

INTERVIEW SUCCESS



Review this packet to ensure that your interviews are as efficient and successful as possible. Then make an appointment with career services for individualized guidance and attention.



Career Services
Quinebaug Valley Community College
860-932-4089
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10 TIPS FOR YOUR NEXT INTERVIEW

1) Do your Research

Prior to going to the interview, it is best to know as much as you can about the company. Research the mission, culture, future trends, clients and current company news by reading all pages of the company website as well as Googling the company name. Keep abreast of current news in the industry.

2) Mock Interview

Participate in a Mock Interview with a Center for Career Development Counselor to practice discussing your strengths, weaknesses, goals, accomplishments, relevant experiences, questions, and verbal/non-verbal language. Record your mock interview on your phone to review and evaluate.

3) Dress Professionally

Wear professional attire appropriate to the field (business suits for corporate companies; dress shirt/pants or a simple, conservative dress for more casual settings) and be sure you are neat, clean and professional in appearance. Be conservative with make-up, jewelry, and fragrance--less is more.

4) Be on Time

Always arrive 15 minutes prior to the interview. Consider a trial-run to the company if you are unfamiliar with the location so you can time out travel and parking.

5) Organize your Thoughts

Practice ahead of time, your answers should be like a pitch...concise, and complete.

6) Be Specific

Tell the interviewer how you can contribute to the company and give concrete examples. Prepare a few 'stories' ahead of time. These should describe your skills and how you've used them in the past to fulfill needs similar to those of the employer.

7) Connect to the Employers

Listen carefully to the questions being asked of you. Sell and match your skills and strengths with the needs of the employers.

8) Ask Questions

Prove that you have done your research and reflect your knowledge of the field and interest in the position. Craft at least 3 questions ahead of time that you may want to ask.

9) Send a "Thank You" Note

Make sure to send either a separate email or hand-written 'thank you' note to all individuals with whom you interviewed. Ask for business cards before you leave the interview for correct name spellings and position titles of interviewers.

10) Reflect on and Evaluate your Experience

Think about what happened during the interview and ask yourself..."is this a place I would enjoy working?"..."are the job responsibilities a good match with my strengths?"..."is there opportunity to learn and grow?".

DRESS TO ACHIEVE

The way you dress can make the difference in getting the job, being offered additional opportunities, and in getting ahead once you land your first job.

Remember, an interview is a formal situation, so it's important to be aware of the details of your appearance. Keep the color of your clothing muted and understated. The focus should be on YOU—not your clothes.

The idea here is to avoid anything that could distract the interviewer. A clean, neat, and professional appearance is an important step in making a good first impression. Maintaining your hygiene for an interview is very important.

Adapted from SYMS 'Dress to Achieve'

APPROPRIATE MEN'S ATTIRE

- ☐ Neat solid two-piece suit (*Navy, Black, Dark Grey*)
- ☐ Button down dress shirt (*White or Light Blue*)
- ☐ Tie in a simple pattern that matches the color of the suit
- ☐ Polished conservative dress shoe in a dark color
- ☐ Belt in a conservative color that matches the shoe
- ☐ Little or no jewelry – no earrings
- ☐ Clean shave
- ☐ Minimal fragrance/aftershave
- ☐ Clean trimmed fingernails
- ☐ Neat short haircut
- ☐ Padfolio/Portfolio



APPROPRIATE WOMEN'S ATTIRE

- ☐ Neat solid two-piece skirt or pant suit (*Black, Navy, Dark Grey*). Skirt length should be a little below the knee
- ☐ Cotton or silk blouse (*White, Crème or pastel color*)
- ☐ Pantyhose in a neutral color with no runs
- ☐ Polished conservative closed-toe pumps with 1" or 2" heel – no strappy sandals
- ☐ Limited jewelry – nothing distracting
- ☐ Natural looking makeup using conservative tones
- ☐ Conservative fingernail color and length
- ☐ Neat professional hairstyle
- ☐ Minimal fragrance
- ☐ Padfolio/Portfolio and conservative handbag



WHAT TO AVOID

- ☐ Bright, distracting colors or patterns and low-cut blouse
- ☐ Dirty scuffed shoes
- ☐ Chewing gum, smoking cigarettes, and overkill of fragrance
- ☐ Backpacks, sunglasses, and noisy or overpowering jewelry

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

- ☐ Be prepared to talk about yourself. Identify your skills, interests, goals, and values. Assess your strengths and be able to back them up with examples.
- ☐ Research the organization – you should know size, locations, services and products.
- ☐ Prepare a few good questions for the interviewer. Avoid asking about salary and benefits during the first interview.
- ☐ Review your resume and a list of your positive qualities just before the interview. Take extra copies of your resume.

