatively short (30 – 45 minutes). It is intended primarily to eliminate unqualified candidates from further consideration. For example, when employers recruit on a college campus, they use screening interviews to decide which of the numerous candidates are best qualified to meet their organization's needs. The selected candidates are then invited to the employer's office or facility for a second, more detailed interview.

The selection interview, a longer, more thorough interview, is designed to identify the most qualified candidate for the position. A selection interview may last up to one hour or more. It is not uncommon for a candidate to go through a sequence of four or five selection interviews with several different employment officials during the course of a day-long plant or office visit. This is also called a “second interview” and is discussed more thoroughly later in this guide.

Regardless of the type of interview, both the interviewer and interviewee will have dual roles. Each will act as screener and screened. Not only will you present yourself and your qualifications, you will evaluate whether or not you would consider working in the organization based on information and impressions you acquire in the interview. At the same time, the interviewer will try to discern your potential as an employee, as well as presenting his/her organization in an informative and appealing manner.

The interview process will undoubtedly involve an in-person interview where you meet with one or more interviewers/ employees from the organization. Prior to the face-to-face interview, there is a good chance you may participate in either a video/Skype interview or a phone interview, sometimes both. Remember, the outcome of a phone or video interview is the same as an in-person interview — a decision will be made about whether you will proceed to the next phase of the interview process. Therefore, you want to make sure you research the employer, develop appropriate questions for the interviewer, and be prepared to answer the “typical” types of interview questions. The following are tips for both these types of interviews.

Tips to Preparing for Video Interviews

(Courtesy of the National Association of Colleges and Employers)

Video interviewing is a convenient and cost-effective alternative to the traditional in-person interview for potential employees. However, there are format-specific elements that students and new graduates need to understand and consider when preparing for a video interview. Here are some recommendations for preparing for video interviews:

- Understand the technology and be comfortable with it. Do not sign up for a video interview unless you are comfortable with the process. Learn what you can and can't do with the audio and video controls. Find out what your image looks like — and how to look your best — and where to look once the interview begins. Being adept with the technology gives you credibility as an “online professional.”
- Consider image and the interview environment. Dress professionally as a video interview is an interview. Ensure the background of the interview area is consistent with the image you want to portray to recruiters. Remove or silence all distractions, such as cell phone ringers, email alerts on the computer, music, pets, roommates, and more.
- Test all settings and connections beforehand. Make sure the settings are optimized and all connections are working prior to the interview to avoid any issues during the interview.
- Be prepared for a system hiccup. And even though you are thoroughly prepared, have a Plan B ready in case the technology fails during a video interview. For example, have your cell phone ready to use in case the connection is unacceptable or drops. Being prepared in such a manner and making a smooth transition to another method in light of unexpected problems can impress an employer.



Conducting the Successful Phone Interview

(Courtesy of the National Association of Colleges and Employers)

A potential employer may want to do a preliminary interview by phone. If you are prepared for the call, you can impress the interviewer.

Here are some tips:

- Turn off distractions. Take your phone into a quiet room.
- Have your tools in one place:
 - ◊ Resumé
 - ◊ Pen and paper to jot down the interviewer(s) name(s) and to take notes during the interview
 - ◊ Company research (with relevant information highlighted)
 - ◊ Questions to ask about the company and position
 - ◊ A loosely written outline of points to make or items to cover as you talk about the position
 - ◊ A glass of water
- Dress the part for the interview. Experts say if you are dressed in a professional manner, you will speak that way. And, in the event the interviewer(s) suggests the phone interview switch to a video interview, you will not be embarrassed by how you are dressed.
- If an employer calls and wants to do the interview right away (instead of setting up an appointment), excuse yourself politely and offer to call back in five minutes. This will give you time to make the psychological switch from whatever you are doing to your professional demeanor.
- Stand up while speaking. Your position affects the quality of your voice. If you are sitting down or relaxing, you do not project the same readiness and intensity as when you stand up.
- Talk only when necessary. Since you lack the visual cues of body language to assess whether you have said enough, mark the end of your response with a question, such as “Would you like more details about my experience as an intern with XYZ Company?”
- Let the employer end the interview. Then you should say “Thank you for your time,” and reiterate your interest in the position.
- Write a thank you note to anyone who participated in the phone interview.



