

## ***INTERVIEW PREPARATION***

<b>Do's</b>	<b>Don'ts</b>
* Research the organization with whom you are about to interview	* Arrive unprepared to talk about the job and how you meet the qualifications
* Know your strengths and be prepare to sell them to the employer	* Expect the employer to decide what you are qualified to do
* Arrive on time or a few minutes early	* Arrive late
* Be sure your appearance is clean and neat	* Wear perfume or cologne
* Be courteous to everyone because you never know who will have input into hiring	* Ask about benefits or talk about what you hope to gain from working for this employer
* Wait until you are invited to sit down before doing so	* Tap your feet, fiddle your hands or give in to other nervous habits
* Speak clearly, audibly and expressively	* Use slang
* Listen carefully to the interview questions	* Rush into your answers
* Be positive, confident and assertive	* Ignore your body language
* Follow up with a thank you letter	* Drink, smoke or chew gum

\* Excerpted from: *Texas Christian University (TCU)* <http://www.cpl.tcu.edu/IntPrep.html>

## ***RESEARCHING THE EMPLOYER***

It is important to know as much as possible about the employer when you arrive for the interview. Not only will this indicate to the employer that you are interested enough in the job to do some research about their organization, but it will help you understand what they are looking for in an employee. Be informed about the organization's history, geographical locations, general methods of operation, purpose, reputation, potential growth, organizational structure, etc. Review the industry if possible so that you know what is going on and where the organization stands among its peers.

Check industry periodicals or newspapers for stories on the organization. Surf the Internet, increasingly organizations have homepages both for recruiting and for internal communication.

Don't be afraid to ask a company for information. Your research does not need to be a secret, and in fact will be a plus in the eyes of the recruiter.

Based on this research, you will want to formulate some questions about the organization. This is an impressive way to show a recruiter that you have done your homework without blurting out "I researched you." Always ask the questions in terms of what you can do for the employer or the employer's needs, programs or policies. Never ask about what the employer can do for you such as salary, hours or vacation. That will come after the job offer.

\* *Excerpted from: Texas Christian University (TCU) <http://www.cpl.tcu.edu/IntPrep.html>*

## What To Wear

Even with work attire becoming less formal, the suit is still the uniform of interviewing. If you don't have one, save your money and go shopping because it is important in how you present yourself. Keep it conservative. You can always lighten up and match the dress code set by the example of your boss or other supervisors. Keep in mind that the interview is not a social occasion, so don't be too stylish. Choose dark colors, long-sleeve white shirts or blouses, and minimal accessories or jewelry.

Men should wear solid, over-the-calf socks, polished black tie shoes, a conservative tie with stripes or a small pattern that, when tied, ends at your belt buckle, and no cologne or after-shave. Blazers and sport coats are usually not a good choice. Hair should be barbered, clean and combed. Usually no facial hair or earrings are best.

Women, wear dark shoes with low heels and closed toes (purse should match in color and material), neutral hose with no pattern, and no perfume or cologne. Keep your makeup light and natural, including the nail polish. Your hair should be styled so that it is not a bother nor distraction to either you or the interviewer. Avoid big jewelry, multiple pieces such as rings on each finger, several bracelets or necklaces or anything that makes noise.

**Note:** The purpose here is not to make everyone look alike or disguise your personal style. The purpose is to try to ensure that your look does not distract from your spoken communication in the interview. If an employer is thinking about what you are wearing they are not listening to your message.

\* *Excerpted from: Texas Christian University (TCU) <http://www.cpl.tcu.edu/IntPrep.html>*

## Anticipating Questions

Most often, interviewers will ask "open-ended" questions which can be difficult if you have not anticipated them. They will also ask questions probing the extent of your knowledge or experience, looking for weaknesses or inconsistencies. Other questions may seem off the wall, but they want to see how you react. The key factor is that good interviewers have a purpose to each question, whether it be putting you at ease, augmenting factual information that they already have, seeing how you react to the unexpected, or discovering more about the way you approach problems.

Open-ended questions are those like "Tell me a little about yourself," which often begin the interview process. In these questions, it will become obvious quickly whether or not you have done your homework. If you start reciting your resume, buzz! They know you are not ready. You can practice answering open-ended questions by looking at a list of sample questions asked by employers included in this section.

