



# Instructor's Guide

## YOU'RE HIRED! JOB-WINNING INTERVIEW STRATEGIES

### Introduction

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There's nothing like preparation to calm the pre-interview jitters! After watching this video, young adults will know what steps to take in order to make the most of any job interview.

### Learning Objectives

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After viewing the program, students will know how to:

- Define personal employment goals
- Research a company of interest
- Conduct mock interviews, for practice
- Dress for success
- Make a good first impression on an interview
- Communicate strengths, skills, and accomplishments during a job interview
- Ask and answer a wide variety of pertinent questions during a job interview
- Strategically follow up a job interview via phone, mail, or e-mail

### Educational Standards

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- Correlates to all applicable National and State Educational Standards including the NCLB Act.
- Correlates to National Standards for Business Education from the National Business Education Association.
- Correlates to standards from the National Council of Teachers of English.

## **Main Topics**

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**Topic 1: PREPARATION**

**Topic 2: DEFINING PERSONAL JOB GOALS**

**Topic 3: RESEARCH**

**Topic 4: PRACTICE**

**Topic 5: THE INTERVIEW**

**Topic 6: THE QUESTIONS**

**Topic 7: FOLLOW-UP**

## **Review**

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**1. What are the four critical steps in the interview process?**

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**2. What is the purpose of a job interview?**

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**3. Besides your experience and skills, what is an interviewer hoping to learn about you?**

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**4. How can you prepare for an interview?**

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**5. Nowadays, it isn't unusual to have five or more careers in a lifetime. What are some ways to decide what's right for you?**

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**6. List some ways in which you can learn more about the company (and the person, as well as the industry overall) you're interviewing with.**

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**7. True or False? The more interviews you do, the better you're going to get.**

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**8. How dressed up do you have to get for the interview?**

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**9. True or False? If you're going to be late for an interview, call ahead to let the interviewer know.**

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**10. List some ways to send the right message using non-verbal communication.**

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**11. List some tips for answering the question, "What is your greatest weakness?"**

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**12. True or False? Employers ask tough questions so they can weed out obviously undesirable candidates.**

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**13. What if the interviewer wants to know about your past employment experience — but you don't have any?**

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**14. Besides learning about the job itself, what questions should you ask during the interview?**

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**15. What if the interviewer asks where you want to be in 5 years — but you don't know?**

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**16. True or False? Near the end of the interview, when the employer asks if you have any additional questions, it's best to say "No" — otherwise, the interviewer will think you haven't been listening.**

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**17. What questions should you NEVER ask on a job interview?**

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**18. How should you answer if you're asked a question that is illegal to ask (for instance, "Are you married?" or "Where were you born?")?**

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**19. Is it okay to send a thank-you note after the interview, or does that make the job applicant seem too desperate?**

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**20. What if you follow all the best advice, and still don't get the job?**

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## Review — Instructor's Key

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### 1. What are the four critical steps in the interview process?

- Define your job goals
- Conduct research on the company you'll be interviewing with
- The interview itself
- Follow-up with the person who interviewed you

### 2. What is the purpose of a job interview?

- The interview gives the prospective employee and potential employer a chance to learn more about each other.

### 3. Besides your experience and skills, what is an interviewer hoping to learn about you?

- An interviewer might ask you a difficult question to learn how well you think on your feet. The interviewer may also be assessing your communication skills; and determining how much you know about the company.

### 4. How can you prepare for an interview?

- You can prepare physically, by eating right and getting enough sleep the night before. You can also prepare mentally, by anticipating questions and practicing how you will answer them. Remember that fear of the unknown leads to nervousness, so rehearsing answers to many kinds of questions by role-playing with a friend will be a big help.

### 5. Nowadays, it isn't unusual to have five or more careers in a lifetime. What are some ways to decide what's right for you?

- Attend conferences and events that feature people working in careers that interest you
- Set up information interviews to talk with people about their careers, without the expectation of a job offer

### 6. List some ways in which you can learn more about the company (and the person, as well as the industry overall) you're interviewing with.

