

# California State University **Northridge Career Center**

## **Interview Tips**

The interview gets you the job. You must learn to tell who you are and why you are right for the employer. That means you must show and tell your skills, drive, education, and ability to work.

In the 20-60 minutes of the initial interview, you, as the applicant, must convince the interviewer why you should be hired. You also have an opportunity to find out important information about the organization and the position. The interview, therefore, is a way for you and a prospective employer to exchange information about each other that can only be done by meeting in person.

## **The Career Center Campus Interviews**

Each fall and spring, campus interviews are conducted by employers in the Career Center. Interviews are for anticipated entry-level positions.

- Employers represent business, industry and government.
- Interviews are advertised each semester to CSUN students completing their degrees and to eligible CSUN alumni.
- Employers conduct information sessions and participate in career information panel discussions.
- Recruiting employers provide brochures and other printed materials about their organizations and positions. Materials are made available to students in the Career Library.

Additional opportunities for students and alumni to interview or to obtain information occur through a variety of job Fairs and Expos held on campus.

Visit the Career Center or call (818) 677-2878 for more information.

Accommodations for deaf students and students with disabilities are available upon request in the Career Center.

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## **Be Prepared**

The keys to successful interviewing are preparation, like-ability, and bonding. There are several critical areas to consider and essential things to do in preparation for your interview.

1. **Know the Position.** Be prepared to explain why you are seeking the position and why you would be successful in the job.
2. **Know the Company/ Agency.** Learn about its services and products to converse intelligently about the organization.

3. Your primary responsibility during the interview is to give the employer substantial reasons why you should be hired. Stress what you can do to meet the goals and needs of the employer, not what the employer can do for you. Look for commonalities - colleges, values, backgrounds, interests-so that you can build necessary social links.
  4. Dress for Success. Grooming and selection of clothes should reflect a professional look for the position you are seeking. Remember that first impressions are lasting.
  5. Learn Interview Techniques. Knowledge of interview techniques will greatly increase your odds of getting the position you want. The Interview Workshop and the Group Practice Session can help alleviate pre-interview jitters and prepare you to express your qualifications more effectively. Once you know the principles, be willing to practice what you've learned.
  6. Project Your Confidence. A positive attitude will generate enthusiasm and help you create a favorable impression upon the interviewer. Remember that the interviewer needs to hire employees. So, if you can present yourself and your qualifications to the interviewer more effectively than anyone else, you will significantly increase your chances for obtaining an offer of employment.
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## **Types of Interviews**

There are many different types of interviews which may range from the seemingly casual to the stress interview. There is also a wide range of personality types involved in the interviewing process.

The most widely used interview style is the question - and-answer approach. The majority of interviewers ask the same basic questions of all applicants in order to measure one applicant's response against all other applicants. See the list that follows for 20 frequently asked questions.

Another style of interview commonly used is to begin the interview with an open-ended question, such as "Tell me about yourself." In this situation, the interviewer is also interested in testing your poise and confidence.

Regardless of the style, the interviewer is trying to ascertain whether the job is for you and whether you will be successful in that organization. Fortunately, many interviewers are professionals in their role of identifying talent and potential employees and will attempt to make the experience a pleasant one. The main thing to remember is to be enthusiastic, courteous, and positive about your attributes and abilities to do the job.

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## **Phases of the Interview**

There are usually three phases in the interview: Introduction, Heart and Conclusion.

1. The Introduction phase of the interview begins before any formal questions have been asked. Your appearance, handshake, eye contact, voice, facial expression and other nonverbal behavior make the initial impression which can have a significant influence on the interviewer's decision about you. It is during this introductory phase that most interviewers will attempt to establish rapport with you. They are aware of the stress inherent in the interview situation and will try to help you feel more at ease.
2. In the Heart of the interview, the interviewer poses questions to elicit evidence of your suitability for the job. At this time you have the opportunity to demonstrate your ability to answer quickly and intelligently and to communicate important information about yourself. The interviewer should provide information about the company, details about the current position, and where you might possibly fit in, both now and in the future. Salary and company benefits may also be discussed.
3. The Conclusion phase of the interview provides you and the interviewer the opportunity to clarify specific points and to ask additional questions. It is the time for the applicant to sum up qualifications briefly and enthusiastically to the interviewer. It is also necessary at this point to find out how and when additional contact will be made.

