



COLLEGE of ENGINEERING

THE UNIVERSITY OF TOLEDO

Interviewing Guide

Engineering Career Development Center

1040 Nitschke Hall

On-campus Interview Success

"The average person puts only 25% of his energy into his work.

*The world takes off its hat to those who put in more than 50% of their capacity,
and stands on its head for those few and far between souls who devote 100%."*

- Andrew Carnegie -

Consider the on-campus interview for a moment. You will be spending twenty to thirty minutes in a tiny cubicle with a total stranger. This person will subsequently decide whether you will ever have a chance of working for their company. The best you can hope for is to avoid being disqualified, which only takes you one step further into the interviewing maze. One little mistake, one little error, and you could be history.

Actually, the entire process seems rather absurd, except for the fact that you will not get a job without playing the interviewing game. On-campus interviewing is often the starting point for the interviewing process. On-campus interviewing is not simply meeting with three or five (or even ten) companies and then picking the one you want to work for. To maximize your on-campus interviewing success, you need to first maximize both the quality and quantity of the interviews, and then maximize your interview efficiency. It is not enough to just "show up" for the interviews and hope that someone will miraculously offer you a job. You have to perform at your peak to gain any mileage from on-campus interviewing. Don't just read this one section, but read all of the sections related to interviewing.

On-campus interviews are a gift. They will be the easiest interviews for you to find. You should not depend exclusively on these interviews to guarantee you after-graduation employment. There are far more companies than those visiting your campus. Many of the best companies may not be visiting any campuses. Please make sure to take note of the additional sections on how to reach out to these "other" companies.

The Company's Interviewing Process

From the employer's side of the desk, there are four distinct steps that interviewers go through in our entry level hiring process:

1. **Marketing** - getting our company name out on campus
2. **Screening** - reviewing a candidate's qualifications against our basic criteria
3. **Assessing** - reviewing a candidate's behaviors against our critical behavior profile
4. **Selling** - encouraging chosen candidates to choose our company over the competition

The first two steps, *Marketing* and *Screening*, take place on campus. The final two, *Assessing* and *Selling*, take place at our company-site interview. It is the fourth step, *Selling*, where you want to find yourself--where you are being courted as the employee we want. But, before you get to the *Selling* stage, you will need to pass the first three steps. The opening steps take place right there on campus.

Types of Interviews....

There are many different types of interviews. Sometimes you will interview with only one person and yourself. Other times you may encounter several interviewers at once or be one of several interviewees.

The following is a partial list of some of the types of interviews you may encounter.

Campus Interviews:

- ♦ Tend to be brief, approximately 1/2 hour long.
- ♦ Tend to be screening interviews and usually with no more than 2 interviewers.
- ♦ Should not be used as practice interviews.
- ♦ Usually held after information sessions; make sure you research employers.
- ♦ Review and remember university no-show interviewing policies.

On-Site/Company Interviews:

- ♦ Can be a first (screening) or a follow-up (second) interview.
- ♦ May be meeting with one individual, several people, bosses, co-workers, subordinates or others.
- ♦ Can be any length and include anything from an individual interview, to several interviews, to lunch and organizational tours.
- ♦ When contacted for an on site interview ask for the day's agenda including who you'll be meeting with, special things to bring in, will there be tours, parking, etc.
- ♦ Remember secretaries, receptionists, and similar individuals. BE COURTEOUS TO ALL YOU MEET!

Panel/Board/Committee Interviews:

- ♦ The interviewee is interviewed by more than one interviewer (who may be from different departments and have different function levels).
- ♦ Try to appear calm and make eye contact with all participants.
- ♦ These types of interviews are becoming more common.
- ♦ Good chance to see "culture" and typical interactions of people from the organization.
- ♦ Ask assertive questions as needed.

Telephone Interviews: VERY COMMON!

- ♦ Brief (10-15 minutes) you better have a prioritized list of your top selling points.
- ♦ Keep information by your phone.
- ♦ Watch your answering machine messages. (Make sure it is professional.)
- ♦ Respond to employers within 24 hours or sooner.
- ♦ May be at odd times (be prepared). They will call in the evenings or weekends!
- ♦ Use your voice to show enthusiasm. Smile while you are talking on the phone.

Informal Interviews:

- ♦ Company informational sessions, lunch with a recent graduate from your school, and XYZ Profession Night are all supposedly "informal" gatherings or "get-to-know-you" activities.
- ♦ They are still a very important part of the interview process!