Many employers have adopted the technique of behavioral interviewing, which is based on the premise that past behaviors are most indicative of future behaviors. Behavioral questions require that you tell about specific incidents from your experience, and describe how you responded in certain situations. Your answers will give the interviewer insight into who you are and how you operate. Your interviewer will then make predictions as to how well you would adapt to their work environment, and how successful you would be in the position.

You will not be able to anticipate all of the questions you may be asked, but you will be able to answer appropriately if you prepare. Think about your strengths and weaknesses, and consider what the employer will want to know about you. Your credentials (major, GPA, relevant experience) are only part of what that interviewer evaluates. They will also want to know about you as a person: your work habits, leadership potential, ambition, communication skills, poise, and personality to determine if there is a potential match for their team.

\* Excerpted from: Texas Christian University (TCU) <http://www.cpl.tcu.edu/IntPrep.html>

## Planning Your Sales Presentation

To be successful in an interview, you must be prepared not only to tell the employer the type of work you would like to do for them, but also to convince the employer that you are the best person for the job. This takes careful preparation.

First you must know yourself and what you have to offer. Know your abilities and skills, how you developed them, and most importantly, how you have demonstrated them in actions. In thinking about yourself and what you have to offer, think of examples that illustrate your abilities and be prepared to succinctly relate them. Explain in two or three sentences how that class project, volunteer work, organization leadership position or job led to a task that needed to be done, what you did and what the results were.

Then you need to know your strengths and weaknesses. Under no circumstances should you attempt to bluff or fake here, but neither do you volunteer negative information. Whenever possible, talk about a weakness in terms of what you are doing to overcome it or choose something that may cause you problems but which is not necessarily negative to an employer.

Once you know what information you want to share with the interviewer, then you need to practice presenting this information in a positive, confident way. There are several ways to practice: actually interviewing, mock interviews, or just answering questions out loud by yourself.

At the very least, you should stand in front of a mirror or videotape yourself practicing out loud. This is the only way to examine your body language. Remember that people usually believe what they see over what they hear, so your body language can be more important than your words.

It is okay to practice from a list of typical [questions asked by employers](#), but you should not script your answers to be memorized and recited. You should know what you want to say in response to a given question and how you want to say it so that when you are finished, you have left behind the message that you think is important.

Finally, you want to leave the interviewer with the impression that you are truly interested in the position. It is important during the interview to ask questions. These could be questions about the responsibilities of the job, how the position fits into the department or the organization as a whole, what type of training is involved, what type of candidate the employer is seeking, or other issues related to the job. These questions should be about what you can do for the employer and not about what the employer can do for you. Do not ask about salary or benefits until the interviewer brings them up. This conversation will probably not take place until after you have been offered a position.

\* *Excerpted from: Texas Christian University (TCU) <http://www.cpl.tcu.edu/IntPrep.html>*

## Behavioral Interviews

During an interview, the employer's goal is to get to know as much about you and how you would perform on the job as he/she possibly can. To reach this goal many interviewers use a technique called behavioral interviewing. The purpose of the behavioral interview is to see how you would respond to situations you may face in the work setting. Interviewers try to predict this by examining how you have responded to similar situations in the past. They may ask questions like "Tell me about the last time you had to deal with a difficult person and what the outcome was," or "Give me a specific example of something you did that helped build enthusiasm in others." Sometimes interviewers will describe a hypothetical situation, like one you might encounter in the workplace, and ask you how you would handle it. See [examples of behavioral questions](#).

The key to responding to behavioral interviewing questions is to give specific examples of your behavior in particular situations. Always keep in mind that the interviewer is looking for positive outcomes that predict you will successfully handle similar situations in the future. Many people don't understand the goal of behavioral interviewing and respond to these questions by simply telling about a time that they faced whatever situation the interviewer described. You must go further than that, not only describing the situation, but also telling what you did in response to the situation and how your response led to a successful outcome. This is often referred to as the **STAR** system: **S**ituation, **T**ask, **A**ction, **R**esult. You will first describe a **S**ituation you faced in which you decided what needed to be done (**T**ask). Then, outline what **A**ctions that were taken to accomplish this task, and share the **R**esults with the interviewer.

Preparing for the behavioral interview is not very different than preparing for any interview. You should have an idea of the type of job for which you are applying. Make a list of skills that the employer will be looking for in a candidate. For each skill on the list try to come up with several examples of times you have used that skill. For each example practice describing not only the situation, but how you successfully used that skill to lead to a positive resolution of the situation.

