INTERVIEW WITH CONFIDENCE

CAREER SERVICES WEST 2420
**ANSWERING TOUGH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

Century College Career Services  
West Campus #2420

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**Tell us a little bit about yourself.**  
This is a chance for you to share relevant information with the interviewer. It is not the time to tell them your life history. Briefly list your work experience as it would pertain to the position you are seeking. Highlight significant accomplishments.

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**What motivates you? How do you motivate others?**  
They want to know about how you promote success. What attitudes and methods do you practice that inspire you to do good work and in turn help others achieve successes.

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**Describe a time when you had to handle a difficult situation/difficult person at work and how you dealt with it.**  
Answer this question with professionalism and respect. Never describe someone using inappropriate or negative language; this is not a time to vent your frustrations. They are looking to identify how well you work with others, did you conduct yourself professionally and your problem solving skills and abilities.

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**What are your weaknesses?**  
This is an important one. When you talk about a weakness be sure to put a positive spin on it. Employers want to know not only that you are aware of your weakness but what have you or are you doing to overcome it. In a big picture sense, are you able to meet challenges and work toward solutions?

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**Why do you want to work here?**  
Have you done your homework? Do you actually know why you do wish to work for them? This is how employers discover if you have taken the time to learn about their organization and not just the position title. It is also lets the employer know that you came prepared and are serious about the position within their organization.

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**Do you work best alone or with a team?**
This can seem like a trick question. But today's workplace jobs that only require one or the other are rare or nonexistent. Employers want to know do you have the ability to collaborate with others to accomplish goals. Also, employers want to know do you have the ability to take initiative, problem solve and create solutions on your own.
COMMONLY ASKED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
Century College Career Services
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Spend time practicing answering the questions listed below. Ask at least two people to do a mock interview with you. The more you practice you will only get more comfortable articulating your skills, abilities and experiences.

Tell us a little bit about yourself.

Why are you interested in this position/job?

Why are you looking for a job? Why are you leaving your current position?

What are your strengths and weaknesses? What would you say is an area in which you need improvement?

Describe some of your most important career accomplishments.

What are your short-term/long-term goals? Where do you see yourself in five years? Ten years?

If we talked to your current/former supervisor/co-workers what would he/she/they say about you?

What do you enjoy most in your current/former job? What do you enjoy the least?

Describe your work ethic.

Explain how you would be an asset to this organization/hospital/clinic?

What knowledge and experience qualifies you for this position? What makes you qualified for this position?

Why do you want to work here? Why should we hire you? What do you know about our company/organization?

Describe a time when you had to handle a difficult situation/difficult person at work and how you dealt with it.

How do you alleviate stress?

Tell me about a time you had to go above and beyond to get the job done.

What tools and habits to your utilize to stay organized?

What would make you a good _________/medical assistant?

What type of environment do you work best in (team, individual, etc.)?

Describe your ideal boss and/or job. What type of supervisory style do you prefer and why?

What are your salary requirements?
Do you have any questions for us?
INTERVIEW DO’s AND DONT’S
Century College Career Services
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You’ve done it! Your job search has been successful enough to get you noticed! That means that both your resume and cover letter have done the work they were intended to do --- get you in the door and an opportunity to interview. Now what? It’s now up to you to sell yourself to the employer in a face-to-face encounter. The following list of “Do’s” and “Don'ts” should help you to prepare for your interview. Remember, practice makes perfect and as you gain more experience interviewing you should get better with time. Role playing and mock interviews are also very helpful preparation tools to enhance your interview skills.

**Do’s:**

**Do** know yourself. Thoroughly review your resume, cover letter, skills and attributes obtained from your experiences (professional, personal and otherwise) and education.

**Do** know what you want. Know what your goals are, what type of position you are looking for and why you are the person for the job.

**Do** research the company. It is important to know something about the organization in which you are interviewing with. If possible, find a way to incorporate this knowledge into your answers. Try to make it flow into conversation rather than bringing it up bluntly just to show you did your homework.