- Check out the company's Web site for an overview of its philosophy and earning power
- Conduct an Internet search to see how the company is faring in the media
- Scan local papers for relevant information
- Visit the library and browse through reference books, magazines, and journals that pertain to this industry
- If possible, visit the business



**7. True or False? The more interviews you do, the better you're going to get.**

- True. You may always be a little nervous before an interview, but you'll gain poise and confidence after going on several.

**8. How dressed up do you have to get for the interview?**

- No matter what type of job you are interviewing for, conservative clothing in coordinated colors is the best choice
- Dress a little better than you normally would on the job
- Pay careful attention to grooming details, including your nails, shoes, and hair
- No jewelry, unless it's very conservative
- No cologne or perfume
- If you're carrying your resume in a portfolio, make sure the portfolio looks new
- Turn off your cell phone

**9. True or False? If you're going to be late for an interview, call ahead to let the interviewer know.**

- This is a trick question! It is never acceptable to be late for an interview.
- Leave yourself plenty of time to arrive at the interview site, allowing for traffic or other unforeseen delays
- Try to arrive a few minutes early so you'll have time to calm down and prepare yourself

**10. List some ways to send the right message using non-verbal communication.**

- Don't be afraid to show your enthusiasm
- Shake hands firmly
- Make eye contact
- Try to feel and project confidence
- Smile!

**11. List some tips for answering the question, "What is your greatest weakness?"**

- Some career guides suggest selecting a strength and presenting it as a weakness, such as "I work too much!" But interviewers have heard this type of answer before, and it doesn't impress them.
- To stand out, talk about a true weakness — but emphasize what you've done to overcome it
- Before the interview, type up a list of your weaknesses. Select one that you have been actively working to overcome, and practice discussing it out loud.

**12. True or False? Employers ask tough questions so they can weed out obviously undesirable candidates.**

- False. Employers are looking for people who accept responsibility for their mistakes, and for workers who are honest. They also want to see how well you can handle a difficult situation.

**13. What if the interviewer wants to know about your past employment experience — but you don't have any?**

- Talk about class projects
- Talk about clubs you are involved in
- Talk about extracurricular activities, such as volunteering

**14. Besides learning about the job itself, what questions should you ask during the interview?**

- The questions you ask during an interview depend upon what type of information is most important to you. For some people, questions may center on job flexibility, work environment, and job security. Others may be more interested in learning about opportunities for advancement and challenge. Sample questions: How would you describe a typical work day? What do you feel is the best part of working for this company?

**15. What if the interviewer asks where you want to be in 5 years — but you don't know?**

- No one can predict the specifics of where they will be years down the road, but you can discuss your general goals. Let the interviewer know in what direction you want to develop. Take advantage of guidance counselors and career centers to do some skills assessment, and to get clear on what your employment preferences are.

**16. True or False? Near the end of the interview, when the employer asks if you have any additional questions, it's best to say "No" — otherwise, the interviewer will think you haven't been listening.**

- False. Even if you feel you have all the information you need, you should ask another question, or summarize your qualifications for the job — and then thank the interviewer for their time and interest. Otherwise, the interviewer may think you're not interested. Sample question: I'd like to learn more about this industry. Are there any classes or seminars I can take?

**17. What questions should you NEVER ask on a job interview?**

- Never ask about taking time off, vacation, holidays, sick pay, or salary. These questions can be asked after you have received a job offer — which usually includes this sort of information anyway.