What Employers are Seeking

What are employers looking for in candidates? It might not always be what you may think. The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) conducted a national survey to learn more about the skills employers look for in recent college graduates. In 2016, the top skills employers sought according to the NACE survey were:

- Leadership
- Ability to work in a team
- Communication skills (written)
- Problem-solving skills
- Communication skills (verbal)
- Strong work ethic
- Initiative
- Analytical/quantitative skills
- Flexibility/adaptability
- Technical skills

It is important to remember employers do not expect candidates to possess all of these skills, and much of what you learned will contribute to helping you acquire these skills on the job. However, it is important to consider how your experiences and skills contribute to any one of these ten areas. This will help you effectively communicate your preparation to employers through your resume, cover letter, LinkedIn profile, and interview.

From an employer's perspective, hiring you is a risk. Through studying some paperwork that you have submitted and talking with you over a relatively brief period of time, he or she is expected to make a sound decision. You have the opportunity to convince the employer of your "safety." By relating specific experiences and accomplishments, you must show them that you will fit into their organization and contribute to its goals, vision, and mission. Ultimately, the employer's decision reflects his or her opinion as to whether you **CAN** do the job and whether you **WILL** do the job.



Interview Preparation

Most candidates interviewing for a given position will have the basic qualifications necessary to do that job. However, it is typically the candidate who does the best job of presenting himself or herself who gets the job offer. Basic interview preparation should include:

Know Yourself. Before going into any interview situation, you will need to spend a considerable amount of time thinking about yourself. Are your interests consistent with the general career area and this specific job? What are your employable skills and how do they correspond with this position? Is this opportunity compatible with your work values?

Know the Organization. Knowledge of the organization, its products or services, locations, and needs is essential and expected. The more you know about the organization, the industry it represents, the position under consideration, and how all this relates to your own career goals, the more effective you will be. Thorough preparation will strengthen your self-confidence and will demonstrate sincere interest in the job. A lack of knowledge of the organization could greatly hurt your chances of being hired.

Clearly Define Your Goals Prior to the Interview. Employers look favorably upon candidates who have specific and well-defined career goals. For example, you may say to an interviewer, “Ms. Nicks, I am particularly interested in a sales representative position with your company. Eventually, I would like to advance to a sales management position.” Many mistakenly believe that the more general they are about what they want to do, the better their chances of getting a job.

Consider Your Fit. Continue the interview preparation process by considering your interests, values, skills, and needs in relation to the specific job you are pursuing. How does this position fit in with your long-range goals? You may find it helpful to make a list with information about yourself in one column and information about the career and specific position in the other column. Be prepared to discuss the link-ups with your interviewer. Your task is to help the employer become as well-informed about your attributes and goals as you are. The better you relate your career interests and qualifications to the employer’s needs, the more successful you will be and the employer will know what you can do



Practice Helps!

You must be able to communicate information effectively to the employer. Strive to become as articulate and natural in your interview presentation as possible. There will probably be plenty of rough edges at first, but you will almost surely find that your interviewing skills will improve quickly with practice.

Take advantage, too, of the practice interviews (that is, a “Mock Interview”) that the Office of Career Services can provide. You will need to make an appointment in advance because of the preparation needed of this service, but most students will find it extremely helpful in honing their interviewing skills and increasing their confidence.. Just call us at 1-217-732-3155 ext. 4315 or email Joe Hendrix (jhendrix@lincolncollege.edu) or John Hyde (jhyde@lincolncollege.edu) and we would be happy to help. As an alternative, have someone ask you several of the sample interview questions included in this guide and record your responses. Then, review it and evaluate your answers.

Remember, oral communication is the single most important evaluation criterion. It isn't necessarily the best-qualified candidate who gets the job, but rather **the one who is best at presenting his or her qualifications**. Your practice will pay off handsomely.



First Impressions and Interviewing Basics

Getting your interview off to a good start is important. Being prepared and knowing what to expect can increase your effectiveness in the initial stages of the interview.

What to Wear. When you are neatly groomed and appropriately dressed you create a favorable impression. The suit is the basic element of the interview wardrobe for men and women alike. Colors such as dark blue, black, or various shades of gray are considered most appropriate, although camel and beige are acceptable during the summer. Women may also wear dark brown, dark maroon, and medium blue. Fabric patterns such as solids, tweeds, muted plaids, and pinstripes create the most professional look. For men, white or blue cotton shirts are best — ties are a must! Dark, over-the-calf socks and lace-up or slip-on shoes in brown, black or cognac are the best choices. Women commonly wear tailored shirts or blouses in white, off-white, or a coordinating color. A basic medium- heeled pump in a color that complements the suit is recommended. Don't be trendy. Distracting jewelry, nail polish, make-up or perfume/ cologne should be avoided. Overall, be immaculate. A good appearance reinforces your many positive attributes.