Ten Critical Success Factors Nearly Every Company is Looking For:

You may wonder what exactly the employer is looking for in their candidates. The following is a list of ten critical success factors that nearly every employer is looking for:

- Positive attitude toward work—no matter what the job is
- Proficiency in field of study
- Communication skills (oral and written)
- Interpersonal skills
- Confidence
- Critical thinking and problem-solving skills
- Flexibility
- Self-motivation
- Leadership
- Teamwork

Show your competence in as many of the above critical success factors as possible and you will rise above the competition.

Interview Tips and Preparation

During an interview, you should strive to put your best foot forward. To do this, you must know your own capabilities and limitations, understand the job for which you are interviewing, know what you can contribute to the organization and the position, and present yourself and your capabilities positively. Interviews are stressful for most people. You can avoid some of the stress by preparing beforehand. Let the interviewer set the pace, BUT seize the opportunity to present qualifications.

The following tips might be useful to you in preparing for interviews:

- **Know the Organization.** Research the organization beforehand. Visit the organization's web site and read about the agency's mission and about the specific part of the organization where the position is located. Talk to others who work in the organization. Know the job you are interviewing for.
- **Be Enthusiastic.** Show that you're truly interested in the job you applied for and in the organization. Speak clearly and smile. Provide a firm handshake and maintain eye contact.
- **Be Yourself.** Don't put on an act for the interviewer. Being yourself may help you relax during the interview and eliminate unnecessary stress.
- **Be Prepared.** Arrive ten minutes early. Review your résumé or job application beforehand. Review the announcement for the job applied for. If you have time, you might want to request a copy of the position description for the job so that you can get a better understanding of the position you applied for. Prior to the interview, have questions prepared to ask the interviewer.
- **Be Honest.** Openly discuss with the interviewer your work skills, strengths, and experiences, including reference to any volunteer work you perform. If you do not have experience directly related to a particular task that's part of the job, say so. However, explain your willingness to learn new skills. Don't exaggerate your experience, simply present yourself in a positive manner. Do not criticize past employers, classes, professors, etc... and do not have a superiority complex.
- **Look Your Best.** You will never get a second chance to make a good first impression. Dress for your interview in clothing appropriate to a typical office environment. Dress professionally by wearing a suit with tie for men, blouse for women. Make sure your clothing is clean and pressed. Polish your dress shoes, too.

Good Luck In Your Endeavors!

If you don't get the first job, keep trying. Each interview should be viewed as a learning experience and will be helpful to you as you try to land the job that's right for you.

"Interviewing Intangibles"

- **APPEARANCE.** An upbeat personality, positive attitude and a smile is a professional way to meet a potential employer. Conspicuous obesity or extreme emaciation are negative marks. In men, conservative dress (charcoal gray or dark blue suit with white shirt and dark tie) can't be faulted. In women, a good suit with a fresh light-colored blouse is excellent. Jewelry should be muted, hair neat.
- **PERSONALITY, STYLE.** If you can, learn manners and poise, adopt a diplomatic approach, and act with proper deference and confidence.
- **ARTICULATE.** This category is increasingly important because even if you have the proper educational background, superb dress and manners, good looks, etc., you'll ruin your chances if you come across as a "linguistic cripple." Utilize available resources, if necessary, to learn to write and speak fluently.
- **ENERGY, DRIVE, AMBITION.** Easy to recognize through the quick stride, fresh appearance, and tone of superb physical health. Practice the art of being "stimulating company." You can learn it.
- **POSITIVE ATTITUDE.** Without being an utter fool, you can beat the pessimist with a constructive, cheerful outlook on life. Don't take a negative point of view that discourages others around you. Far better to be a prudent optimist.
- **THOUGHTFUL.** No one wants a "yes" man. An intelligent man or woman usually weighs a question for a second or two before responding. At least brief reflection is wise and gives the impression that you have good judgment. (Translation: do not be glib!)
- **OVERALL COMPOSURE.** The nail-biter, hair-twirler, foot-tapper rarely go beyond the initial interview unless his or her credentials are so outstanding that allowances must be made for nervous habits. Looking someone in the eye is in folk legend a mark of honesty - another intangible quality, slight, yet of significance. Try to eliminate any distracting habits you may have picked up.
- **AURA OF LEADERSHIP.** An erect carriage, a head held high, an agreeable manner, and a certain amount of self-confidence connote leadership qualities. You must be sure of yourself to lead others. Implicit in this is that you inspire trust and are likeable.
- **BRIGHT, INFORMED.** A bit of sparkle. If you're intelligent and well-rounded, you usually will come over as bright and lively, with a degree of humor that provides "sparkle." If the interviewee doesn't have it, it's immediately obvious - and that person comes over as heavy, perhaps a little dull, and a bit of a bore.
- **BREADTH OF INTEREST.** You can train yourself to know a bit in many fields - art, architecture, politics, travel, languages, economics, literature, music, etc. You can educate yourself to carry on an intelligent conversation without permitting embarrassing gaps because of your lack of interest or education.

