INTERVIEWING
WORKFORCE READINESS:

EXPLORE | EXPERIENCE | ENGAGE | EMERGE

Academic and Career Enrichment Center (ACE)
Benedictine University – Goodwin Hall, Room 214
5700 College Road, Lisle, IL  60532
(630) 829-6041
(630) 829-6043 fax
ace@ben.edu
www.ben.edu/ace
PRE-INTERVIEW REMINDERS

1. Be neat, well groomed and more dressed than you would be for the job. 50% of the decision about you is made in the first minute. Non-verbal factors speak loudly. Dress up rather than down. Usually a suit and dress shoes are appropriate for men and women. Wear flattering but somewhat conservative colors.

2. Wear conservative jewelry and little or no perfume or cologne.

3. Practice interviewing with a friend.

4. Bring extra resumes, reference sheets, blank paper, erasable pen, list of questions to ask interviewer, information about the company or job, directions to the interview, and an attractive folder, portfolio, or briefcase. A copy of your transcript, and letters of recommendation could also be helpful.

5. Plan to arrive 10 minutes early.

6. Research the company. Know about their products and services, the industry, their competitors, any recent news, etc. Use their company website, LinkedIn, Glassdoor.com to conduct research. Try to talk with someone who works for the organization. Obtain a job description and know how you can add value.

SOME THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Interviewing Is A Two Way Street
   - “Do I really want to work here?” is as important as “How do I convince this employer to hire me?”

2. What Is the Employer Trying to Find Out
   - Why are you seeking a job at our organization?
   - What can you do for us - using what skills and knowledge?
   - What kind of person are you? Especially what are your values, and how well do you get along with others?
   - What distinguishes you from all the others who can do the same thing?
   - Are we willing and able to pay what it will take to get you?

3. What You Must Try to Find Out During the Interview
   - What does this job really involve?
   - Do my skills match this job?
   - Would I like to work with these kind of people?
   - If there seems to be a match, persuade the employer what’s unique about you from all others who can do the same job.
   - Focus on what you can do for the employer, not on what the employer can do for you. For example, “I have a perfect attendance record from my most recent part time job and plan to continue that into my next job” versus “Would you pay the tuition for my master’s degree?” Be willing to pay your dues.
   - Give or show examples or proof of your skills. For example, “I have letters of appreciation from some of my previous customers. Would you like to see them?” versus “I value customer satisfaction.”
   - Be courteous and kind. Never badmouth another employer even in order to show yourself in a good light.
   - Spend about 1 to 2 minutes answering each question. Rarely take more than 2 minutes to respond to an interview question.
   - Remember the non-verbals: Make the handshake firm but not bone crushing; maintain normal (about 50% of the time) eye contact and good posture. Smile when you feel like it; sit attentively in the chair offered you. Show enthusiasm if you are feeling it; project a bright outlook and positive attitude (even if you received your 100th rejection one hour before the interview). Don’t worry about taking a few seconds to think before responding to a question.
   - Do not lie. Don’t be afraid to repeat answers in response to different questions. Often the interviewer is looking for consistency in responses.
   - Do not bring up salary, benefits, vacation, etc. until you know the employer is interested in you. Generally, wait for the employer to broach these subjects.
   - Ask questions about the job and the company.
   - Know yourself, your strengths, and your aspirations; have well-defined career objectives.
   - Know that your work experience is more important than your degree.
4. **As You Conclude the Interview** -
   - Ask for the interviewer’s business card. (Name, title and address for your thank you note.)
   - Ask “When may I expect to hear from you?” (You may contact them after that time, if they have not yet communicated with you.)
   - Always send a thank you note within 24 hours of the interview. It can be a personal, handwritten notecard, email or typed letter. Emphasize your interest in the position and add anything you forgot to discuss in the interview.
   - If you want the job, remember to ask for the job!

**Prohibited Pre-Employment Inquiries**
Pre-employment inquiries may not be asked for the purpose of discriminating on the basis of race, color, religion, disability, gender, national origin, or age. Questions regarding birthplace, date of birth, number or age of children, marital status, native language, etc. are prohibited unless they are asked because that information is required in order to do the job.