Be Punctual. Your first opportunity to make a favorable impression on the interviewer is to be punctual. Never be late for an interview! Try to arrive early enough (five to 10 minutes) to allow time to check your appearance, collect your thoughts, and review your notes and questions. If for some reason you will be late, be certain to call ahead. One way to help you arrive on time is to visit the interview site in advance of the appointment to be sure you know how to get there. Upon arrival for your interview, greet the employer's receptionist or secretary courteously and with respect. First impressions really count!

Handling Introductions. The introductions between you and your interviewer are important in getting the interview started on a positive note. Greet your interviewer with a smile, a firm handshake and direct eye contact. The interview will generally begin with a social comment about the weather or such to put you at ease. Expect it and react in a normal, cordial fashion. Be sure to note your interviewer's name and use it during the interview. Always address the interviewer as "Mr." or "Ms." until he or she asks



First Impressions and Interviewing Basics

What to Bring. Always carry extra copies of your resume to the interview. If you have updated your resume for the specific job for which you are interviewing, carry along the revised version and give it to the employer. You may be asked to bring a copy of your transcript; however, this is more commonly a part of the application process.

If appropriate (as in the case of advertising, journalism, art, or education), bring a portfolio containing samples or illustrations of your work. If you have an electronic version of your portfolio, you may want to put the URL on the top of your resume under your phone number or LinkedIn URL.

It is also a good idea to carry a printed copy of your reference page, which indicates their names, titles, addresses, telephone numbers, and e-mail addresses. You will also want to carry a pen and paper to make notes following the interview, particularly about your impressions and about any requests the employer made that need your action. There may be an occasion where you would like to write down something for future reference. Before doing so, ask your interviewer if he or she minds if you take some notes.

Additionally, it is generally best to refrain from referring to notes during the interview unless you specifically ask permission from the interviewer. For example, if you have written down questions to ask during the interview, ask the interviewer if it is okay for you to look at some questions you developed specifically for this interview.



Interview Time is Show Time

(Courtesy of the National Association of Colleges and Employers)

Want to tell a potential employer that you are creative? A problem solver? Flexible? Instead of describing yourself as a “self-starter,” tell a story about how you took action when you saw an issue that needed to be fixed. Do not say you are “flexible” — tell the hiring manager about a change in your job (or school work demands) and what you did to deal with the change. Well-worn phrases will not help you get the job, but concrete examples will! For specific examples, refer to the table below.

DON'T SAY	THE STORY YOU NEED TO TELL
Highly Qualified	Highlight your accomplishments in previous jobs. Emphasize your specific skills and note any certifications you have earned
Hard worker	Explain exactly how you have gone the extra mile for your job. For instance, did you regularly meet tough deadlines, handle a high volume of projects, or tackle tasks outside your job description?
Team player	Provide examples of how you worked with colleagues or individuals in other departments to meet an objective or complete a project.
Problem solver	Highlight a difficult situation you encountered and how you handled it.
Flexible	Describe how you responded to a major change at work (or in your schoolwork) or dealt with the unpredictable aspects of your job.
People person	Can you offer examples of your strong communication skills? Can you describe how you have worked with coworkers and customers?
Self-starter	What can you contribute immediately to the company or to the department you work in? Describe how you took action when you saw an issue that needed to be fixed.



Responding to Questions: The Heart of the Interview

The majority of the interview time is typically devoted to the employer asking you questions. Try to discern what an employer is really asking you. What are the underlying questions? For example, if an employer asks what qualities you think are important for someone in the position you are applying for, he or she probably really wants to know whether you have given thoughtful consideration to the skills and abilities necessary to succeed within his or her organization. Put yourself in the employer's frame of reference and respond as directly as possible. Your objectives are to put your candidacy in the best possible light and alleviate any reservations the employer may have about your suitability for employment.

BE YOURSELF AND FOCUS ON YOUR POSITIVE QUALITIES!

If there are periods in your past that are difficult to explain, do not dwell on them. Respond to your interviewer's inquiries honestly, indicating what you have learned from your mistakes. Take responsibility for your past actions and do not blame others. If something in your past is indicative of poor judgment, try to give examples of more recent things you have done that indicate good judgment. Consider the following example:

Question: "Your GPA is a 2.3. That's considerably lower than the other people interviewing for this position. Care to comment?"

