

How to Prepare For an Interview



ANNA MARIA
COLLEGE

Career Services

Trinity Hall East, Room 133 (1st Floor)

Anna Maria College

50 Sunset Lane

Paxton, MA 01612

careerservices@annamaria.edu

508.849.3596

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

1. RESEARCH THE COMPANY

Learn about the company and its operation. You will impress the employer if it is obvious you've done your research.

- Search for the company's website on the internet. You may be able to find the following information:
 - Job description and title
 - The history of the company and the name of the interviewer (it is important to know the name of your interviewer to prepare you for your interview and your future thank-you letter).
 - Products and services, and divisions/departments that interest you; philosophy training programs, organizational structure and size; competitors and types of clients; and growth in past and potential future.
- You can research the information in other ways in addition to reading the company's website.
 - Talk with current or former employers.
 - Read the Annual Report; you can search the internet or call the company to request it.
 - Newsletters and magazines, business directories, trade and professional associations.

2. GATHER YOUR DOCUMENTS/PREPARE FOR THE INTERVIEW

Get directions and know how long it will take it to get there. Find out who will interview you and about how long the interview will take. If several people will be interviewing you, know their position and try to prepare questions specific to their department/function. Bring with you your:

- **Resume-** Bring six to seven extra resumes in case you are introduced to other unexpected interviewers.
- **Reference Sheets** -bring a list of three to five references listed on a separate sheet of paper. List person's name, position, address, phone, company and email. Be sure to get permission from the individuals to be listed as a reference.
- **Portfolio-** If you have a portfolio of your best work and employment documents, sort through it and make sure it is updated and has all the information needed for the interview.

3. DRESS FOR SUCCESS

You can put together a good interview ensemble without breaking the bank by setting and sticking to a realistic budget. Observe and analyze others. Ask a sales associate, family member, or friend to guide and help you work within your budget. Consider consignment shops that offer professional and quality attire. Also, before you go out to buy attire for an interview, research the company. Some places are sexist when it comes to women wearing pantsuits at interviews. Nevertheless, these outfits make good foundations and alternatives to the formal suit.

Dress for Success: Women

- **Clothing is non-verbal communication**
 - Clothes say a lot about you: your values, economic status, and more. So when interviewing, how do you keep your own individual style and personality while still being seen as the perfect person for the company?
 - Keep it professional. Avoid frayed, wrinkled, or soiled clothing. Avoid clothes that are too short, tight, baggy, boldly colored, revealing, or trendy.
 - Don't wear flashy jewelry. It distracts the employer from you!
 - Also, most companies frown on visible tattoos and body piercings. Make sure to cover them up if you can.
- **Begin with the basics**
 - Well-styled understated outfits are the way to go. Start with a canvas of grays and blacks that look professional and fit well.
 - Classic, conservative skirt suits are always the safest route. **Skirts should be knee-length.** Wear neutral gray colored stockings/tights under your skirt.
 - Coordinate the skirt suit or suit pants and jacket with a simple white, ivory, or business blue blouse.
- **Don't accessorize too excessively.**
 - Need to have minimal make-up and perfume and a neat and tidy hairstyle. Regarding perfume, don't set your atomizer on "stun." Some people are allergic to perfume, so try a lightly scented bath soap instead.
 - Modest manicures are the way to go for interviews. Save the brightly decorated nail polish for a great conversation at parties.
 - Scarves can customize your basic wardrobe with a quick dash of color and texture. Make sure the color is not too bright.
 - Shoes and handbags should match up and be stylish but simple. Wear closed toed shoes with flat or moderate 1 ½ heels.
 - Choose a briefcase or portfolio in place of a purse.

Dress for Success Men

Few things have as much impact as the first impression you make for that anticipated face-to-face interview. Research shows it only takes a few seconds to make a lasting impression. That means no matter how solid your credentials, you still want to look professional. Dressing appropriate not only gives you more confidence and credibility, it surrounds you with a sense of belonging that can help deflect the minor slips or stumbles we all can make during that critical interview, or once hired, in daily routines.

➤ **Understand the company culture**

- The bottom line is about striking a balance between what is expected and still being yourself.
- Research the company. If you find the company dress code too restrictive, apply for a job elsewhere. Don't try to break the code. If you choose to fight the system, be prepared to lose.
- Clothing is non-verbal communication.