It is your decision how to handle a prohibited inquiry. You could politely say, “I don’t think it’s appropriate for me to answer that question” or answer it in general terms.

**Types of Interviews**

**First Interview** With Human Resource Dept. (Screening)
The purpose of this interview is to screen out all but a few of the candidates. (See Interview Turnoffs.)

**Interview With Hiring Authority** (Probably the person supervising the open position.)
In a medium to large organization, this will be the second interview. At this time, it is appropriate to more heavily emphasize your technical knowledge and skills which would be required to do the job.

**Stress Interview** (The silent interview)
This is not common practice, but if the employer wants to see how you handle stress, the interviewer may look at you and say nothing for a long period of time. STAY CALM and either wait it out or ask if it is appropriate to begin your questions.

**Panel/Committee Interview** (Two or more people interview you together)
Treat this as similar to interviewing with the hiring authority. Find out the job titles of the committee members and try to address some questions from what you think are their perspectives.

**Group Interview** (One or more people interview two or more candidates simultaneously)
This is occasionally used as a way to break down a large number of candidates to a few viable ones. Sometimes a task is assigned to the group and the group process is observed. In either case, don’t try to act like someone you are not. If you normally wait to hear what everyone else has to say before you give input, be the last to speak. If you usually are the first to speak, speak first, etc. You do not know what traits the interviewers are looking for, anyway.

**Phone Interview**
Phone interviews are often used to screen candidates. From the employer’s perspective, the purpose of a phone interview is to determine whether or not it is worth their time, effort, and expense to bring you in for a face-to-face interview. Candidates should dress up in their interview attire, have notes on the table they can refer to and project a strong phone voice, along with enthusiasm and confidence. If being interviewed by an HR person, expect more screening-related questions. If being interviewed by a hiring supervisor, anticipate job-related questions.

**Video/Skype Interview**
Skype and video chat interviews are very common, especially when interviewing for a remote position. Be sure to check your sound and technology to make sure they are working properly. Lighting is important as well so it’s best to face a window so the natural light. Go through a test run with a friend so that they may offer you feedback so you can feel confident you are ready to go.
Interview Turnoffs - From Two National Employer Surveys

1) Arrogance/cockiness
2) Poor oral communication/presentation skills
3) Lack of interest
4) Lack of knowledge of company or industry
5) Early discussion of salary and benefits
6) Being unprepared for interview and making excuses
7) Egotism/over-confidence
8) Tardiness/not showing up for interview
9) Poor eye contact
10) Abrasive/rude/demanding
11) Dishonesty
12) Poor language usage/slang/poor grammar
13) No career direction/no self-knowledge

1 Unrealistic career and work expectations - Employers believe that many new graduates feel they have already "paid their dues". They don't expect the non-glamorous hard work required and often expect too-high wages.
2 Poor communication skills - Employers see poor writing, and oral and public speaking skills, spelling, grammar, incomplete thoughts and presentation skills.
3 Poor Math Skills and problem-solving abilities - Employers report that lack of real-life experience hinders many applicants from practicing problem solving and use of team skills especially with other employees.
4 Lack of career-related work experience - Employers note a weak work ethic in new grads. They report naive notions of business behavior work expectations, office politics and normal operating procedures.
5 Absence of tenacity, motivation and commitment to excellence. Employers say many applicants are unwilling to work hard, are inflexible regarding travel, and are unwilling to manage their own career and continually learn.

After the Interview

Evaluation
The time immediately following the interview should be spent evaluating your performance. What went well? What could you improve? What aspects of the job did you like or dislike? What questions did you think of after you left the interview? Keep a record for future reference.

Follow-Up
Don't let the interviewer forget you. Write a letter to the interviewer immediately following your meeting to express your appreciation and to re-emphasize your interest in the company and position. If you forgot to emphasize important information or want to re-emphasize something, do it in the thank you, but make it less than a printed page. (See example below.)

SAMPLE FOLLOW-UP THANK YOU LETTER

Your address
City, State & Zip Code
Current Date

Employer's Name
Employer's Title
Company Name
Company Address
City, State & Zip Code

Dear Mr./Mrs. Blank:

Thank the interviewer for his/her time and state the name of the position, date, and place of the interview.