**Do** practice answering typical interview questions. There are several resources (books, articles, websites, handouts, etc.) that outline several types of questions and most commonly asked questions.

**Do** dress for success. Make sure you look neat and professional and remember that you only get one chance to make a first impression.

**Do** know where you are going, and how to get there, ahead of time. Go to the location before the day of the interview. Make sure you give yourself plenty of time and allow for traffic, weather, etc.

**Do** show up prepared. Arrive a few minutes early! Have copies of your resume, cover letter and references with you. Have something to write on, preferably in a portfolio or briefcase. Have a pen with you that you are sure works and doesn’t leak.

**Do** prepare questions of your own. Make a list of questions you would like to ask when given the opportunity in the interview. Make sure the questions are intelligent questions regarding the position, the company and/or the industry.

**Do** your best to be aware of your body language. Communicate clearly and articulate your ideas. Listen carefully in order to ask any follow-up questions that may arise. Show enthusiasm and make sure you use appropriate eye contact.

**Do** thank them for their time and let them know of your interest. Make sure you send a thank you card immediately following the interview. Keep it brief and to the point showing appreciation for their time and consideration and re-emphasizing your interest in the position.
Don'ts:

Don't go out and buy a new suit if you don't have to. You may very well have something in your closet that will work just fine. Make sure that clothes fit comfortably and look neat and professional. In most cases you will want to wear a suit, or at the very least a shirt/tie and dress pants for men and blouse or sweater and dress pants/skirt for women.

Don't dress as if you were going out on the town with friends for the night. Dressing more conservative is the way to go for an interview. Less is more when it comes to jewelry, make-up and perfume/cologne.

Don't wear clothes that make tattoos visible and don't show off multiple body piercings. While you want to be true to who you are, an interview setting may not be the place to show your personal style and flare. Remember first impressions weigh heavily and there is always time later to assess how much of your personality you want to reveal in the workplace. There is a time and place for everything. Remain professional.

Don't use too much body language including hand gestures, etc… as it may be distracting during an interview. Try to relax and use a good combination of both verbal and nonverbal communication.

Don't talk too fast. You also don't want to drone on and on either! When asked a question take a brief moment to organize your thoughts. Relax and talk as if you are engaging in a conversation. Share what you need to in order to answer the question completely; don't share your entire life story!

Don't use slang in a job interview. You want to portray yourself as articulate, intelligent and confident. Save the slang for talking with your friends.

Don't refer to past job experiences, supervisors and/or colleagues in a negative manner. Instead use it as an opportunity to let them know you were ready for a change, a new opportunity, advancement, etc.

Don't give a potential employer a personal email address that has a non-professional address (surferdude@yahoo.com, partygirl@hotmail.com). The same goes for phone numbers. If you give out your cell phone number make sure your voicemail doesn't sound like you are calling the dance club downtown or a 900 number, the message should identify who they are calling, be short and professional.

Don't lie in an interview. While you want to always keep in mind that you are trying to sell yourself to the employer, be honest about weaknesses, experience, etc. However, you also want to be able to answer questions successfully and say what an employer wants to hear. Be sure to work on ways to answer a question positively and honestly without coming off as something you aren't. This doesn't make for a good fit for you or the employer.

Don't get personal. Remember, this is a job interview. While you want to reflect your personal attributes to some extent, a job interview isn't the place to bring up any personal information including family, religion, social interests, etc. Keep it professional and job related.

Don't arrive late. Do all you can to be early! If you are really early then sit in your car, go to the restroom to make sure your tie is straight or your hair looks ok, get a drink of water, etc. Be sure to arrive approximately 10 minutes early and check-in with the appropriate person.

Don't get too nervous! Remember, you are interviewing them as well. Think of the interview as a two-sided conversation, you are both trying to learn about the other and what they may have to offer. Also think of an interview as a learning experience. Practice makes perfect. The more interviews you go through, the better you will get! To be a little nervous is to be expected. In fact, it might help to keep your adrenaline going and to keep you on your toes!
“You only have one chance to make a first impression.”