\* *Excerpted from: Texas Christian University (TCU) <http://www.cpl.tcu.edu/IntPrep.html>*

## Telephone Interviews

A telephone interview, like any first interview with an organization, is a screening interview. The employer is trying to decide if you are a serious candidate for the position and whether or not he/she should spend the time and money to bring you in for a more in depth second interview. This means your goal in a telephone interview is to be invited for that more in depth, face-to-face meeting.

You should prepare for a telephone interview in many of the same ways you would prepare for an interview in person. It is important to research the organization, anticipate questions and plan your sales presentation carefully. However, there are some additional problems to consider when interviewing over the telephone. You do not have the benefit of body language to help you sell yourself to the interviewer. It becomes more important than ever to pay attention to the tone of your voice. In person you may use a smile or a gesture to add enthusiasm to your words, or good posture to indicate confidence. But over the phone you must be sure to convey that enthusiasm and confidence in your voice.

There are tricks that can help you improve your tone of voice during a phone interview. Some people choose to dress in business attire even though the employer can't see them. This allows them to feel like the qualified candidate that they are. It can be difficult to exhibit confidence in your ability to handle a professional position when you are lounging around in sweat pants or wearing curlers in your hair. Other people stand during a telephone interview because it helps them project their voice. If you choose not to stand at least pay attention to your posture. Posture plays a major role in how you sound over the phone.

It is also important to pay attention to background noise when interviewing on the phone. The telephone will amplify anything that is going on around you such as a dog barking, or a television playing in the next room. Don't assume an interviewer won't notice if you eat or smoke while on the phone. Not only does it distract from the message you are trying to convey, but also the employer may be irritated that you haven't devoted your full attention to the interview.

An additional problem with the telephone interview is that it may be unexpected. Anytime an employer contacts you to discuss a position, you are making an impression. You should consider this part of the interview whether or not you had previously arranged to talk with the employer at this time. Some employers would prefer to conduct an interview when you are not expecting them to call because they feel like they may get a better picture of the real you. Try to take an unexpected interview in stride. Take a few deep breaths and relax. (If you are truly flustered ask if you can call the interviewer back in five minutes). There are some steps you can take to make on-the-spot interviews like this easier. As soon as you start sending out resumes expect some phone calls. Have a pad and paper handy to take notes. Keep a copy of your resume by the phone so you can refer to it when necessary. You may even want to keep information close by about the various organizations you have contacted about jobs. This way you can always refresh your memory of the job description and the organization.

A telephone interview is just as much an interview as if it were face-to-face and you should take it just as seriously. It is important to prepare for the interview, and it is important to follow up with a thank you note as well.

\* *Excerpted from: Texas Christian University (TCU) <http://www.cpl.tcu.edu/IntPrep.html>*

## Follow Up

After the interview it is a good idea to write down all of the important information you learned during the interview. You will want to remember not only the interviewers' names but also anything you learned about the organization, and the position. Try to get a business card from the interviewers so that you will have the correct spelling of their names, their titles, and their addresses.

It is important to write a thank you note within 48 hours after the interview. Besides being common courtesy, the thank you note will also get your name back in front of the interviewer. You can reinforce strong points of the interview, or mention additional qualifications you may have forgotten to bring up.

If you have not been contacted within the time frame given by the interviewer, get on the phone and call them. Never take the attitude that after the interview you can just sit and wait.

\* *Excerpted from: Texas Christian University (TCU) <http://www.cpl.tcu.edu/IntPrep.html>*