Re-state your qualifications for the position and why you are interested in the job or what impressed you about the company.

Make a summary statement, re-stating your interest and skills for the position. A statement that you are available for further interviews or additional information may also be included here.

Sincerely,
Your signature
Your Name (Typewritten)
### YOU HAVE THE JOB OFFER - NOW WHAT?
#### JOB FACTORS TO BE CONSIDERED

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Location</td>
<td>11. Independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Good Location for Spouse’s Career</td>
<td>12. Opportunity for Creativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Travel</td>
<td>13. Skill Transferability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Immediate Use of Training &amp; Experience</td>
<td>16. Advancement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Learning Potential</td>
<td>17. Image of Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Significant Responsibility</td>
<td>18. Exposure to Outstanding Professionals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Job Status</td>
<td>20. Industry</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you need time to make a decision, it is acceptable to ask for a few days. Also, you can negotiate start date - especially if giving notice to a current employer is an issue.

### WHAT ABOUT SALARY? - Salary Negotiation

#### Establishing a realistic salary range

It is important to establish the highest figure you could expect to earn, a mid-range figure, and the bottom line lowest amount you would accept before going into a job interview. Researching two important areas will help you set these figures.

1. Analyze personal needs and lifestyle. How much do you need?
2. Thoroughly check newspapers, trade journals, private and state employment agencies, companies employing workers with your skills, professional trade associations, and executive recruiters to get an idea of salary range in your field and geographic area.

#### When to initiate discussion of salary

The best time to bring up salary is when you are confident you have a firm job offer. The general rule is that you should not discuss salary until the interviewer brings it up.

#### Avoid undercutting your salary

Let the employer state a salary range first. You might ask, “This position sounds like one which would put my abilities to good use. What is the salary range?”

#### Negotiating for a higher salary

Emphasize your accomplishments, not your needs. Show the employer concrete evidence of your productivity. Do not hesitate to restate your strengths. If the employer balks at your expectations, try to negotiate a salary review at the end of six months.

#### Considering benefits

Benefits need to be included in weighing the relative merits of a total salary package. Benefits may include sick leave, vacations, travel benefits like the ones airline employees receive, goods at a discount, insurance plans or dental coverage, educational assistance, profit sharing or stock options, reduced interest loans, and company cars.
COMMON INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Common Interview Questions for New Grads:
• What school subjects did you like or dislike? Why?
• Why did you choose ________________ as a major?
• Why did you decide to attend Benedictine University?
• What have you contributed to campus life?
• Why weren’t your grades better? Have you done as well in school as you are capable?
• Who is your most/least favorite faculty member? Why?
• If your faculty from you major courses were here, what would they say you need to improve upon?
• What offices and leadership positions have you held while in college?
• If a fellow student/co-worker were asked to describe you in five adjectives, what would they be?
• What do you use as your greatest challenge in starting a new career?
• Which of your college years was the most difficult/most enjoyable? Why?
• How have you balanced the various components of your life in college?
• How much of your college expenses have you earned?
• Do you think your extracurricular activities and studies were worth the time?
• What do you think are the disadvantages of the field you have chosen?
• Did you participate in any team sports?
• What expectations do you have yourself by age 30 (40) etc.?
• Describe what you consider to be the ideal job.

Common Interview Questions for Experienced Professionals
• What do you think it takes for a person to succeed in (your occupational specialty)?
• What are some things your previous employing organization might have done to be more successful?
• What have been the biggest failures or frustrations in your career?
• Think about something you consider a failure and tell me why you think you it occurred.
• What did you do in your last job to make yourself more effective?
• How would you handle the following situation? (A scenario is described and you are asked how you would deal with it. Usually the scenario will relate to your specific occupation and be intended to elicit your knowledge, problem solving abilities, interpersonal skills, judgment skills, etc.
• How would you deal with the following factors in achieving objectives through others:
  • People who place their interests above the company’s
  • Building a team from independent individualists
  • People who are working at cross-purposes
  • Overstepping of authority by a subordinate
  • Tell me about some projects you have initiated. What prompted you to begin them?
• What are the reasons for your success?
• Whom have you most respected for leadership qualities? Have you tried to use that person’s style?
• How would you describe yourself as a decision-maker?

