

Interviewing Basics

Just the thought of interviewing for a job, internship, or fellowship can make many students extremely nervous. You may imagine yourself sitting across from an employer, palms sweaty, breath uneven, mind racing, while the interviewer drills you relentlessly with question after difficult question. If this sounds familiar, you are not alone.

It is not uncommon for candidates to get nervous before the interview. However, interviewing is a two-way street; it is an opportunity for you and the employer to get to know each other. Contrary to what you may have heard, interviewers do not want to intentionally ask you difficult questions just to see you make a mistake. In fact, employers want you to do well during the interview. Think about it: they invest a lot of time and money screening and recruiting candidates. The sooner they can identify the right person, the sooner their job is done.

The good news is that the more experience you get with interviewing, the less nervous you will feel. Like any other task you have mastered, interviewing is a skill. If you have ever been on a team, played an instrument, or performed in public, you probably didn't just show up on game day and expect to deliver a flawless performance. Instead, you probably spent many hours beforehand practicing, rehearsing, and visualizing what you would do and say. Well, interviewing is no different; it is a skill that requires preparation and practice.

What Do Employers Look For During the Interview?

Employers typically want to know three things:

- Can you do the job?
- Will you do the job?
- Will you fit in with the organization?

Your job is to provide enough solid information to answer an unequivocal ?YES!? to all three of these questions. To do so effectively, you will need to be aware of the specific characteristics employers seek in new hires. According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), who surveys hundreds of employers each year, the attributes most highly sought after are:

1. Communication skills
2. Honesty/integrity
3. Interpersonal/ teamwork skills
4. Motivation/initiative
5. Strong work ethic

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