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CAREER SERVICES CENTER

Interviewing

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Interviewing Checklist

Use this checklist to prepare for your interview.

Before the Interview:

- **Print the Position Description** – Carefully read the position description and highlight any requirements for the position. Then match your strengths and experience to the position.
- **Research the Company Website** – Read the “About Us” section of the website to learn more about the company’s mission, what the company does and current projects it’s working on. Some companies also have tips on how to prepare for an interview with them posted on their website – make sure to check.
- **Check Glassdoor.com for Interview Questions** – See what questions the company asks, how long the interview process takes and whether or not the company will negotiate salary.
- **Create a List of Interview Questions the Company Might Ask** – Write questions and what you would like to say for each one. Practice reading the questions and answers until you memorize the information you would like to convey.
- **Schedule a Practice Interview with Career Services (www.tamuk.edu/csc)** - We will ask you industry specific questions and provide feedback on what employers are looking for.
- **Prepare a List of Questions to Ask the Interviewer** – Typically, at the end of an interview, the interviewer will ask if you have any questions for them. You want to prepare around 5 questions and then ask around 3 questions about the position. This demonstrates your interest in the position and the fact that you are a serious candidate. Google “Questions to ask an Interviewer” for sample questions.
- **Tell your References about your Interview** – If your references know when, where and what you are interviewing for, they will be better prepared to share your qualifications for the position.
- **Test Drive to the Interview Location (if possible)** – Make sure you know where you are going and how long it will take you to get there.
- **Choose Appropriate Clothing** – Each company culture is different and you should dress appropriately for that culture. For example, interviewing at a bank would require a suit and tie while interviewing at Google would only require jeans and a t-shirt. Make sure you know which is which before the interview!

Day of the Interview:

- **Arrive 10 – 15 Minutes Early** – Showing up too early can be awkward since the interviewers will not be ready to see you yet. Arriving late will look like you are unprepared and not serious about the position.
- **Turn Off Your Cell Phone** – Do not bring a cell phone or other distracting technology to an interview.
- **Bring Extra Copies of your Resume** – If an interviewer does not have a copy, you can provide them with one.
- **Be Nice to Everyone** – You never know who is watching and what part they might play in the hiring process.
- **Confidently Introduce Yourself and Shake Hands** – Make eye contact, speak clearly and offer a firm handshake at the beginning and end of the interview. Make sure to introduce yourself to everyone in the interview.
- **Get a Copy of Each Interviewer’s Business Card** – This will help you remember who you interviewed with and provide contact information for thank you notes and follow-up.

After the Interview:

- **Send Thank You Notes to Each Interviewer within 24 Hours** – Address the interviewer as Mr./Ms., thank them for interviewing you for the position, express your interest in it and let them know you look forward to hearing from them.
- **Follow-up if you Don’t Hear Back** – If you have not heard back from the interviewer after 2 weeks, send a short e-mail expressing your continued interest in the position and ask if they have made a decision.

Appearance

General

- **Avoid Perfume or Cologne** – Some people are very sensitive to smells. It's best to be clean without any smell – good or bad.
- **Wash and Iron Clothes** – You want to look well put together and not like you slept in your clothes.
- **Keep Jewelry Minimal** – You want to be the focus of the interview – not what you are wearing.

Men

- **Wear a Suit, Tie and Dress Shoes** – It's better to be overdressed than underdressed.
- **Get a Fresh Haircut and Shave** – It's ok to have a beard or mustache, but it should be well groomed.

Women

- **Wear a Suit, Dress or Blouse and Skirt** – Choose neutral colors that don't take the focus off you and make sure your dress or skirt goes to your knees.
- **Wear Low Heels** – Heel height should not exceed 3 inches.
- **Make-up Should be Clean and Natural** – Keep the focus on you and not your blue eye shadow.
- **Don't Wear Big Noisy Jewelry** – Avoid wearing noisy charm bracelets or large hoop earrings. Jewelry should be simple and quiet.
- **Pull Hair Away from your Face** – You do not want to mess with your hair in the interview.

Telephone Interviews

- **Find a Quiet Place to Talk** – Make sure you will not be interrupted by family, friends, etc.
- **Charge your Phone and have a Charger Ready in Case it Dies** – Check the room for available outlets. If you have a landline phone, it may be a better connection without the chance of dropping calls.
- **Be Prepared 10 – 15 Minutes before the Call** – Spread out your notes, resume and position description as a quick reference for questions.
- **Convey Friendliness and Confidence** – They will be able to hear it in your voice. Answer by saying, "Hello, this is (first & last name)."
- **Pay Attention to the Interviewer's Name and Voice** – You want to try to match the voice to a name so you will know who is talking to you.