**18. How should you answer if you're asked a question that is illegal to ask (for instance, "Are you married?" or "Where were you born?")?**

- One option is to address the intent of the question, assuring the interviewer that you are the right candidate for the job. For example, if asked whether you're a U.S. citizen, reply that you are authorized to work in the U.S. Questions about having children may be answered by telling the interviewer that you can work overtime if asked, or go on business trips if need be.
- It's okay to answer illegal questions in a straightforward manner, but be aware that your answers could cost you the job
- You might decide that you don't want to work for a company that asks questions that could be interpreted as discriminatory

**19. Is it okay to send a thank-you note after the interview, or does that make the job applicant seem too desperate?**

- Sending a brief follow-up thank-you is essential. Calling on the phone, e-mailing, or sending an actual notecard in the mail shows you are really interested, and also gives you the opportunity to send your resume again without seeming too pushy.
- Sending a thank-you provides an opportunity to add any related skills, abilities, interests, or other information that you didn't think of during the interview, which may have a bearing on your candidacy
- A thank-you note also helps you stand out from candidates who did *not* follow up

**20. What if you follow all the best advice, and still don't get the job?**

- Ask for feedback. One way to do this is to send a letter thanking the employer for the opportunity to be considered for the job. Use that note to include a request for the interviewer's opinion about your interview. Remember too that any interview you go on is good practice for the next one.

## Sample Interview Questions & Answers

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### 1. Tell me about yourself.

Well, I'd say that my strongest skills are attention to detail, organization, planning, and follow-through. I know how an office needs to be run. I'm good at getting the cooperation of people around me and keeping them informed of situations. (Note: This answer covered skills, areas of knowledge, personality, accomplishments, and strengths. It's also good to include examples of personal work experiences that demonstrate your skills.)

### 2. Tell me how you were able to organize a project to keep it on track.

I worked with three other employees to set up a schedule that showed us where we needed to be at each step. We finished the project early and under budget.

### 3. What would you say is your greatest weakness?

Well, I have had trouble in the past with planning and prioritization. However, I'm now taking steps to correct this. I just started using a pocket planner . . . *(Candidate then pulls out the planner to show how it is being used.)*

### 4. Why do you want to leave your current job?

I've achieved the highest level in my current position, and I'm ready for new challenges. I think this job would provide the perfect opportunity for me to grow in new directions, and I really believe my skills can help your company grow. (Note: Never speak negatively of a former place of employment or employee, no matter what the circumstances under which you left.)

### 5. What difficulties have you faced on the job?

While working at a summer camp I had to balance a lot of competing demands — from the parents, the children, the counselors, and the director. It really taught me how to view all sides of any situation, and how to prioritize my time. I learned to see the other person's side and explain my position.

### 6. Do you have any more questions?

I want to continue to improve my skills. If I'm hired, are there opportunities to take seminars, or classes, to learn more about the different facets of the company? The best way to end the interview is to summarize your qualifications, reiterate your interest in the position, and thank them for their time and interest in you.

## Practice: Common Interview Questions

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1. What interests you most about this position?
2. Where do you see yourself in 5, 10, or 20 years?
3. What are your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
4. What did you like about your last job?
5. What separates you from other candidates?
6. How does your previous experience or academic preparation relate to this work?
7. What is your ultimate career goal?

## Tips

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- Practice answering difficult or uncomfortable questions before the interview.
- Never be late. Make sure you know how to get to the interview site, and allow for possible delays.
- Smile as you're preparing for the interview, on your way to the interview, during the interview.
- The morning of the interview, organize and review your notes. You'll feel much more confident when you have a baseline of knowledge about the job and place of business.
- Don't worry if a question comes at you that you didn't expect. Instead, concentrate on what you want the interviewer to know about you and why you're the best candidate for the job.
- Never speak negatively about a past place of employment.
- Don't ask about salary or vacation time — if the company is interested in you, that information will be provided when they make you an offer.
- Don't lie about your experience. If you *don't* have experience using a certain computer program, it's better to say that you'd like to learn, or that in previous jobs you picked up new skills quickly.
- Remember to ask the interviewer your own questions.
- First and last impressions are the strongest, so be sure to conclude the interview gracefully, for instance by thanking them.
- After the interview, write down for your records the information you received during the interview, the name of the person with whom you spoke, and the date of your conversation.
- Follow up the interview by sending a brief thank-you note.



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