➤ **Do what suits you best and Don't dress to un-impress**

- Avoid frayed, wrinkled, or soiled clothing. Avoid clothes that are too short, tight, baggy, boldly colored or trendy.
- No backpacks. A briefcase is preferable.
- A solid navy, dark gray, or black suit that FITS. Get it tailored, if necessary; add a dark blue pinstriped or conservatively patterned navy or gray suit later; select a good wool that breathes.
- Bright white or business blue dress shirt.
- Tasteful solid or simple striped or patterned tie.
- Straight, spread, or button-down collars; for wide collars, tie a full Windsor knot, which should finish with a dimple.
- Leather shoes that complement your suit; choose a simple black, classic cap-toe; match with black, calf-length socks.
- Match your belts to your shoes; silver buckles are more reserved.

4. PRACTICE AND ROLE PLAY FOR THE INTERVIEW

- Go through the list of questions at the end of this packet and practice answering questions that might be asked of you. If you have difficulty with some, write them out as notes for yourself.
- Practice replying first in your head, then aloud (which feels really different), then have someone ask you the questions, and if you can, have yourself videotaped.
- Prepare questions to ask the interviewer. It is ok to write them out and bring them to the interview. Use the list of questions at the end of this packet to assist you.

*Two of the questions you should ask at the end of an interview:

1. “When do you expect to make a decision?”
2. “If I have not heard from you, may I call you?”

5. ARRIVE 10 MINUTES EARLY TO THE INTERVIEW

- **Ten minutes is plenty of time to breathe and mentally prepare for your interview.**
- Use a restroom, take a few deep breaths and glance through company literature while you wait.
- Try not to use your cell phone or any electronic device to text/call/email because they may see you and think you are unprepared and more interested in your social life. Show them you are prepared and you are interested in the position you are applying for by staying away from your electronic devices before, during and after the interview.
- Being early may impress your employer, as well. They will know that you care for the position and care about being on time.

AT THE INTERVIEW

- Make eye contact with your interviewer(s).
- Shake hands firmly with the interviewer (s).
- Wait to be asked to sit down.
- Be relaxed and alert.
- Don't chew gum.
- **Emphasize what you can do for the company, rather than what the company can do for you.**
- **Give eye contact and show enthusiasm.**
- Pauses are great! They give you time to think and slow down, calm you, and help you get rid of ums and ok's.
- Words to Avoid: Like, you know, kind of, sort of, maybe, stuff/things, okay, um, yeah
- Use words such as: “I” and/or “we.” You can say: “I am; I have; I accomplished; we planned; we created; I know.”
- **Stay positive** and stay away from any negative comments.

- **Prove your accomplishments** by giving examples, situations, and events that prove you are a good leader, good researcher, and good communicator.
- **Express yourself:** Use complete sentences and avoid one word answers to show enthusiasm.
- **Be aware of body language:** Your tone, posture etc. give clues about your feelings and attitudes. Don't cross your arms or slouch back. Face the interviewer in a relaxed manner.
- **Be a good listener:** Be alert to nonverbal clues indicating when to start or stop talking, maintain eye contact.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Review the questions below and formulate your answers. You may want to write out responses to tricky questions and then practice verbalizing them before your interview.

Questions Asked by Employers:

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why do you want to work for our organization?
- Describe your ideal job.
- What can you offer us?
- What do you consider to be your greatest strength?
- What do you consider to be your greatest weakness?
- Have you ever had any failures? What did you learn from them?
- Name three accomplishments you are most proud of?
- Who are your role models? Why?
- How does your college education or work experience relate to this position?
- What motivates you most in a job?
- Have you ever had difficulty getting along with a former professor/supervisor/co-worker and how did you handle it?
- Why should we hire you?
- What do you know about our organization?
- Where do you want to be in five years? Ten years?
- Why did you choose your major?
- Describe a situation where you were in a leadership role and the members of the group were uncooperative or unmotivated.
- Why did you choose to attend your college or university?
- In which campus activities did you participate? Why?
- Have you ever quit a job? Why?
- Give an example of a situation in which you provided a solution to an employer.
- What are two or three accomplishments that have given you the most satisfaction? Why?
- Give an example of a time in which you worked under deadline pressure.
- How do you think a former supervisor would describe your work?
- How did you learn about us?
- How many employers have you worked for during the last five years?
- You seem to switch jobs a lot. Why?
- Why are you looking to leave your current employer?
- Do you plan to continue your education?
- Give an example of a major problem you faced and how you solved it.
- In your lifetime, what has been your greatest accomplishment? What did you learn from it?
- What was your greatest failure? What did you learn from it?