Response: "Yes, it is low. My grades don't adequately reflect the knowledge I've gained. The leadership and project management skills I have developed over the past four years both in and out of the classroom have prepared me for this position. For example, I have worked with a variety of people through the offices I've held in my fraternity. You'll note that I was the chairperson of a successful charity fund-drive involving all fraternities and sororities on campus."



Responding to Questions: The Heart of the Interview

In virtually all interviews, you will be asked direct as well as open-ended questions. Direct questions are focused and will elicit some specific information from you. Open-ended questions will allow you to bring more information into your answers that you want to provide to your interviewer. Such questions allow you the opportunity to elaborate upon topics you want to discuss. Deal as much as possible in details and relevant examples, such as job experiences, pertinent hobbies, travel, offices held, college and community organizations, school work, special projects, and honors. Answer questions by focusing on experiences, accomplishments, and skills you have that relate to the specific job for which you are interviewing.

Keep in mind that most interviewers are making comparative judgments as they screen numerous candidates. Therefore, they tend to ask questions that will best help them to differentiate candidates from one another. Try to determine what the interviewer is really asking and what the heart of the question is before responding. Avoid the pitfall of rushing into an answer without first thinking through your response. It is okay to take a few moments to collect your thoughts before responding.

A list of questions designed to give you an idea of the types of questions you can expect to be asked is included as Appendix A. Study it carefully and prepare to respond effectively to these and similar questions. In addition to these questions, Appendix B contains sample questions relating to behavior that will help interviewers judge your potential work ethic.



Questions for the Interviewer

As important as it is to provide good answers to interviewers' questions, you must also be prepared to ask pertinent questions during the interviewing process. Many applicants mistakenly believe that they are evaluated solely on their response to interviewers' questions. In reality, candidates are also evaluated on the basis of the questions they ask during employment interviews.

Your questions should reflect a sincere interest in the organization and an awareness of the employer's needs and how you can fulfill them. Questions relating to salary and benefits should normally be avoided during initial screening interviews. Rather, these types of questions should be raised in subsequent interviews — after you and the employer have developed a greater degree of mutual interest. Do not scare off an interviewer by appearing overly concerned about salary, benefits, vacation time, etc. Examples of good questions to ask are located in Appendix C .

These questions should give you an idea of the types of queries employers expect candidates to make during employment interviews. Obviously, there will not be enough time to ask all — or even most — of these questions, so choose them wisely. Most importantly, ask the questions that are significant and relevant to you as you consider a particular employment opportunity. In any case, avoid asking questions that are adequately covered in the recruiting literature most companies provide. It is perfectly permissible to ask for clarification of information provided in recruiting literature, annual reports, and the like, but do not give the interviewer the impression you have not “done your homework” prior to the interview.

Likewise, if the interviewer appears pressed for time, do not prolong the interview by trying to fit in all your questions. There will probably be time to ask further questions during subsequent interviews and before you will need to respond to an offer of employment.



HOW TO HANDLE IMPROPER OR ILLEGAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

How Should You Respond if You are Asked an Improper/Illegal Question? First of all, think about what the interviewer may be asking or why he/she may be asking you that question. Perhaps the job requires long hours and a lot of travel. An untrained interviewer may ask you point blank if you are married or plan to have children or about your ability to travel. What are your alternatives if asked such a question?

- A. You Can Refuse to Answer
- B. You Can Answer the Question as Asked
- C. You Can Answer the Legitimate Concern of the Employer – ignore the improper question itself and respond instead to the concern underlying the question.

Option C allows you to present yourself in a positive manner and control the way you answer the question. You might want to rephrase the question or simply ignore it and answer the issue behind the question. You can address an interviewer's reservations directly, correct erroneous assumptions about the real issue of concern, and resolve it. For example:

Q: Are you planning to get married soon? (or, Do you have a serious boyfriend or girlfriend?)

A: If you are concerned about my staying in the area or my ability to travel, I can assure you that I am

looking forward to living in this area and travel has always been part of my job expectations.

Q: Do you plan to have children?

A: Regardless of whether I have children, my career will always be an important part of my life.

Q: Where were you born? (The concern is about your work eligibility and you should respond to that

concern.)

A: I am a permanent resident of the United States and have a legal permit to work.-or-

A: I have an F1 (or J1) visa and can obtain practical training experience before returning home.

