

PREPARE FOR THE INTERVIEW

KNOW YOURSELF

Identify your skills, values interests, personal and professional strengths and weaknesses. Be aware of your short and long term goals. Be ready to discuss this important information with interviewers.

RESEARCH THE COMPANY

- Use materials in the FIT library, the Career and Internship Center (B202) and any business library. Major reference books: *Moody's*, *Standard and Poor's*, *Dunn & Bradstreet*, *Fairchild's Market Directory of Women and Children Apparel*, *Menswear Blue Book*, *Davison's Textile Bluebook*, *Standard Directory of Advertising Agencies*, *Madison Avenue Handbook*, *Sheldon's Guide to Retail Stores and Resident Buying Offices*. *The Encyclopedia of Associations* and a variety of directories for many areas of the fashion industry are available in libraries and bookstores.
- Be sure you know the exact time and location of the interview and the interviewer's name.
- Dress like a professional aim to make an excellent first impression.
- Be prepared for rejection. The job-hunting process generally involves getting turned down by an employer, often more than once. This does not mean that you may not be an excellent candidate. It does mean that the interviewer could not match your skills with the company's needs.
- When you receive a job offer and are having difficulty deciding to accept or reject it, you may want to discuss the options with a career counselor.

TIPS FOR THE INTERVIEW

- Be prepared for an open-ended interview where the interviewer does not ask many questions. Generally, this type of interviewer expects you to be prepared to give an articulate and aggressive presentation. For example, how your knowledge and experience relate to the job in question and how you can contribute to the work of the firm. This helps the interviewer determine what you know about the company and why you may be suited for the job.
- Both in the initial and follow-up interviews, you must be able to answer effectively: Why this industry? Why this job? Why this firm? After each answer you give, the interviewer may very well ask, "Why?" Be ready to answer with specific examples to backup your responses.
- Be prepared to explain, justify and expand on everything you have in your resume.

KEY QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD BE READY TO ANSWER

- Tell me about yourself. (Be prepared for this question. For example, a short statement about why you are interested in this particular interview, how you came to select your major or your reasons for attending FIT.)
- Describe your weakness—what is your major weakness and what can you do to overcome it? Describe your strengths—which is your greatest asset/skill?
- What do you feel are your major successes or accomplishments? Your failures? Your major disappointments?
- What were three of the most important events (decisions) of your life? What are the decisions you have most regretted? Why?
- Are you a leader? (Be prepared to give examples of situations in which you exhibited leadership qualities.)
- How did you like your summer (previous) job? What did you get out of it? What did you learn about yourself? What was the most rewarding thing about this (these) job(s)? Why did you decide to leave it? What makes you want to be a--- (position applied for)? Why would you be good at it?
- How well do you work independently? With others?
- Where do you expect to be in five, ten years? On what do you base this?
- You have five minutes to describe the most relevant and specific items in your background which show that you are uniquely qualified for this job. (Be prepared with several important points you want the interviewer to remember. Stress these points in short, concise statements.)
- How would you describe yourself? (Again, keep this short and focus on your most positive attributes.)
- How do you work under pressure?
- Are you assertive? Able to take criticism? (Prepare to backup your answers.)
- What things are most important to you in your first job?
- Why are you interested in this particular company?
- In what ways do you think you can make a contribution to our company?
- Based on this interview, what questions do you have about the company? What other questions might you have?
- In your last job, what sorts of people (problems) were most difficult? How did you deal with them (it)?

MAKING YOUR INTERVIEW WORK FOR YOU

It is as important to ask thoughtful questions during the interview, as it is to give intelligent answers to the interviewer's questions. You should inquire about topics that are not covered in the company's literature or the interviewer's presentation to show your interest in the firm and the knowledge you have already acquired about it, as well as interest in your own career prospects and development.

In general, show familiarity with current events as they affect the industry and firm. Use a recent edition of the Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature to find any articles about the industry or firm which you can use for discussion and questions. Try to avoid discussions of sensitive issues unless the interviewer mentions them first. Your intimate knowledge of the problems a firm is experiencing may not favorably impress an employer.

Be tactful and accentuate the positive. Don't ask trivial questions. Don't be verbose. Show interest and listen attentively. Expand upon the answer to the question if you feel it is appropriate. Questions about salary, benefits, and vacation are more appropriate to ask in an interview when you feel interest in the position and sense the interviewer is considering you as a candidate for the job, or at the end of the follow-up interview after it is clearly determined that there is a substantial level of interest in you.

QUESTIONS FOR THE INTERVIEWER

- Which companies are your major competitors?
- How would you describe a typical day on the job?
- What specific skills or experience would help someone perform well in this job?
- To whom would I report?
- Would I be assigned to a specific department or rotate throughout the organizations?
- How will my job performance be evaluated? How often?
- Is there any formal program or on-the-job training?
- Is there an opportunity to interact with other areas within the company?
- What is the typical career path within the firm for the position being discussed?
- Is there any travel involved? If so, where and how often?
- How will my work performance be evaluated? How often and by whom?
- What is the work ethic, philosophy or culture of the organization?
- Where do you see the company heading in the next few years?

EMPLOYERS LOOK FOR QUALITIES

OVERALL - Poise, sincerity, good verbal and written communications skills, analytical ability, initiative, and interest in their firm and their industry.

PROFESSIONAL DRESS - Dress like a businessperson unless there's a reasonable circumstance—DO EXPLAIN. Be neat and clean. Don't be sloppy or dress in extreme, trendy styles. Dress appropriate to the company you are interviewing with.

GRADES - The importance of grades vary, from firm to firm. For some they are critical, for others, unimportant. Be able to explain marked deficiencies if asked. Employers may ask you to release your transcript or they may ask you for the name of a faculty reference of your choice. They may even inquire about you from a faculty member whom they know personally. The Career Services Department will not discuss your grades with employers.

EXPERIENCE - Again, this varies from job to job. If you've had work experience, be able to articulate the importance of what you did and how it may relate to the job for which you are interviewing and in terms of your own growth or learning.

KNOWLEDGE OF THE EMPLOYER'S COMPANY AND INDUSTRY - Know the firm's position relative to others in the same industry. General awareness of media coverage of the firm and industry is often expected.

SUMMARY

- Be yourself. Show enthusiasm, interest, and willingness to work.
- Do your homework about the company and the job for every interview.
- Take the interview seriously. If you are not prepared, you are wasting your time.
- Dress appropriately. FIRST IMPRESSIONS ARE CRITICAL!

DO'S AND DON'TS FOR JOB SEEKERS

Do's

- Do stress your qualifications for the job opening.
- Do recount experiences you have had which would qualify you for the job.
- Do indicate where possible, your stability, attendance record, and productivity.
- Do learn ahead of time about the company and its products or services.
- Do approach the employer with respect rather than an arrogant attitude.
- Do maintain your poise, good posture, and eye contact with the interviewer.
- Do answer questions honestly, don't brag or exaggerate.
- Do stress the contribution you can make to the organization.
- Do let as many people as possible know you are job hunting.
- Do recognize your limitations and learn how to strengthen areas of weakness.
- Do indicate your flexibility and readiness to learn.

Don't

- Don't discuss past experiences that are not related to the current interview.
- Don't display an arrogant or know-it-all attitude.
- Don't hedge in answering questions—acknowledge that you're unsure of the answer.
- Don't express your ideas on compensation or hours early in the interview.
- Don't linger or prolong the interview when the interviewer is attempting to end it.
- Don't isolate yourself from contacts...networking is valuable.
- Don't make claims that you cannot "deliver" on the job.