Fifty Standard Interview Questions

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. What do you want to do with your life?
3. Do you have any actual work experience?
4. How would you describe your ideal job?
5. Why did you choose this career?
6. When did you decide on this career?
7. What goals do you have in your career?
8. How do you plan to achieve these goals?
9. How do you evaluate success?
10. Describe a situation in which you were successful.
11. What do you think it takes to be successful in this career?
12. What accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction in your life?
13. If you had to live your life over again, what would you change?
14. Would you rather work with information or with people?
15. Are you a team player?
16. What motivates you?
17. Why should I hire you?
18. Are you a goal-oriented person?
19. Tell me about some of your recent goals and what you did to achieve them.
20. What are your short-term goals?
21. What is your long-range objective?
22. What do you see yourself doing five years from now?
23. Where do you want to be ten years from now?
24. How do you handle conflict?
25. Have you ever had a conflict with a boss or professor? How did you resolve it?

Fifty Standard Interview Questions continued...

26. What major problem have you had to deal with recently?
27. How do you handle pressure?
28. What is your greatest strength?
29. What is your greatest weakness?
30. If I were to ask one of your professors to describe you, what would he or she say?
31. Why did you choose to attend your college?
32. What changes would you make at your college?
33. How has your education prepared you for your career?
34. What was your least favorite class? Why?
What were your favorite classes? Why?
35. Do you enjoy doing independent research?
36. Who were your favorite professors? Why?
37. Why is your GPA not higher?
38. Do you have any plans for further education?
39. How much training do you think you'll need to become a productive employee?
40. What qualities do you feel a successful manager should have?
41. Why do you want to work in the ____ industry?
42. What do you know about our company?
43. Why are you interested in our company?
44. Do you have any location preferences?
45. How familiar are you with the community that we're located in?
46. Will you relocate? In the future?
47. Are you willing to travel? How much?
48. Is money important to you?
49. How much money do you need to make to be happy?
50. What kind of salary are you looking for?

25 Tough Questions Employers Might Ask...

1. What are your short-range objectives?
2. What are your long-range objectives?
3. Why are you leaving your present position?
4. What can you do for us that someone else cannot do?
5. Why should we hire you?
6. What is your philosophy of management?
7. Define "Success". Define "Failure".
8. What kind of salary are you worth?
9. What are your five biggest accomplishments in your present or last job?
10. How long would it take you to make a contribution to our firm?
11. How long would you stay with us?
12. What is your biggest strength? Weakness?
13. If you could start again, what would you do differently?
14. Are you creative? Give an example.
15. Are you a good manager? Give an example.
16. How would you describe your personality?
17. Have you helped increase sales? How?
18. Have you helped reduce costs? How?
19. What do your subordinates think of you?
20. What computer experience do you have?
21. Would you be willing to take a drug test?
22. How do you feel about people from minority groups?
23. Why do you want to work for us?
24. What other types of jobs are you considering? What companies?
25. Tell us about yourself.

10 Tough Questions and Answer Examples

1. Tell me about yourself. My background to date has been centered around preparing myself to become the very best ____ I can become. Let me tell you specifically how I've prepared myself .

2. Why should I hire you? Because I sincerely believe that I'm the best person for the job. I realize that there are many other college students who have the ability to do this job. I also have that ability, but I also bring an additional quality that makes me the very best person for the job--my attitude for excellence. Not just giving lip service to excellence, but putting every part of myself into achieving it. In ____ and ____ I have consistently reached for becoming the very best I can become by doing the following . . .

3. What is your long-range objective? Where do you want to be 10 or 15 years from now? Although it's certainly difficult to predict things far into the future, I know what direction I want to develop toward. Within five years, I would like to become one of the ____ your company has. In fact, my personal career mission statement is to become a world-class ____ in the ____ industry. I will work toward becoming the expert that others rely upon. In doing so, I feel I will be fully prepared to take on any greater responsibilities that might be presented in the long term.