Questions that were inappropriate before you are hired, such as date of birth, marital status, and others,



Concluding the Interview

Most interviewers will conclude the interview by indicating when you can expect to receive further word on your status as an applicant. However, if the interviewer does not volunteer this information, be certain to ask. This will help you to follow up your interviews within a reasonable time frame. When employers are interviewing numerous candidates, your follow-up efforts will help distinguish you from less conscientious applicants. As a means of facilitating this follow-up process, ask the interviewer for one of his or her business cards and keep it handy for future reference. If the employer does not have a business card, write down his or her full name, title, address, phone number, and e-mail address for your records immediately after the interview.

Handling the Salary Issue

The topic of salary, as mentioned previously, will probably come up in your selection interviews. As part of your pre-interview search, investigate salary levels within your career field for similar positions. The Occupational Outlook Handbook, published by the U.S. Department of Labor, the National Association of Colleges and Employers' (NACE) Salary Survey, Glass Door, and Salary.com will prove helpful.

These resources, and others like them, may be found on Career Services website under the "Career Exploration and Planning Resources page (<https://careerservices.lincolncollege.edu/career-services/career-exploration/>). Salary information may also be found in pertinent professional journals and various other publications. In any event, have an appropriate salary range in mind based on your research prior to the interview, but don't get so bogged down on the salary issue that you give the employer the impression that you are more interested in salary than the opportunity at hand. Normally, there will be sufficient time to negotiate salary after the employment offer has been made.



After the Interview

As a matter of courtesy, it is important to send your interviewer a short thank-you letter, handwritten note, or e-mail within 24 hours after the interview. Send an e-mail thank you if the interviewer states that they will make a decision about the next step in the interview process within a day or two after the interview. Generally, all that is necessary is to thank the interviewer for his or her time and to express your ongoing interest in the position. You may also include a specific topic from your interview conversation as a reminder of something you discussed. If the interviewer indicated a specific time frame by which you should learn of your status as an applicant, be sure to mention that you are looking forward to hearing from him or her by this time.

If time permits, send a short thank you e-mail within 24 hours after the interview and follow up with a handwritten or typewritten note that includes references to one or two specific topics discussed in your interview. As is the case with other types of employment correspondence, your thank-you letter should be neatly typewritten or handwritten to ensure a professional image.

Evaluating your Interviews

Immediately following your interview, take some time to evaluate your performance. Consider what you might do in future interviews to strengthen your effectiveness. Each interview should be a learning opportunity and an opportunity to improve your next interview. You will find that the more you interview, the better you become at effectively presenting your career interests and qualifications to employers. However, if you are consistently passed over for the next phase in the interview process or never make it past the first interview, consider some of the following factors:

- Have you set realistic job goals for yourself?
- Do you need to do your pre-interview research more thoroughly?
- Are you presenting yourself in the best possible manner?
- Does your resume reflect your career interests and support your claims? Does it represent the real you?
- Are you conveying an enthusiastic and well-informed interest in the position and an eagerness to learn?

Ultimately, as you evaluate your interviews, you will develop new skills in the entire process of interviewing. Besides being well-prepared, don't underestimate the importance of being enthusiastic. Highlight your qualifications and potential. Remember, the number one rule in any hiring situation is to convince the organization that you are worth more than they will be paying you. Be confident in yourself, and

DON'T GIVE UP TRYING!



Second Interviews

Typically, employers who interview on campus include a second interview at their offices or facilities as a part of the hiring process. These interviews follow on-campus or screening interviews and are usually the last step in the process. They are designed so that the employer and candidate can get to know each other in more depth than is possible in the campus interview. The objective of second interviews is to ensure that there is a good “fit” or “match” between you and the organization and position.

During these visits, you will learn more about the position, the employer’s culture, mission, vision, product(s), services, goals, long-term career opportunities, and the local community. You will experience a variety of formats for these second interviews. For example, the length of the interview visit will vary among different employers, and a variety of people will ask questions in both formal and informal sessions. In addition, these interviews can be given many names such as an office visit, plant visit, or site visit.

It is important to maintain your professionalism at all times throughout your visit. Keep in mind that every employee you meet, from the person who picks you up at the airport, to the person who greets you at the reception desk, to the recent alumnus you meet at lunch, to the people with whom you formally interview, are evaluating your qualifications and “fit” for the position.

Since the most common ways to be contacted are by phone or e-mail, you will want to have a professional-sounding message left on your voicemail and a professional e-mail address.

Preparation: The second interview is an important opportunity to collect information you will need to make a decision. Well in advance of the interview, you should prepare questions to ask and think about what to observe during your interview visit. The better you prepare, the more likely you will be to present yourself as an enthusiastic, mature, and interested candidate.