DURING THE INTERVIEW

- ☐ Arriving a few minutes early will give you a chance to gain composure during the interview.
- ☐ Remember that enthusiasm is a very desirable trait to verbally and non-verbally express yourself.
- ☐ Take time to listen to the interviewer's questions in order to give an appropriate response.
- ☐ Maintain good eye contact with the interviewer – try to be relaxed and confident. Remember that you are looking for a good match. Do you like what you are hearing from the interviewer?
- ☐ As the interview ends, reiterate your interest in the position – ask what the next steps would be, and when you can expect to hear. Make sure to get the interviewer's business card.



AFTER THE INTERVIEW

- ☐ Send a “thank you” note to the interviewer either by email, or a handwritten or typed note by mail. If you interviewed with several people, send a “thank you” note to each interviewer separately.
 - ☐ Be sure to provide any requested information (transcripts, references) as soon as possible.
 - ☐ Follow-up with the interviewer by phone within five days if you have not been notified of a decision.
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INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

COMMON QUESTIONS INTERVIEWERS ASK

- ☐ Can you tell me a little about yourself?
- ☐ What made you choose _____ as a major?
- ☐ What are you looking for in an internship/job?
- ☐ What makes you an ideal candidate for this position?
- ☐ What do you know about our company?
- ☐ Do your grades reflect your abilities?
- ☐ In what ways do you expect to make a contribution to this organization?
- ☐ What do you want to learn in this position?
- ☐ What are some of your strengths?
- ☐ Can you tell me about an area you may need to improve on?
- ☐ What do you consider your greatest achievement thus far (academic or personal)?
- ☐ Where do you hope to see yourself in five years?
- ☐ What are your long-term goals and how would working for our organization help you to achieve those goals?
- ☐ What adjectives would you use to describe yourself?
- ☐ How would a former supervisor describe your work ethic?
- ☐ What do you expect from a supervisor?
- ☐ How do you take initiative? Set priorities and goals? Manage your time?
- ☐ What have you learned from your involvement in extracurricular activities?
- ☐ What experience have you had with public speaking? Statistics? Writing professional reports?
- ☐ What steps do you take to stay knowledgeable in your field?

COMMON BEHAVIORAL QUESTIONS

Can you tell me about a time when you...

- ☐ Demonstrated strong teamwork?
- ☐ Exercised leadership skills?
- ☐ Handled a difficult customer or client?
- ☐ Made an important decision?
- ☐ Worked under pressure and completed the assignments?
- ☐ Had to juggle several things at once? How did you manage the multiple demands and what was the result?
- ☐ Overcame a major obstacle?
- ☐ Managed a project, from beginning to end?
- ☐ Took initiative to improve a challenging situation?
- ☐ Went above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done?
- ☐ Were in a situation in which you thought you could handle alone, and soon realized you took on more than you could handle. What did you do?
- ☐ Had to handle a problem that arose and your manager was unavailable. What was the nature of the problem? (What was the outcome?)

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

- ☐ How many tennis balls would it take to fill up this room?
- ☐ Estimate how many windows are in New York City.
- ☐ Two U.S. coins add up to thirty cents and one is not a nickel. What are the two coins?
- ☐ How many times a day does a clock's hands overlap?

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE INTERVIEWER

- ☐ What are you looking for in an ideal candidate for this position?
- ☐ What are your expectations for this position?
- ☐ How would you describe the culture of the organization?
- ☐ What type of training would I receive if hired?
- ☐ What do you like best about the company?
- ☐ What has been your most rewarding experience while working for the company?
- ☐ What is the next step in the interview process?
- ☐ What do you consider the major challenges facing the industry today?
- ☐ What are the prospects for growth and advancement?