4. How has your education prepared you for your career? As you will note on my résumé, I've taken not only the required core classes in the ____ field, I've also gone above and beyond. I've taken every class the college has to offer in the field and also completed an independent study project specifically in this area. But it's not just taking the classes to gain academic knowledge--I've taken each class, both inside and outside of my major, with this profession in mind. So when we're studying ____ in ____, I've viewed it from the perspective of _____. In addition, I've always tried to keep a practical view of how the information would apply to my job. Not just theory, but how it would actually apply. My capstone course project in my final semester involved developing a real-world model of ____, which is very similar to what might be used within your company. Let me tell you more about it .

5. Are you a team player? Very much so. In fact, I've had opportunities in both athletics and academics to develop my skills as a team player. I was involved in ____ at the intra-mural level, including leading my team in assists during the past year—I always try to help others achieve their best. In academics, I've worked on several team projects, serving as both a member and team leader. I've seen the value of working together as a team to achieve a greater goal than any one of us could have achieved individually. As an example...

6. Have you ever had a conflict with a boss or professor? How was it resolved? Yes, I have had conflicts in the past. Never major ones, but certainly there have been situations where there was a disagreement that needed to be resolved. I've found that when conflict occurs, it's because of a failure to see both sides of the situation. Therefore, I ask the other person to give me their perspective and at the same time ask that they allow me to fully explain my perspective. At that point, I would work with the person to find out if a compromise could be reached. If not, I would submit to their decision because they are my superior. In the end, you have to be willing to submit yourself to the directives of your superior, whether you're in full agreement or not. An example of this was when . . .

7. What is your greatest weakness? I would say my greatest weakness has been my lack of proper planning in the past. I would over commit myself with too many variant tasks, then not be able to fully accomplish each as I would like. However, since I've come to recognize that weakness, I've taken steps to correct it. For example, I now carry a planning calendar in my pocket so that I can plan all of my appointments and "to do" items. Here, let me show you how I have this week planned out . . .

8. If I were to ask your professors to describe you, what would they say? I believe they would say I'm a very energetic person, that I put my mind to the task at hand and see to it that it's accomplished. They would say that if they ever had something that needed to be done, I was the person they could always depend on to see that it was accomplished. They would say that I always took a keen interest in the subjects I was studying and always sought ways to apply the knowledge in real world settings. Am I just guessing they would say those things? No, in fact, I'm quite certain they would say those things because I have several letters of recommendation from my professors, and those are their very words. Let me show you . . .

9. What qualities do you feel a successful manager should have? The key quality should be leadership--the ability to be the visionary for the people who are working under them. The person who can set the course and direction for subordinates. A manager should also be a positive role model for others to follow. The highest calling of a true leader is inspiring others to reach the highest of their abilities. I'd like to tell you about a person who I consider to be a true leader . . .

10. If you had to live your life over again, what would you change? That's a good question. I realize that it can be very easy to continually look back and wish things had been different in the past. I also realize things in the past cannot be changed; only things in the future can be changed. That's why I continually strive to improve myself each and every day, and I'm working hard to continually increase my knowledge in the _____ field. That's also the reason why I want to become one of the very best _____ your company has ever had. To make positive change. All of that is still in the future. So, in answer to your question, there isn't anything in my past that I would change. I look only to the future to make changes in my life.

In reviewing the above responses, please remember these are sample answers. Please do not rehearse them verbatim or adopt them as your own. They are meant to stir your creative juices and get you thinking about how to properly answer the broader range of questions that you will face.

Sample Behavioral Type Interview Questions

1. *Please give an example of a research project that you recently completed that required you to use your analytical skills and demonstrated your technical expertise in a scientific area. Explain your work.*
2. *Describe a project where it was important for you to collaborate or consult with another group or organization with whom you did not usually interface. What steps did you take to facilitate cooperation or resolve a conflict? What was the outcome?*
3. *Although we all try to be experts in our area of study, it is impossible to know and understand everything. What aspect of your technical field are you still working to master? What steps have you taken to further your learning?*
4. *Have you ever been in a situation in which traditional solutions did not work? What did you do in that situation? What was the outcome?*
5. *Can you give me an example of a recent problem that you were called on to help solve? How and with whom did you check your ideas as you proceeded? What was the result?*
6. *Interacting with others can be challenging at times. Have you ever had an experience with someone you have worked with who was less cooperative than you needed him or her to be? How did you handle the situation? What was the result?*
7. *We all make decisions that occasionally turn out to be mistakes. Describe a project-related decision that turned out to be less than satisfactory.*

What did you do to correct the problem? What was the result?
8. *Can you think of a time when you had a good idea and had to persuade someone to accept it? What was the idea? How did you present it to the person? What was the outcome?*

Questions you should be asking...