After you have established a definite date for your next communication, be sure to thank the interviewer for the time and consideration given to you and express your interest in the company and position. Ask for the job.

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## **What Employers Look For**

Most questions asked in the interview center around four major characteristics that the interviewer is trying to assess: Qualifications, Leadership, Motivation and Communication. These skills are assessed throughout the entire interview.

- **Qualifications.** Include your education, work experience, personal characteristics, and other attributes or experiences that communicate to the interviewer your ability to do the job.
- **Leadership.** Skills are shown in your leadership in campus, community, work or other activities. This is one way that employers use to measure and evaluate your initiative and potential for success.
- **Motivation.** Typical questions relating to this characteristic include: "When did you first become interested in this field?" or "What do you know about this company?" Employers want people who will enjoy their work and those who have a strong desire to work for their particular company. They want to be able to trust their clients and projects to you.
- **Communication.** Communicating these characteristics strongly to the employer during the interview, as well as how you can fit in the organization, will significantly improve your chances for a job offer.

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## **Knockout Factors**

- Lack of proper career planning-purposes and goals ill-defined.
- Little or no knowledge of the company's products or services.
- Inability to relate strengths and experiences to the position sought in a clear and concise manner.
- Little interest or enthusiasm in the company-merely shopping around.
- Bad grooming or too casual dressing.

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## **Assertive Communication**

Use Assertive Communication principles to present yourself most effectively in the interview.

1. Be positive. Approach the interview with a positive and enthusiastic attitude. Get psyched up and develop confidence in your ability to handle the interview. Information about people and past experiences should always be conveyed in a positive manner.
2. Volunteer relevant information about yourself. You can't expect the interviewer to ask all the right questions to bring out all of your strengths.
3. When you make a statement, back it up with specific examples of experiences or accomplishments.
4. Use transitional statements. Don't make excuses, don't apologize or ramble on. Quickly make a transition from an area of weakness to where your strengths lie.
5. Listen carefully. Be sure you understand the questions. Ask for clarification when in doubt.

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## **Assertive Interview Technique**

To succeed in the interview, we strongly recommend that you review the information presented in the Interview Workshop and practice the Assertive Technique. The following information highlights some of the basic principles of effective interviewing.

Assertiveness in the context of the interview is a form of behavior which demonstrates to the interviewer your self-confidence, your interest and enthusiasm for the work you are seeking, and your optimistic outlook toward the outcome of the interview.

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### **Take to the Interview:**

- Extra copies of your resume.
  - A copy of your transcripts and credentials, when appropriate.
  - A portfolio, "string book," or relevant samples of your work. Appropriate when applying for positions in art, journalism, education, or related fields. Complete information on references-names, titles, companies, addresses, phone numbers.
  - A pen, pencil and notepad to record important information after the interview.
  - The time and location of your interview, the name and title of the interviewer(s).
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### **12 Mistakes Smart Students Make**

1. Not knowing about the prospective organization and ignoring information on the web and in the Career Center.
2. Mistaking the interview for a casual meeting without dressing up like the interviewers.
3. Not knowing what you hope to do (even if you really don't know).
4. Giving one-word answers-yes, no, ok-instead of explaining your experiences so that the interviewer can understand.
5. Being just "yourself" and hoping they'll like you at your worst without showing your best, most polite, enthusiastic, and professional self.
6. Expecting the interviewer to have read your resume and just hire you on the basis of it (without taking the interview workshop to learn how to talk after you've written your resume).
7. Not explaining how your experience fits what the company's recruiter needs.
8. Thinking you can wing it without rehearsing your pitch and preparing a mental outline.
9. Not asking any questions about the job and responsibilities you're being interviewed for.
10. Not explaining how your involvement in clubs, internships, volunteer activities, part-time and full-time jobs counts as work experience.
11. Not being prepared to explain your class work in terms of academic success, teamwork, and leadership skills.
12. Not following up with a thank-you note, references, and a call or email immediately after an interview and asking for the next step in the process of getting hired.