- Are you at your best when working alone or in a group?
- Would you rather be in charge of a project or work as part of the team? Why?
- What would you do if one supervisor told you to do something now and another supervisor told you to do it later?
- What kind of salary are you looking for today?
- What would your current employer say about you?
- Are you willing to travel?
- Will you relocate?
- Have you ever been fired from a job? Why?
- What two or three things are most important to you in your job?
- Do you have any questions for me?

***At the end of your interview the interviewer will ask you if you have any questions. Make sure you have a few questions to ask so you look professional and prepared.**

Before your interview, be sure to read company literature, annual reports, and newspaper/magazine articles. Learn about policies, philosophies, services, products, salaries and future outlook. Use this information when selecting questions to ask the interviewer. It will show interest and motivation on your part. This is your opportunity to show the employer you have done your research. It is appropriate to write down your questions and bring them to the interview.

Questions for You to Ask:

- What are you looking for in the person you will hire for this position?
- Describe a typical work day and the responsibilities of this position.
- How will I be trained or introduced to the job?
- How is this job important to the company? How does it contribute?
- What are the department's goals for the year?
- How many people work in your department? In the company?
- How has this organization changed in the past 10 years?
- Who are the people I'd be working with and what do they do?
- What issues or concerns are currently facing this department/organization?
- How would I get feedback on my performance?
- If hired, would I report directly to you, or to someone else?
- Does your company encourage further education?
- How often are performance reviews given?
- Are salary adjustments geared to the cost of living or job performance?
- What are your growth projections for next year?
- Do you offer overtime?
- Is this a new position or am I replacing someone?
- What is the largest single problem facing your staff (department) now?
- What do you like best about your job/company?
- What qualities are you looking for in the candidate who fills this position?
- What skills are especially important for someone in this position?
- Is there a lot of team / project work?
- Where does this position fit into the organizational structure?

- How much travel, if any, is involved in this position?
- What is the average age of top management?
- What is the salary range for this position? Any merit raises?
- What are the hours? Overtime? Weekend/evening work?
- Any travel involved? What geographical areas and how often? Reimbursement or company car?
- Are there any educational benefits? Funds for professional development?
- What kind of medical/life insurance is available?
- When do you expect to make a decision about this position? May I call you, if I have not heard from you? (Ask for a business card).

TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

1. SCREENING INTERVIEWS:

- Used for initial screening, usually 30 minutes long.
- Purpose is to weed out candidates before more intensive in-person interviews.
- May be conducted in-person, over the phone or via video.
- If done by telephone, be sure you are in a quiet area and prepared with your resume, portfolio and notes, otherwise ask to reschedule the interview.
- Emphasize succinctly and directly that you possess the desired skills/abilities for the position.

2. ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS:

- These are the most common type of interview and are usually conducted on site by the hiring supervisor.
- The interviewer focuses on questions to assess your skills, knowledge and abilities as they relate to the job.

3. PANEL OR PEER INTERVIEWS:

- Involve more than one interviewer questioning the candidate.
- The interviewers may not have the ultimate authority to hire you, but evaluate you and make recommendations.
- If you know the panel beforehand, you can prepare questions and or comments specific to each of the interviewers.
- Direct your answers to questions to the person who asks the question, but maintain eye contact with the other members.

4. LUNCH INTERVIEWS:

- Assess how well you handle yourself in social situations.
- Be sure to select easy things to eat and do not order alcohol.
- Even though it seems more relaxed, be prepared to answer tough questions.
- See college central for more information: collegecentral.com/annamaria

SECOND INTERVIEWS:

- Similar to first interviews but may last longer, (1/2 day to two days). They involve more people, and are held at company headquarters.
- May include group and individual interviews, a tour of the facility, and a meal with company representatives.
- You may need to confirm travel arrangements, and hotel. Know ahead of time if the company is paying and who is arranging them.
- Know the firm's reimbursement policy for expenses and get it in writing.
- Be prepared with extra copies for your resumes, your portfolio (if you have one), and a list of questions to ask the interviewers.

6. VIDEO INTERVIEWS:

- Allow the candidate and recruiter to see and interact without travel expenses.
- Be prepared for a slight delay time in recovering sound and image.

7. BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEWS

- Consist of questions that enable the interviewer to know how you previously reacted or behaved in certain hypothetical situations.
- This helps the interviewer predict future performance based upon past experiences.

8. CYBER INTERVIEWS:

- Last about 30 minutes
- A computer might ask you a series of questions about your background, work history and career goals.
- You might have a toll free call requiring you to answer up to 25 questions on a push button phone.