## Questions Asked by Employers

1. What are your long-range and short-range goals and objectives, when and why did you establish these goals and how are you preparing yourself to achieve them?
2. What goals, other than those related to your occupation, have you established?
3. What do you see yourself doing five years from now?
4. What do you really want to do in life?
5. What are your long-range career objectives?
6. How do you plan to achieve your career goals?
7. What are the most important rewards you expect in your career?
8. What do you expect to be earning in five years?
9. Why did you choose the career for which you are preparing?
10. Which is more important, the money or the job?
11. What do you consider to be your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
12. How would you describe yourself?
13. How do you think a friend or professor who knows you would describe you?
14. What motivates you to put forth your greatest efforts?
15. How has your college experience prepared you for a business/science-engineering-technology career?
16. Why should I hire you?
17. What qualifications do you have that make you think that you will be successful in your career field?
18. How do you determine or evaluate success?
19. What do you think it takes to be successful in a company like ours?
20. In what ways do you think you can make a contribution to our company?
21. What qualities should a successful employee possess?
22. Describe the relationship that should exist between a supervisor and those reporting to him or her.
23. What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction? Why?
24. Describe your most rewarding college experience.
25. If you were hiring a graduate for this position, what qualities would you look for?
26. Why did you select your college or university?
27. What led you to choose your field of major study?
28. What college subjects did you like best? Why?
29. What college subjects did you like least? Why?
30. If you could do so, how would you plan your academic study differently? Why?
31. What changes would you make in your college or university? Why?
32. Do you have plans for continued study? An advanced degree?
33. Do you think that your grades are a good indication of your academic achievement?
34. What have you learned from participation in extra-curricular activities?
35. In what kind of a work environment are you most comfortable?
36. How do you work under pressure?
37. In what part-time or summer jobs have you been most interested? Why?
38. How would you describe the ideal job for you following graduation?
39. Why did you decide to seek a position with this company?

40. What do you know about our company?
41. What two or three things are most important to you in your job?
42. Are you seeking employment in a company of a certain size? Why?
43. What criteria are you using to evaluate the company for which you hope to work?
44. Do you have a geographical preference? Why?
45. Will you relocate? Does relocation bother you?
46. Are you willing to travel?
47. Are you willing to spend at least six months as a trainee?
48. Why do you think you might like to live in the community in which our company is located?
49. What major problem have you encountered and how did you deal with it?
50. What have you learned from your mistakes?

### **Behavioral Interview Questions**

1. Give me an example of something you did that helped build enthusiasm in others.
2. Tell me about a difficult situation where it was desirable for you to keep a positive attitude.
3. Describe the last time you had to deal with a difficult person and the outcome.
4. Give me an example of a time when you had to make an important decision. How did you go about it?
5. Tell me a time when you had to persuade someone to accept an idea or a proposal.
6. Describe a time when you had to handle multiple responsibilities and how you managed it.
7. Give me an example of a time you worked under extreme stress.
8. Tell me about a time when someone on your team wasn't pulling their weight and how you handled it.
9. Describe a time when you had to use creative problem solving and the outcome.
10. Give an example of a time when you had to teach someone a skill and how you went about it.

\* Excerpted from: Texas Christian University (TCU) <http://www.cpl.tcu.edu/IntPrep.html>

## **Illegal Questions and How to Respond**

Various state and federal laws offer some protection to would-be employees against discrimination. There is often a fine line between illegal and legal. For example, it is illegal to ask if you are a United States citizen, but not illegal to ask if you are authorized to work in the United States.

The general rule is that an employer's questions, whether on a job application or during an interview, must be related to performing the job for which you are applying and must be asked of all candidates, regardless of minority status.

Should you be confronted with illegal questions, you have three options. First, if you do not think the answer will hurt you and it does not violate your principles, answer the question. Second, you can refuse to answer in a non-threatening way. Third, you can talk about the intent behind the question, trying to finesse your way out of answering. (You might try answering a question with a question such as asking about the relevance of the inquiry to the job you are discussing or making a statement about your ability to perform the job).

### **Examples of Illegal Questions are:**

*Illegal:* Are you a U.S. citizen?

*Legal:* Are you authorized to work in the U.S.?

*Illegal:* How old are you?

*Legal:* Are you over the legal age required for this job?

*Illegal:* Who will care for your children when you travel?

*Legal:* Are you able and willing to travel as needed?

*Illegal:* Are you disabled?

*Legal:* Are you able to perform the functions of the job with or without reasonable accommodations?

*Illegal:* Have you ever been arrested?

*Legal:* Have you ever been convicted of \_\_\_\_\_? (Naming a crime that is reasonably related to the performance of the job.)

*Illegal:* Were you honorably discharged from the military?

*Legal:* What branch of the Armed Forces did you serve?

(Excerpted from *Planning Job Choices*, National Association of Colleges and Employers)

In any case where you feel you were not treated properly by an employer connected to Polytechnic University of Puerto Rico, Cooperative Education Program and Placement Services

either through On-Campus Interviews or job listings, report your concerns to University Career Services promptly.

\* *Excerpted from: Texas Christian University (TCU) <http://www.cpl.tcu.edu/IntPrep.html>*