Second Interviews

You should be very familiar with and up-to-date on information about the employer. This preparation might include a review of the organization's annual report, as well as any Internet-based resources, including the employer's website and other citations that may be found using various search engines. LinkedIn may provide alumni contacts within the organization, as well as information on the employer and the individuals with whom you are interviewing. Career Services website has information on researching companies and organizations.

Finally, be sure not to overlook self-preparation, including appropriate travel and interview attire. Also be certain to review your activities, work experience, strengths, skills, and other qualifications that match what the employer is seeking and as written in the job description.

Arrangements and Expenses. If possible, you should confirm the arrangements in writing, regardless of the method an employer used to contact you. Be sure to discuss who is paying for the trip. Most employers will reimburse you for all reasonable expenses, including transportation, meals, hotel, and parking. Normally, you will be expected to cover incidental expenses such as snacks, souvenirs, wi-fi, in-room movies, etc. Most employers are willing to pre-pay travel and lodging expenses if you do not have a credit card or sufficient cash.

Visits can last up to one day long, so overnight accommodations are often necessary. Most times an employer will be willing to work around your schedule but will also appreciate your flexibility. Transportation may be by car or plane depending on the distance involved and your preference. The employer may make the arrangements or ask you to make them. If you make them, ask the employer for recommendations on airlines, hotels, and ground transportation, etc. The employer may suggest that you rent a car upon arrival. That is fine if you meet the minimum age requirement and have a major credit card, but you may not, so be certain to inquire about this to avoid embarrassment. It also shows that you plan ahead. Ask about any expense forms that need completion and be sure to keep any receipts. On occasion, a married student's spouse or partner will be invited, but the employer should take the initiative in such cases.

Second Interviews

Be sure to confirm arrangements several days prior to your visit and get any necessary directions as well as the name and telephone number of your host. This will enable you to avoid any miscommunication. Keep your expenses within a reasonable range; using common sense and good judgment is very important. Never double-charge two or more employers for the same trip. Rather, prorate your expenses among employers visited on the same trip.

Arrival. This will vary depending upon whether you are driving or flying, but it is a good idea to arrive in or near your destination the evening before the interview. If you fly, it is especially important that you confirm your flight a few days ahead of your visit. A representative may meet you at the airport, or you might take a courtesy van or taxi. In either case, you should dress professionally — as you would for an interview. You may be going to dinner or to the employer's office before going to the hotel.

If you drive, be sure to allow yourself plenty of time. Plan extra time for delays such as road construction or detours. You should also keep a record of your mileage and receipts for gasoline.

Interviewing. Your interview schedule will vary depending on the organization. As with the any interview, it is very important to be yourself. Don't try to give the answer you think the interviewer wants to hear. It is common to have numerous interviews with various levels of employees. It could be a one-on-one or group setting. Each interviewer knows what he or she is looking for in a candidate. The types of people involved may include managers (staff, line, plant), human resources officials, recent alumni, your prospective immediate supervisor, and people in departments with whom you would work closely. You should be excited about the chance to talk to a variety of people, since it will give you a better understanding of the overall organization.

The interviewers will vary in terms of their ability to ask questions and conduct an interview. Some may be skilled communicators, some may be more technically oriented, and others may be relatively unprepared and may even ask inappropriate questions. Some employers allow the interviewers to develop their own questions with little coordination. Remember that the people you meet in the second

Second Interviews

You may be asked the same question many times or you may be asked very different, but specific, questions by each person. They might be directed toward assessment of your skills and strengths (e.g., communication, leadership) as they relate to the position, or the questions may require you to communicate how you would handle or react to a given situation. You may also be asked to give an example of a situation and how you handled it (e.g., “Give me an example of a time when you experienced rejection and how you dealt with it”). Different interviewers may be assigned to go into depth about a specific skill or quality.

If you have multiple interviewers, be sure to keep track of interviewer names and titles throughout the day. You may want to jot these down and check the spelling of their names with your primary contact before you leave. Ask for business cards after each interview, whenever possible.

Observing. You should also think about, observe, and note various other aspects of the organization during your visit, including:

- Are people professional and courteous to each other?
- Are people positive or do they complain?
- Do you enjoy the people?
- Is there diversity?
- What is posted on bulletin boards?
- What seems to be the work attitude (fun, serious)?
- Building location, other tenants
- Office furnishings and decor
- What social events, civic/volunteer activities, sports leagues, leisure activities are organized through the employer?
- Is the employer involved in philanthropic activities in their community?