Before an interview, prepare some questions to ask during the pre-interview stage and the interview stage. You should be actively involved in the interview process.

Pre-Interview Questions:

- ♦ Ask for the name of the person who is speaking to you on the phone (receptionist, interviewer, head of the company/department, etc.).
- ♦ Are their parking arrangements that I need to know about?
- ♦ Who will be interviewing me?
- ♦ How much time should I allot for the interview?
- ♦ Where should I meet my interviewer?
- ♦ Anything special I should bring with me to my interview?
- ♦ Are there any forms/applications to be filled out before the interview?

Interview Questions:

- ♦ Can you tell me what a normal day is like for someone in this position?
- ♦ What are the Industry trends?
- ♦ Will this co-op position be assisting one of your professional staff or working on a special project?
- ♦ Are there possibilities for relocation and travel?
- ♦ Do co-ops have the opportunity to participate in training experiences?
- ♦ How much supervision does a co-op receive?
- ♦ How long have you had co-op students working for you?
- ♦ Can you tell me types of positions or projects I might have during subsequent co-op periods?
- ♦ How does the co-op position fit in with the professional staff positions?
- ♦ What are some of the products, services, and plans for the future?
- ♦ Organization's record of employment stability (employee retention/turnover)

Ask the following questions tactfully early in an interview to assess what an interviewer is looking for.

Formulate your responses accordingly.

- ♦ What are some of the duties and responsibilities of the position?
- ♦ What is the organization's personality and management style?
- ♦ What are your expectations for new hires?
- ♦ Can you tell me about the organizational culture/environment?
- ♦ What percentage of co-ops continue to work with you after graduation?

Always ask this question!

- ♦ **What will the next steps be in the hiring process?**
- ♦ **Ask for their contact information so you can follow-up.**
- ♦ **When should I expect to hear back from you? END BY THANKING THEM FOR THEIR TIME!**

ASKING GOOD QUESTIONS

Questions about the Company

- Do your homework!
- If it is a publicly held company, go to the internet or library to read their annual report.
- If it is a privately held company, look to your Co-op Director or Career Fair's for any printed materials e.g. sales brochures, product description...
- Be resourceful! An internet search can bring forth valuable information.
- Be alert to recent events and trends.
- Examples of areas to question:
 - History
 - Products
 - Competitors and customers
 - Strategies for growth

Questions About the Department/Division

- Narrowing your focus; prepared questions about the internal organization.
- Here you are trying to get a sense for where the open position stands in the organization and who you will be working with.
- Areas to ask about:
 - Organization chart
 - People/positions you would interact with
 - Reporting relationships
 - Interactions with other divisions, subsidiaries or corporate departments
 - Interactions with outside groups including vendors, customers...

Questions about the Position

- This is the heart of the interview. Your questions will serve two distinct purposes:
 - To provide you with sufficient information about the position.
 - To provide you with a view of what the hiring manager is looking for in your background.
- Areas to ask about:
 - Specific duties and responsibilities for the position
 - Areas which may have been neglected that will require special attention
 - Projects to be addressed initially and over the co-op semester

An excellent question to ask each interviewer is:

“In your opinion, what will it take to be successful in this position and with the company?”

If you get the answer to this, you will know exactly what they are looking for in your background. This is a natural lead-in to discussing your qualifications, background and experience.

Phone Interviews

Employers use telephone interviews as a way of identifying and recruiting candidates for employment. Phone interviews are often used to screen candidates in order to narrow the pool of applicants who will be invited for in-person interviews. They are also used as a way to minimize the expenses involved in interviewing out-of-town candidates.

While you're actively searching for your co-op, it's important to be prepared for a phone interview at a moment's notice. You never know when a recruiter might call and ask if you have a few minutes to talk.

BE PREPARED TO INTERVIEW:

Prepare for a phone interview just as you would for a regular interview. Compile a list of your strengths and weaknesses, as well as a list of answers to typical interview questions (see Fifty Standard Interview Questions). In addition, plan on being prepared for a phone conversation about your background and skills.