Skype Interviews

- **Create a Free Skype Account and Practice with a Friend** – Skype with someone you know to get used to the program before your interview.
- **Test Camera Angles** – Some angles are more flattering than others. Find out what's best for you before the interview.
- **Find a Location with a Professional Looking Background** – Keep in mind that the interviewers will be looking at you and the wall behind you. Clean up the background and make sure it looks professional.
- **Use a Professional Username and Picture on Skype** – If it's not appropriate, update it or create a new account.
- **Wear a Full Suit** – Don't just wear a suit coat and pajama bottoms. You might have to stand up during the interview.

10 Frequently Asked Interview Questions

1. Tell me about yourself?

Do:

- Introduce yourself by stating your first and last name
- Talk about your education, relevant experience and any relevant organizations that you are a member of
- State your passion for the company/position you are applying and let the interview committee know why you want this position

Don't:

- Get personal – avoid talking about your personal life or irrelevant information (ex. family, children, hobbies)

2. What are your key skills/strengths?

Do:

- Read the position description for the job in which you are applying and match your skills with what they are looking for
- Highlight any skills you have that are expected for the position

Don't:

- Give every strength you can think of, but instead focus on the top strengths that you could bring to the position

3. What are your weaknesses?

Do:

- Consider areas where you can improve and start working to improve them
- Choose an answer that will not be a deal breaker for the job you are applying to – check the position description and name a weakness that is not relevant to your position
- Answer this question honestly by stating your weakness and then explaining the steps you have taken to overcome it
- Be specific about your weakness (ex. “I don’t feel comfortable speaking in front of large groups, but I have done X, Y and Z to overcome it.”)

Don't:

- Use answers like “I’m too much of a perfectionist.” – it doesn’t sound believable – or “I’m not good at communicating.” – this is too general and they may think you can not effectively communicate your thoughts and ideas

4. Why did you/do you want to leave your job?

Do:

- Remain positive and upbeat even if the circumstances were difficult
- Talk about what you have been able to accomplish at you last position and why you are so interested in this position
- Realize that people are constantly looking to advance in their careers and that is ok

Don't:

- Criticize your previous employer no matter how tempting

5. Why do you want this job?

Do:

- Showcases your passion and enthusiasm for the company and position
- Talk about what you know about the company and how you see yourself fitting in with what they are trying to accomplish
- List your experience that has prepared you for this opportunity

Don't:

- Say you just need a job, you want it because it's local, or you want to make more money

6. Tell me about a difficult scenario at work and how you dealt with it?**Do:**

- Use the cAr Technique to answer Behavioral Questions (ex. Questions that start with "Tell me about a time when...")
 - **c = Challenge** – Spend a brief amount of time explaining the challenge you were facing (ex. One day when I was working at the front desk in the Office of Admissions, we had a large amount of student traffic. As I was assisting the next person in line, a very upset student approached my desk angry that they had not received their acceptance letter yet.)
 - **A = Action** – Spend the majority of your time explaining the action that you took to resolve the challenge you were facing (ex. I let the upset student know that I did not have access to that information, but that my supervisor would be able to assist them. I found my supervisor and explained the situation. She was then able to take the student to her office and access his records to determine why a letter had not been mailed.)
 - **r = Result** – Spend a brief amount of time explaining the result and remember to always focus on a positive outcome (ex. As a result, the student was accepted into the university and my supervisor thanked me for defusing the situation and resolving the problem.)
- Use communication to resolve the problem and find a solution

Don't:

- Get mad or angry at the difficult person or situation
- Quit your job because of it
- Not do anything about the situation – you need to take some sort of action – ignoring it does not count

7. Tell me about an achievement of which you are proud?**Do:**

- Choose work-related examples that show a tangible benefit to the business – personal achievements should only be included if they are very impressive or prestigious
- Highlight an achievement that is closely related to the field you are applying to

Don't:

- Use achievements that everyone else uses (ex. Graduating College) – they will not help you to stand out from the crowd if everyone else has achieved that too

8. What are your career goals?**Do:**

- Have career goals for your future
- Reassure the employer that the position you are applying for fits your career plans and your long term commitment to the company

Don't:

- Tell the employer that you are unsure of what your future holds or that you want to use this job as a stepping stone to get a better job later

9. What are your salary expectations?**Do:**

- Wait until you have been offered a position before discussing your salary expectations
- If you are forced to name a price, give a realistic but wide salary range and say that you feel that salary won't be an issue if you decide to work together

Don't:

- Worry about the salary in the interview – you can negotiate with the employer once you are offered the job

- Demand a certain amount of money – if it looks like all you care about is the salary, they may not think you are really interested in the position or the company

10. What do you know about our organization?

Do:

- Research the company before the interview and be familiar with what they do, their competitors, and current market trends that might be affecting them

Don't:

- Go into the interview blind – they will realize that you know nothing about their company and will not feel that you are serious about the interview