Second Interviews

Tours. Depending on the type of organization, you may be taken on a tour of the plant, office building, or facilities. Usually an employment, department, or plant manager conducts the tour and, while it is normally a relaxed time, you should be aware that you are still being evaluated.

It is also very important to learn about the community in which you would be living and working. You may get a tour of the city or surrounding area during a second interview that will give you a feel for the community. You may also want to look at the Chamber of Commerce's website and other online information about the area. Housing, cost of living, entertainment, and other personal interests as they relate to the community are important factors in your job satisfaction and should not be overlooked.

Testing. An increasingly common part of the employment process is testing of some kind. This can include personality and interest inventories, mathematical and verbal tests, or drug tests. Many times, offers are contingent upon completion of these tests that can take place during a second interview. Usually there is not much preparation that can be done for these tests. With personality or interest inventories, keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers. You should answer questions honestly in order to give an accurate profile of yourself.

Drug tests have also become a standard part of the employment process. These tests usually take the form of a urine or blood sample that is analyzed for controlled substances. You should not be caught off guard if any of these tests are a part of your second interviews. In addition, you should keep in mind that failure to complete these tests might mean that you will not be considered further for employment.



Second Interviews

Salary Discussions. It is normally best to let employers take the initiative in bringing up the subject of salary. However, as mentioned earlier, you should research the field to find out the salary range you can expect. If questioned about salary, it is advisable to avoid giving an exact figure. Rather, you should indicate a broad salary range. This range should be based on your research. Stress that you are very interested in this career/job opportunity. Use the Career Services website for more information about salary

If you are seeking an entry-level position, you may have relatively little opportunity to negotiate your salary. Most employers, at least those of substantial size, have fairly standard salary packages for entry-level candidates. It is rare that these employers will deviate significantly from an established norm. However, some employers do include salary premiums for such things as previous internship or co-op experience, high academic achievement, etc.

If in doubt about how the salary you are initially offered has been determined, simply ask the employer how the offer compares with offers being made to other entry-level candidates. This will open up an opportunity for you to mention any special “qualifiers” you may possess that may have been overlooked in the interviewing process. Also, ask when your performance and salary will be reviewed. It may well be that your salary will increase after you complete a formal or informal probationary period. In any case, if you engage in salary negotiations, strive for a “win-win” outcome and beware of the pitfalls of pushing too hard on the salary issue.

Keep in mind that an employer can increase the “value” of an offer to you in many ways, including a starting bonus, company car, commissions, an expense account, temporary housing during your move, moving expenses, interest-free loans, and other benefits. You should also carefully evaluate the complete employee benefits package. Normally, employee benefit plans are described as part of the salary discussion, and literature detailing employee benefits is provided. In any case, be certain that you understand the benefits to which you would be entitled. You should evaluate an offer based on the total compensation package.



Second Interviews

Some organizations make their offers during the second interview, but most need several days to several weeks to decide on candidates. Thus, it is important to find out about the hiring timetable. If delays occur, you should not hesitate to contact the employer and check on your status.

Follow-Up. It is highly recommended that you send a letter of thanks to the primary contact person and possibly to other individuals you meet during the visit and interviews. This is a common courtesy and will certainly make you stand out above an average candidate. It is best to send this correspondence as soon as possible after your interview visit.

If you have additional questions about second interviews, please do not hesitate to schedule an appointment with a Career Services staff member.

NEED HELP?

If you need help with interviewing or any other aspect of the job search or career planning process, take advantage of the assistance available to you at Career Services. A variety of resource materials are available to you on our website (<https://careerservices.lincolncollege.edu/>). In addition, individual appointments may also be made. Don't hesitate to call. We are here to help you!