- Have a professional message on your phone.
- Keep your resume in clear view, on the top of your desk or tape it to the wall near the phone, so it's at your fingertips when you need to answer questions.
- Have a pen and paper handy for note taking.
- Turn call-waiting off so your call isn't interrupted.
- If the time isn't convenient, ask if you could talk at another time and suggest some alternatives.
- Clear the room. Turn off music and the TV. Close the door.
- Unless you're sure your cell phone service is going to be perfect, consider using a landline rather than your cell phone to avoid a dropped call or static on the line.

PRACTICE INTERVIEWING:

Talking on the phone isn't as easy as it seems. It's important to practice. Keep your "ums" and "uhs" and "okays" in check and practice reducing them from your conversational speech. Also, rehearse answers to those typical questions you'll be asked.

PRACTICE INTERVIEWING:

- Don't smoke, chew gum, eat, drink or type on your computer.
- Do keep a glass of water handy, in case you need to wet your mouth.
- Smile. Smiling will project a positive image to the listener and will change the tone of your voice.
- Speak slowly and enunciate clearly.
- Use the person's title (Mr. or Ms. and their last name.) Only use a first name if they ask you to.
- Don't interrupt the interviewer.
- Take your time - it's perfectly acceptable to take a moment or two to collect your thoughts.
- Give short answers. Do not answer yes or no, but provide a good example of work experience.
- Be enthusiastic – show interest in the position and the organization.
- Ask pertinent questions about the job and company. Do not ask about salary, or benefits.
- Remember your goal is to set-up a face-to-face interview. After you thank the interviewer, ask if it would be possible to meet in person.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW:

- Take notes about what you were asked and how you answered and who you talked with.
- Follow with a thank-you note which reiterates your interest in the job.

As with any interview, the better-prepared candidate will have a definite edge. Phone screenings can benefit you by offering a chance to interview with an employer that is not close to campus but may be just the type of organization you wish to work with.

How to Handle Illegal Interview Questions

On the surface they seem innocent enough. And most of the time, they are truly asked in innocence. Yet the structure and format of the question may be entirely illegal. So you've just been hit with an illegal question. What do you do? How do you respond?

In our politically correct society, we are often ready to cry "foul" at the slightest deviation from the accepted norm. But the reality is that most illegal interview questions are asked in true innocence, or better stated, in true ignorance. Ignorance of the law, ignorance of what questions are proper, ignorance of how the information could be used by others in a discriminatory way.

Ironically, most illegal questions are asked when the untrained interviewer is trying to be friendlier and asks a seemingly innocent question about your personal life or family background. Therefore, any attempt by the candidate to "assert their constitutional rights" will merely throw up the defense shields and put an end to mutual consideration. Warning lights go on, sirens sound, and the interviewer begins backing down from what may have been an otherwise very encouraging position.

So what is the proper response? The answer is up to you, but my recommendation is to follow one of two courses of action: answer in brief and move on to a new topic area, or ignore the question altogether and redirect the discussion toward a new topic area. The interviewer may even recognize the personal misstep and appreciate your willingness to put it aside and go on.

Unless the question is blatant--and yes, blatant discrimination does still take place--your best option is to move on to other things. But, if it is blatant and offensive, you have every right to terminate the interview and walk out.

While laws vary from state to state, there are some definite taboo areas with regard to interview questions that employers should be avoiding. Following are some of the basic subject areas and questions that if asked during the course of the interview, might be viewed as illegal questions being asked with the intention to discriminate:

- Questions related to location of birthplace, nationality, ancestry or descent of applicant, and applicant's spouse or parents. (Example: Pasquale--Is that a Spanish name?)
- Questions related to your sex or marital status. (Example: Is that your maiden name?)
- Questions related to race or color. (Example: Are you considered to be part of a minority group?)
- Questions related to religion or religious days observed. (Example: Does your religion prevent you from working weekends or holidays?)
- Questions related to health or medical history. (Example: Do you have any pre-existing conditions?)

Getting Over Interview Jitters by Carole Martin

Michael waits in the lobby for his interview. His hands are sticky and wet, his heart is beating faster than usual and his mouth feels like cotton. The interviewer approaches, and Michael has to wipe his hand on his pant leg before shaking hands.

This is a familiar scenario in company lobbies throughout the world. The job interview can be very stressful for most people. Since one of our top fears is rejection and one of our top needs is acceptance, it is not surprising that interviews make people sweat.