We've all heard that expression and believe it or not it is true in most cases, especially when it comes to a job interview. One purpose of an interview is to present yourself to a potential employer in a manner that reflects a professional and polished image. While you may want to stand out from the crowd, interview attire is not the way to do it! While professional dress and personal style may vary slightly, there are some main points to keep in mind no matter what job you are interviewing for or what work environment you are in. Here are the basics:

**General Guidelines**

- Select apparel, fragrances, jewelry, hairstyle, etc. that do not detract from your professional image
- Remove facial and body piercings other than single ear jewelry for interviews
- Visible tattoos should be covered to avoid distraction
- Apparel should be clean and neatly pressed
- Apparel should fit well and remain in place when sitting and/or walking
- Less is more. Keep your look simple
- Check the outfit for missing buttons, frayed cuffs and other needed repairs
- Scent should be low-key or absent
- Blue is a very good interview color. It conveys trust, calm and confidence and is the favorite color of most Americans!
- Clean and polish your briefcase or purse
- Shoes should be comfortable and polished. Shoes that are well cared-for signal “Attention to detail”.
- A winter coat should be cleaned and pressed
- An umbrella should be in conservative colors and in working order
- Bring a pen and paper, make sure that the pen works and doesn't leak
- Allow time to dress with care and deal with any emergencies that may arise
- Smile!

**Women**

- Solid color, conservative suit (skirts are traditionally knee-length but slightly shorter or longer are also acceptable)
- Coordinated blouse
- Moderate shoes
- Limited jewelry, nothing flashy, real is better than fake, don't accessorize too much
- Neat, professional hairstyle
- Tan or light hosiery
- Light on the make-up and perfume
- Manicured nails
- Portfolio or briefcase

**Men**

- Solid color, conservative suit (dark suit/light shirt)
- White long sleeve shirt
- Conservative tie (low key colors)
- Dark socks, professional shoes
- Very limited jewelry
- Neat, professional hairstyle
- Go easy on the aftershave, Neatly trimmed nails
- Portfolio or briefcase

THANK YOU LETTERS
Century College Career Services
West Campus #2420

Immediately write a Thank You Letter to the interviewer. Write it right after the interview, and get it in the mail the same evening so it arrives in the next day or two or you can e-mail it if time is short.

In the first paragraph, thank the interviewer (or express your appreciation) for the chance to meet with them to discuss the job and see the premises (use the term "meeting" rather than "interview" if it seems appropriate). Make some reference to your positive impressions of the company.

In the second paragraph, offer some new information or additional reason for the employer to be interested in you for that job—perhaps a "goodie" that you didn't mention in the interview. (You might even link this new information to a problem or opportunity the company is experiencing.) Repeat the job title you are applying for, and show continued interest in it.

In the last paragraph, let the employer know (graciously) that you expect to hear from them again and "plant" the idea in her mind of a phone call to you. Make it clear you're willing to come in and discuss the job further, if necessary.

This document is available in alternative formats to individuals with disabilities, consumers with hearing or speech disabilities may contact us via their preferred Telecommunications Relay Service.
THANK YOU LETTER SAMPLE

Your Name
Your Address
Your City, State, Zip Code
Your Phone Number
Your Email

Date

Name
Title
Organization
Address
City, State, Zip Code

Dear (interviewer’s first and last name),

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you about the assistant accounting position at the BB Agency. The job seems to be a very good match for my skills and interests. The creative approach to account management that you described confirmed my desire to work with you.

In addition to my enthusiasm, I will bring to the position strong writing skills, assertiveness and the ability to encourage others to work cooperatively with the department. My artistic background will help me to work with artists on staff and provide me with an understanding of the visual aspects of our work.

I understand your need for administrative support. My attention to detail and organizational skills will help to free you to deal with larger issues. I neglected to mention during my interview that I had worked for two summers as a temporary office worker. This experience helped me to develop my customer service, office support and clerical skills.

I appreciate the time you took to interview me. I am very interested in working for you and look forward to hearing from you about this position. Please contact me with any questions you may have about my credentials.
Sincerely,

Your Signature *(hard copy letter)*

Your Typed Name