Common Interview Questions for All:
• What interests you most/least about this position?
• Describe the last critical decision you made -- what was your thought process and the outcome?
• How long would it take you to make a real contribution to this company if you are hired?
• What are your faults?
• What did you like best/least in previous jobs?
• Describe the best person you ever worked for.
• Who are your best friends? What do you like about them?
• In what ways would you like our company to assist you if we hire you?
• What do you like to do in your spare time?
• What do you know about our company?
• Why should I hire you? Why do you want this job?
• Tell me about yourself.
• What is your purpose in life?
Behavioral Interviewing
This style of interviewing is being used by many organizations. Behavioral interviewing provides a more objective set of information from which the employer can make a decision. The premise of behavioral interviewing is that past behavior is a predictor of future performance. Many questions are designed to elicit information regarding your performance in core skill areas such as communication, problem-solving, decision-making, leadership, management, listening, team-building, organization and planning, goal setting/achieving, adaptability, etc.

Behavioral interviewing questions can be difficult to answer on the spot. The best way to prepare is to go into the interview with situations in mind that you would use to answer the following types of questions or that would exemplify some of the common performance or behavior skills listed above. Another helpful tip is to use the acronym STAR - S describe the situation you were in, T tell the specific tasks you needed to perform, A provide information about the action you took, and R give the results of that action.

Sample behavior interview questions:
- Give me a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.
- Tell me about a time you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.
- By providing examples, convince me that you can adapt to a wide variety of people, situations and environments.
- Tell me about a time in which you had to use your written communication skills in order to get an important point across.
- Tell me about a time when you had to present complex information to a customer or peer.
- Give me a specific occasion in which you conformed to a policy with which you did not agree.
- Describe the most significant or creative presentation you had to complete.
- Describe an instance when you had to think on your feet to extricate yourself from a difficult situation.
- Tell me about a time you had to make a quick decision in the absence of a supervisor.
- Describe a recent situation when you had too much to do and too little time to do it.
- Describe a time in a past work situation when you were faced with problems or stresses that tested your coping skills.

How to Respond to Interview Questions
Get to the point. Stay on track. As you answer, try to bring out task accomplishments and benefits, with supporting data and other specifics. Don’t be afraid to repeat - it gives emphasis and consistency to your answers. Turn negative questions into positive answers. Don’t sound like your responses are memorized. It is fine to hesitate and think before answering. Above all, show your true self. The interview is an attempt for both you and the employer to see if you make a match. If either of you tries to be something you are not, a “fit” cannot be determined.
A Sampling of Questions You Might Ask

Asking questions during an interview shows the employer you are interested in learning more about the position and the organization. Go to the interview with a mental list of questions you wish to ask during the interview. Use the following questions as a guide or develop your own.

- What do you like most about your company? Least?
- How does your company differ from its competitors?
- How many new college graduates are hired each year and in which divisions are they most likely to be employed?
- How would you describe the company personality? How are company values reflected in everyday activities?
- What kind of management style is used? What is management philosophy?
- What significant problems are facing the company? (You should know of some from your research)
- What are the company goals? (You might know about this from your research)
- Is company expansion or relocation planned? (Don’t ask this if it’s been in the local papers recently!)
- How much travel is normally expected?
- How often are performance reviews given?
- What is a typical day like for this position?
- Who was previously in this position and where is that person now?
- What might I expect to be doing over the next 3 to 5 years?
- How much freedom do employees have to determine their own job movement and responsibilities?
- Are employees encouraged to continue their professional development over an extended period of time?
- What is the biggest negative about your company?
- Would you want your son/daughter/brother/sister to work for this company? Why?
- How much freedom will I have to solve problems with my own methods? What help is available if my methods fail?
- How would you describe the most successful employees in your company?

Mock job interviews are an excellent way to practice your interviewing skills. Set up an appointment with a career counselor by contacting the Academic and Career Enrichment Center by phone: (630)829-6041, by email: ace@ben.edu, or in person: Goodwin, upper level, Room 214.