A Change in Thinking:

The first and most important step in overcoming the fear is to put the interview in perspective. This is not an appointment with the dentist, who may inflict pain. It is a conversation with another person. The worst thing that can happen is you won't get the job, which may not have been the right job for you anyway. Second, think of this conversation as a two-way process. You are interviewing potential employers as much as they are interviewing you. Is there a good fit here? What looks good on paper may not be what it appears for either party. Investigate whether this company is a good place for you and whether you want to invest a significant part of your life here.

Calming Techniques:

One of the best techniques to handle stress is through breathing. Take deliberate shallow breaths. Take air in through the nostrils and exhale, quietly, through the mouth. This technique should be practiced to relax before the interview. Relaxation techniques such as yoga and meditation classes are effective in overcoming extreme cases of interview fright. The interview can cause panic attacks if the fear is strong enough. Preconditioning will do wonders for this type of anxiety.

Prepare Before the Interview:

Michael has been to six interviews in the past two months. He has been runner-up for a couple of the jobs but has received no solid offers. *These are competitive times, and rejection can be expected. Competition for jobs is much keener than it was a year ago. It is important, however, to do everything possible to sell yourself by preparing for the interview. Start thinking of yourself as a product and presenting what you have to offer the company.* Can you imagine giving a performance without some practice and preparation? Winging the interview in today's market is a big mistake. Preparation will make you feel more confident and less anxious.

Fear of Rejection:

Because of the number of interviews with no offer, Michael feels defeated, and it is beginning to affect his self esteem. Such rejection hurts, but try not to take it personally. There are so many factors that could be affecting the offer that it is impossible to say what is happening. There may be internal candidates, relatives promised jobs, a competitor who is a perfect match for the position, a lack of chemistry or a mismatch in salary needs.

Let It Go:

When Michael has done everything to prepare for the interview and is satisfied that he has presented himself in the best light possible, the next step is to let it go. There is something to be learned from each interview. Give yourself credit for getting an interview -- only a small percentage of people get this far in the process. Give yourself credit for going out there and putting yourself on the line, even though it is painful for you. Give yourself permission to not get job offers. Believe that an offer will come through when it is the right offer -- the right fit for the company and for you.

Cancellation / No-Show Policy

- If you are scheduled for an on-campus interview or site visit with a company, you are expected to keep your scheduled appointment.
- Events may arise that cause you to cancel. To cancel an interview, you MUST notify the Engineering Development Center at least 24 hours before the scheduled interview day. Failure to keep a scheduled interview or to cancel an interview will constitute a "No Show". Students who miss an interview may jeopardize their standing with the Engineering Career Development Center which could prohibit interviewing with other companies.
- If you miss an interview and do not notify the Career Development Center, you put The University of Toledo, the Engineering Career Development Center, and the company in a very difficult position. Companies can easily decide not to recruit at the University of Toledo based on students not showing up for scheduled interviews. Do not allow this to happen!
- If you miss an interview, you will not be able to interview or have your resume forwarded until you have spoken with your designated Director.
- This cancellation policy applies to students whether you are scheduled for an on-campus interview or on-site interview.
- If you encounter events that require you to miss an interview you must
 1. Call the Career Development Center/Director as soon as you know you will be unable to keep your appointment.
 2. Write a letter of apology to the company explaining what happened.
 3. Bring a copy of your letter and a stamped envelope with company name and address to your Director.

***You will not be eligible to work with the Engineering Career Development Center until these items are received.

NOT showing up to an interview is VERY SERIOUS. Make sure you write down on your calendar all interview times and check them carefully. If you are scheduled for an on-campus interview, you can always contact our Career Development Center secretary for correct times.

What You Should Do After Every Interview.....Send a THANK YOU

Soon after the interview, while everything is fresh in your mind, sit down and write a thank-you letter to send to all individuals who interviewed you! This is the time to reiterate your interest in the company.

