

INTERVIEWING TIPS

Tufts Career Services

<http://careers.tufts.edu>

INTERVIEWING—THE THREE Rs

I. RESEARCH

Do your homework. Use all your resources to learn more about the employer and the position for which you're interviewing. Go to the organization's website, but don't stop there. Get a 360-degree perspective on the employer by researching a variety of resources, from the Vault online library (available by password through the Career Services website – <http://careers.tufts.edu>) to media sources and professional organizations. Develop an understanding of the organization's mission, culture, and challenges.

Learn as much as you can in advance about the nature and format of the interview. Will you meet with a single individual from Human Resources, the hiring manager, and/or potential co-workers? Will there be case work involved (typical of consulting or technical interviews)? The better your preparation, the better your performance.

II. REFLECT

What happens *before* your interview will help determine its outcome. Now that your research has given you more information about an employer, you'll have a better understanding of where you might fit and, most importantly, how you can contribute to the organization's goals.

Reflection is the phase where you develop answers to the following questions that are certain to be asked at some point in an interview: *Why are you interested in this organization? This field? This specific position?* And, the query that candidates most often find challenging: "*Why YOU?*" If you've done your homework – and you're sincere about your interest in the position – you'll be prepared to answer these questions and differentiate yourself from your competition.

As you do your research, consider the fundamental goals of interviewing (below). Reflect on these goals and consider how your research will support you in achieving them.

Your Goals:

1. Sell yourself by describing skills and experience that match the job
2. Get information about the position and organization
3. Determine whether the position is right for you

Employer's Goals:

1. Determine whether the candidate can do the job
2. Assess the candidate's 'fit' with a team/organization
3. Sell the organization and position

Before the Interview: A Checklist

Review your resume. Be prepared to discuss *every* bullet point, from internships and employment to coursework and activities.

Assess yourself. Identify strengths and weaknesses, interests, attributes, and skills. Employers are looking for oral and written communication abilities, interpersonal strengths, creative problem solving, analytical thinking, and experiences that demonstrate both your teamwork and your independence.

Develop career objectives. Employers seek candidates who have carefully considered goals and can connect these goals to *their* position and organization.

Research the employer. Learn its history as well as its current position and future prospects. Begin with the organization's website and proceed to trade journals, professional organizations, and media coverage.

Speak with alumni who work at the organization or in the same industry. (This is called Informational Interviewing.) You can identify these individuals through the Tufts Career Network.

Practice. Practice. Practice. Prepare responses to common interview questions and rehearse to ensure a professional, articulate performance. Likewise, consider questions that you would like to ask the employer to convey your research, interest, and enthusiasm.

Choose your interview outfit. Model it for a friend at least two days ahead. (What if you find a stain or a missing button?) Business attire is appropriate for all interviews, unless you've been instructed differently.

Do a trial run. If the interview is off campus, you may want to take a test drive. Consider unexpected factors: traffic, parking, and money for meters. Check the weather.

III. REHEARSE

Develop a script to answer the questions commonly asked by employers. Somewhere between your brain and your mouth, the most articulate responses can become garbled. Don't wait until your interview, when the stakes are high, to discover this! *Practice, practice, and practice!* Develop scripts to respond to typical interview questions and practice OUT LOUD. Do it alone, with a trusted friend, or a Career Counselor. Attend an interviewing workshop and sign up for a video interview so you can observe yourself on tape. And finally, don't postpone this practice until you've been notified about an interview; you may not be able to get an appointment and even if you do, you may not have the time to improve, based on a Counselor's feedback.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

Jot down the pertinent facts you want to remember about the interview and make note of questions as preparation for future interviews. Within 1 - 2 days, send a 'thank you' email or type written note to those who interviewed you. Emphasize your interest in working for the organization and how you can contribute. Use this as an opportunity to clarify or to mention something you might have overlooked in the interview. If you choose to correspond through email, ensure that your message is as formal as one you would send via snail mail.

THE REAL THING: DAY OF THE INTERVIEW

Get off to a good start

- Check your appearance and grooming.
- Bring extra copies of your resume in a portfolio.
- Arrive 10-15 minutes early so you don't appear rushed or hassled.
- The interview begins at the moment you cross an employer's threshold, sometimes earlier. (Candidates tell stories of meeting VIPs – unknowingly – in the parking lot!)
- Behave respectfully with everyone you meet, from administrative assistants to managers.
- The first 60 seconds create lasting impressions. Offer a firm handshake, greet the interviewer by name, and don't be lulled by 'small talk.' You're being evaluated from many angles, including informal conversation.
- Be aware of your non-verbal communication, especially your eye contact and physical posture.
- Display energy and enthusiasm in a way that fits your personal style. Be YOU.

Keep up the momentum

- When the recruiter begins discussing the organization or position, ask questions if you need clarification or want to know more. Be sure you have a clear understanding of the job, the requirements, and the challenges. Your questions should highlight your interest and knowledge of the organization and industry.

- The interviewer will ask about your qualifications as well as areas where they may have concerns. Be prepared to deal with aspects of your background that could be construed as negative (e.g., low GPA, few outside activities, no related work experience). A low GPA or minimal extracurricular involvement could have resulted from working for financial support through college. Or, you may not have directly related experience, but can point to an employment history that demonstrates positive qualities.
- Never criticize a former employer.
- Watch your grammar and enunciation. Employers want articulate employees.
- Never bring up salary or benefits in the first interview.

Conclude with confidence

- Final impressions count. As you conclude, the recruiter is assessing your overall performance. Remain enthusiastic and courteous.
- If you're unclear about next steps in the hiring process, ask for clarification. Example: "*When do you expect to be making a decision?*"
- Shake the recruiter's hand, offer thanks for the opportunity to interview, and request a business card (so you have contact information for your thank you letter).