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF AFTER THE INTERVIEW

- ☐ Describe the employees you met. Did they seem energetic, efficient, and organized? Or did they appear unenthusiastic?
- ☐ Did your interviewer(s) answer your questions in a direct and positive manner?
- ☐ Do you see yourself working for the company five years from now?
- ☐ Is the salary scale competitive?
- ☐ Do the job and the company fit in with your lifestyle?



CLOSING & FOLLOW-UP

The closing of the interview is just as important as the initial greeting. You want to express your interest in the company, and find out what the next steps of the hiring process may be. Following-up by way of a *'Thank you note'* is necessary. Consider the following points for further follow-up...



ALERT YOUR REFERENCES

- ☐ If you have not done so already, let your references know that they may be contacted soon by a potential employer.

DON'T STOP YOUR SEARCH

- ☐ Although you feel confident you may receive an offer for the position, do continue to apply to and interview with other companies in order to find additional opportunities.

FOLLOW-UP PHONE CALL

- ☐ Follow-up with a phone call if you have not heard back from employer(s) within a reasonable time (five to seven days). Make sure to continue to reiterate your enthusiasm and market your strengths for the position during the call.

BE PATIENT

- ☐ Relax, the hiring process often times takes longer than the employer anticipates.

NEVER BURN BRIDGES

- ☐ Even if you find out you did not get the position, try and turn the situation into a positive one. Consider bringing the interviewer into your network, and ask for feedback, as well as possibly asking for referrals for other contacts.

COMMITTING TO A JOB OFFER

- ☐ Carefully consider an offer before you accept. Once an offer has been accepted, you are expected to fulfill the commitment and properly decline other offers. For more information about accepting, denying, delaying, or negotiating an offer, please contact a Center for Career Development Counselor.

THANK YOU LETTER

By sending a thank you letter, you show your interviewer common courtesy and respect and gives you a chance to stand out to employers. At the very least, a thank you letter puts your name in front of an interviewer one more time. Send thank you letter within 24-48 hours of the interview.

A thank you letter...

- Gives you an opportunity to reiterate your strengths for the position.
- Allows you to make points you might have missed in your interview.
- Demonstrates your written communication skills.



- Sample Thank You Letter -

Andy Anderson
555 Fair Avenue
Norwalk, CT 06854

October 23, 20xx

Ms. Erin Smith
Director, YMCA
700 Myrtle Avenue
Stamford, CT 06901

Dear Ms. Smith,

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me this afternoon. It was great to learn more about the YMCA's commitment to personal development and diversity initiatives. The many services provided by the center are so critical to personal growth. I am very excited about the possibility of obtaining the Community Relations position. I am confident that my leadership and volunteer experience would be an asset to the center.

After meeting with you, I walked away enthusiastic about the possibility of working with the YMCA. I hope you will not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or require additional information. I may be reached at 914-555-5555 or npanther@gmail.com. I look forward to speaking with you again soon.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully yours,

Andy Anderson

THANK YOU LETTER TEMPLATE

YOUR FIRST & LAST NAME
Your Street Address
Your City, State & Zip Code
your phone # / your email address

Date

Name of Interviewer
Title of Interviewer
Name of Company/Organization
Address of Company/Organization
City, State & Zip Code

Dear Ms./Mr. _____:

OPENING: Thank the interviewer by expressing appreciation for the interview (eg: Thank you for the opportunity this morning to interview for the (job title) position. I appreciated your hospitality and enjoyed our conversation which gave me a better understanding of (name of company/organization) and the requirements of the job.).

BODY: Highlight some of the key pieces of your background that fits the requirements of the job description, school involvement, outstanding grades, relevant community activity (eg: The interview convinced me of how compatible my background, interest, skills, and abilities are aligned with the needs of the position. As I mentioned during our conversation, my (list key piece of job requirement), my leadership role at Norwalk Community College as the President of (name of school club), along with outstanding grades in my (name of relevant course) class has prepared me for the (job title) within (name of company/organization.).

CLOSING: A few brief sentences again thanking the interviewer, for being considered for the position and looking forward to next steps (eg: Again, thank you for considering me for this exciting opportunity. Please feel free to contact me if you need additional information or have any further questions. Thank you for your time, and I look forward to hearing from you regarding next steps.).

Sincerely,

(Your Signature in blue or black ink)

First & Last Name