It is important to get business cards of all individuals who interviewed you to make this process easy. You can send your thank you via email, if you have email addresses or through the mail, if you know names, address, city, and state of the company.

~~~~~

Your Name

Address

Phone Number

Email Address

Month Day, Year

Name

Title

Company

Address

Dear Ms. or Mr. :

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to interview with you on \_\_\_\_\_(date) to discuss the \_\_\_\_\_ (job title) position at \_\_\_\_\_(name of company). I was very impressed with the level of responsibility given to students such as myself and I would love the opportunity to become a part of the team.

My ability to work long hours and meet strict deadlines is reflected in my grades. As I stated at our meeting, I enjoy the challenges and learning opportunities posed by real world assignments in which success is based on achievement.

I understand you will begin the hiring process in a \_\_\_\_\_(time frame). I believe a dedicated and focused individual, such as myself, would prove to be a great choice in an employee to integrate into \_\_\_\_\_( name of the company).

Again, I thank you for considering me for the \_\_\_\_\_(position title). I look forward to hearing from you. If you have any additional questions you can reach me at \_\_\_\_\_(phone number) and/or \_\_\_\_\_(e-mail address).

Sincerely,

Your Name

## Top 10 interview gaffes

<http://www.reuters.com/article/lifestyleMolt/idUSSP687020080313>

NEW YORK (Reuters Life!) - Hear the one about the job candidate who brushed her hair during an interview? Or the man who sniffed his armpits on the way into the interview room? They may sound like jokes but these are two of the top 10 gaffes to feature in an annual survey of the most outrageous interview mistakes by candidates compiled by online job site CareerBuilder.com.

The list, based on a survey of 3,061 U.S. hiring managers and human resources professionals by research company Harris Interactive, found the top 10 most outrageous mistakes were:

- Candidate answered cell phone and asked the interviewer to leave her own office because it was a "private" conversation.
- Candidate told the interviewer he wouldn't be able to stay with the job long because he thought he might get an inheritance if his uncle died -- and his uncle wasn't "looking too good."
- Candidate asked the interviewer for a ride home after the interview.
- Candidate smelled his armpits on the way to the interview room.
- Candidate said she could not provide a writing sample because all of her writing had been for the CIA and it was "classified."
- Candidate told the interviewer he was fired for beating up his last boss.
- When an applicant was offered food before the interview, he declined saying he didn't want to line his stomach with grease before going out drinking.
- A candidate for an accounting position said she was a "people person" not a "numbers person."
- Candidate flushed the toilet while talking to interviewer during phone interview.
- Candidate took out a hair brush and brushed her hair.

## **Top Ten Interviewing Gaffes** continued...

As well as asking about the most unusual blunders, employers were also asked about the most common and detrimental mistakes candidates made during an interview.

More than half -- 51 percent -- said dressing inappropriately was the biggest mistake a candidate could make in an interview.

Talking negatively about a current or previous employer came in second at 49 percent and third in the list at 48 percent was appearing disinterested.

Other mistakes included appearing arrogant, not providing specific answers, and not asking good questions.

"If a candidate is overly negative, plays the blame game, is easily frazzled or doesn't come prepared, it usually sends up a red flag for employers, " said CareerBuilder.com spokeswoman Rosemary Haefner.

(Writing by Belinda Goldsmith, Editing by Patricia Reaney)

# Acronyms to Remember & Tips for Successful Interviews

## SOLER:

- **S—Square:** Sit squarely, focus on facing the interviewer.
- **O—Open:** Do not cross arms or legs—indicates you are open to discussion.
- **L—Lean:** Lean forward slightly, shows enthusiasm and you are interested.
- **E—Eye Contact:** Make good eye contact when interviewer speaks and when you speak—don't stare.
- **R—Relax:** When you are relaxed others around you will be relaxed too.

## STAR: (Remember *STAR* when answering questions)

- **S—Situation:** Think of the *Place* or *Event*.
- **T—Task:** What was the *Assignment*, *Mission* or *Job* you were trying to accomplish
- **A—Action:** What did you do or not do that affected the outcome?
- **R—Result:** What happened in the end? How did it all turn out?

## Tips On Handling Questions That Could Display “Negatives:”

- Start off by acknowledging a strength.
- Then state an honest but non-fatal weakness and what you're doing to address it.
- Don't dwell too long on the negatives—you want to take a weakness and show how you are working at overcoming it.

Example: “I am very proficient in C++ but I realize there are many software languages that I have not yet learned—ALTHOUGH I am CONFIDENT I can learn them quickly.”

## PRACTICE, PRACTICE, & MORE PRACTICE!!!

- Have your roommate/friend or anyone ask you some sample interview questions.
- Videotape yourself during this mock interview and critique yourself on your behavior and the answers you provided.
- Look at yourself in a mirror and pretend to answer questions.
- FOCUS on answering the question—don't get sidetracked.
- Be yourself—Don't LIE or pretend to be something you are not!
- Practice saying positive statements about yourself! No one wants to hire someone who doesn't believe they are worthwhile.

**Be Prepared! Take Action! Persevere! Ask for Help! Don't Give Up!**

**If you don't get this job - keep interviewing with other companies!**

**Do NOT Fear—your efforts will pay off!**