

CLP 70: Interview Preparation & Tips

I. Stage 1: Preparation for the interview

- 1) Learn as much as possible about the company or organization that will interview you. Do this by researching the company on the Internet or in publications listed in the Career Planning Guide. You may also call the company's Human Resources Development office and ask that literature about the company be sent to you. Another good way to get information is talking with one or more people who work for the company.
- 2) Make a detailed list of your skills and experiences that relate to the job opening. Think of specific ways in which you can tie your experience to the requirements of the job.
- 3) Develop a list of questions that you want to ask in order to decide whether the job meets your criteria.
- 4) Prepare a list of references who have given you permission to use their names and who you have reason to believe will give you a positive reference. These should be three to five individuals who can speak to your work skills and habits. If you have never had a job before, choose professors who know you well. Have a copy of this list with you at the interview so that you can supply it if asked to do so. Put the list in your online portfolio as well.
- 5) Find out exactly where the interview will be held. If the location is unfamiliar to you, it would be a good idea to scout the location out in advance and note where parking is available.

II. Stage 2: The interview itself

- 1) It is important to think carefully about how to dress for the interview so that you can make the best possible impression.
 - Choose clothing that would be the best level expected for this position (such as a business suit for a management or sales position and good sports clothes for a recreation center position).
 - Do not wear anything which is gaudy or which might not be generally accepted by employers (such as eight earrings in one ear or a bizarre hair cut or color).

- 2) Always arrive five to ten minutes early for an interview.
- 3) Be pleasant to the receptionist when you enter, and be careful about your behavior while waiting. How you behave (gum chewing, smoking, flirting, putting feet on furniture, obvious nervousness) may be reported to the person who is doing the hiring.
- 4) When the interviewer comes, remember to do the following:
 - Give a firm handshake as one way of displaying self-confidence.
 - Engage in good eye contact with the interviewer.
 - Let the interviewer set the pace.
 - While being responsive, don't talk too much.
- 5) After the interview gets started, the interviewer is likely to provide information about the company and about the position to be filled. The candidate should focus on the following behaviors:
 - Listen carefully with good eye contact.
 - Ask carefully prepared questions about the company, revealing that some previous investigation has taken place.
 - Respond to questions in a positive manner, emphasizing strengths and skills for the position and a willingness to be flexible and engage in new learning if that is necessary.
 - Indicate why this particular job or company is appealing.
- 6) After the interview gets started, the interviewer is likely to provide information about the company and about the position to be filled. The candidate should focus on the following behaviors:
 - Listen carefully with good eye contact.
 - Ask carefully prepared questions about the company, revealing that some previous investigation has taken place.
 - Respond to questions in a positive manner, emphasizing strengths and skills for the position and a willingness to be flexible and engage in new learning if that is necessary.
 - Indicate why this particular job or company is appealing.

- 7) As the interview continues, the interviewer may ask questions about the candidate's past work experience and academic background and skills. During this phase the candidate should focus on the following:
 - Identify his or her strong skills and relate them to the job requirements
 - State why the job and/or the company are appealing
- 8) At this point the interviewer may ask the interviewee if he or she has any questions. Good possibilities for questions relate to the following:
 - Opportunity to learn and upgrade skills
 - Possible career path
 - Company's fringe benefit plan

III. The final phase – Closing the interview

- 1) The interviewer will find a way to end the interview. He or she may describe the process that will be followed in making the selection from among various applicants for the position.
- 2) The candidate should
 - express sincere interest in the position (if this is true).
 - ask when the decision will be made.
 - provide references if desired.
 - ask whether he/she may follow through with the interviewer in a few days.

IV. After the interview

- 1) The candidate can still make a good impression by doing the following:
 - sending a note or letter of appreciation to the interviewer, or
 - making a brief phone call thanking the interviewer for his or her time and expressing continued interest in the job.

- 2) If the candidate does not get a job offer, he or she should ask the employer to keep the resume on file for consideration when there are future openings.
- 3) If the candidate does get a job offer, he or she is within rights to
 - ask for a short time (two or three days) in which to make a decision, if this time is needed.
 - ask that he or she be allowed to give the present employer a fair amount of notice, usually two weeks.

NOTE: The interview is the single most important step to getting a job offer. Therefore, applicants often feel a high degree of anxiety. Adequately preparing for the interview will help reduce the anxiety.