

What Happens During the Interview?

The interview process can be scary if you don't know what to expect. All interviews fit a general pattern. While each interview will differ, all will share three common characteristics: the beginning, the middle, and the conclusion. The typical interview will last 30 minutes, although some may be longer. A typical structure is as follows:

- Five minutes - small talk
- Fifteen minutes - a mutual discussion of your background and credentials as they relate to the needs of the employer
- Five minutes - asks you for questions
- Five minutes - conclusion of interview

Handling Questions

You can expect questions regarding your qualifications, career interests, personality, and even personal interests. The interview is not the place to restate your resume. The employer is interested in what makes you think, react, and more importantly, behave the way you do. The interviewer wants to probe into the major activities listed on your resume to appraise those qualifications that are not revealed on paper.

Because some employers emphasize reasons why they **SHOULD NOT** hire you, you should plan to support those reason why they **SHOULD** hire you. You should carefully listen to each question asked and provide a thorough yet brief answer quickly and intelligently. It is unwise to memorize a speech for each anticipated question but it is essential to have a series of key points in mind.

Questions NOT to Ask

Not only should you know what questions to ask during the interview, but it is important to know what questions not to ask. You don't want to alienate the recruiter by putting him or her on the defensive.

The following areas should generally be avoided:

- Avoid asking questions that are answered in the company's annual report or employment brochure. Recruiters are familiar enough with their own information to recognize when you haven't done your homework. If some information in the annual

report isn't clear to you, by all means ask for clarification.

- Don't bring up salary or benefits in the initial interview. The majority of companies recruiting are very competitive and will offer approximately similar salaries and benefits. The recruiter may choose to bring up the information, but you should not initiate the topic.
- Avoid asking any personal questions or questions that will put the recruiter on the defensive. This includes questions such as the interviewers educational background, marital status, past work experience and so on.
- Don't ask questions that have already been answered during the interview. If you have prepared a list of questions and some of them have been addressed during the interview, do not repeat them unless you need clarification.

Questions You Should Ask

Now that you know what you shouldn't ask during the interview, determine what questions you should ask.

- Ask specific questions about the position. You need to know what duties will be required of the person in the position to see if there is a fit between your interests and qualifications and the job you seek.
- Try to find out as much as possible about qualities and skills the recruiter is looking for in job candidates. Once you determine the necessary qualities, you can then explain to the recruiter how your background and capabilities relate to those qualities.
- Ask questions concerning advancement and promotion paths available. Every company is different and most advancement policies are unique. Try to find out what the possible promotion path is to see if it fits your career goals. You may also want to ask about periodic performance evaluations.
- It is appropriate to ask specific questions about the company's training program if this information is not covered in company literature.
- Ask questions about location and travel required. If you have limitations, this is the time to find out what is expected in the position.

Have Questions?

Contact the Career Services Office at:
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