Appendix A: SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- Tell me about yourself. (For help with developing your answer, refer to the Telling Your Story workbook (miamioh.edu/studentlife/_files/documents/careerservices/pdfs/elevator_pitch.pdf))
- What are your major strengths/weaknesses?
- Please share with me two positive traits that you do not currently have that you wish you had.
- Why should I hire you over other candidates?
- What kind of professors did you like?
- Do you work well under pressure? How do you handle it?
- What have you done to show initiative and innovation?
- What supervisory or leadership roles have you had? What have been your most satisfying and most disappointing experiences?
- Why did you decide to interview with us?
- Why are your grades low? Do they reflect your ability?
- What do you know about our organization? What interests you about this specific position?
- What qualifications do you have that make you feel you would be successful?
- What have you learned from some of the jobs you have held?
- What is your experience with “difference”?
- What is not on your resume that you would like to tell me?
- What have you read recently?
- In what school activities have you participated? Why?
- Which school activities did you enjoy the most?
- How did you spend your vacations while in school?
- If you were starting college all over again, what would you do differently?
- Do you think your extracurricular activities were worth the time you devoted to them? Why?
- What are your long-range/ short-range goals? How do you plan to achieve them?
- What do you see yourself doing five years from now? Why did you choose the career for which you are preparing?



Appendix A: SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- If you were hiring a graduate for this position, what qualities would you look for?
- Why did you select Lincoln College?
- What major problem have you encountered and how did you deal with it?
- What have you learned from your mistakes?
- What criteria are you using to evaluate the organization for which you hope to work?
- What other employers are you interviewing with? What types of positions are you considering? What would be your ideal job?
- Why did you select your particular major?



Appendix B: SAMPLE BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

MOTIVATION

- Give an example of a time when you went above and beyond the call of duty.
- Describe a situation when you were able to have a positive influence on the actions of others.
- Give an example of a goal you set, and tell me how you achieved it.

PLANNING AND ORGANIZATION

- Describe how you handle having your schedule suddenly interrupted.
- Tell me about a time when you worked effectively under pressure.
- Give me an example when you were unable to complete a project on time.

DECISION MAKING

- Give me an example of a time when you had to be quick in coming to a decision.
- Describe a difficult decision you made in the past six months. What made it difficult?
- Tell me about a time when you made a bad decision.

LEADERSHIP

- Tell me about a time when you had difficulty getting others to accept your ideas. What was your approach?
- Give an example of your ability to build motivation in your co-workers, classmates, or other group members.
- Describe the toughest group that you have had to get cooperation from. How did you handle it?

INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

- Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a very upset customer or co-worker.
- Describe a situation in which you were able to effectively “read” another person and guide your actions by your understanding of their needs and values.
- Tell me about a situation in which you had to be assertive.



Appendix B: SAMPLE BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

INITIATIVE

- Describe a situation when you had to go above and beyond in order to get the job done.
- Give me examples of projects/ tasks you started on your own.
- Tell me about a time when you surmounted a major obstacle.

COMMUNICATION

- Describe your most significant written document, report, or presentation which you had to complete.
- Tell me about a situation when you had to speak up (be assertive) in order to get a point across.
- Give an example of a time when you had to use your presentation skills to influence someone's opinion.
- What do you do if you disagree with someone you work with?
- Describe a decision you made that was not popular and how you handled implementing it.

TEAMWORK

- Tell me about a team experience you found rewarding.
- Describe a team experience you found disappointing.
- What could you have done to prevent this?
- How do you take initiative and communicate with others while working as a member of a team?

PROBLEM SOLVING

- Tell me about a time you were creative in solving a problem.
- Give a specific example of a policy you conformed with which you did not agree.
- Describe an instance when you missed an obvious solution to a problem.
- Have you ever made a mistake? How did you handle it?
- How have you handled a difficult situation?



Appendix C: SAMPLE QUESTIONS TO ASK THE INTERVIEWER

- What qualities are you looking for in your new hires? Could you describe a typical first-year assignment?
- Could you tell me about your initial and future training programs?
- Do you have in-house professional development seminars? If so, what topics are typically covered?
- What are some of the typical career paths followed by others who have been in this position? What is a realistic time frame for advancement?
- How is an employee evaluated and promoted? What are the opportunities for personal growth?
- What is the retention rate of people in the position for which I am interviewing?
- What are the most challenging facets of the position? What are your expectations for new hires?
- What is the overall structure of the department where the position is located?
- What is the work environment like?
- How often can I expect to relocate during the initial years of employment with your company?
- What are the organization's plans for future growth?
- Is the organization stable and financially sound?
- What assurance about employment stability can I expect?
- Is it company policy to promote from within? What is the work history of your top management?
- What distinguishes your firm from its competitors? What industry-wide trends are likely to affect your organization?
- What are your company's strengths and weaknesses? How would you describe your corporation's personality and management style?
- How is the work environment affected by the company's management style?
- If you were to name three values this organization represents, what would they be?
- Why should I want to work for your organization instead of another?
- Why did you join and stay with the firm?
- What do you like about working for this organization? What don't you like?