



Marine Corps Logistics Command
Albany, Georgia



JOB INTERVIEW SKILLS





What is an Interview?

- An interview is not an informal meeting or a social occasion; it is a time for deliberate conversation that presents skills and capabilities, giving both parties opportunity to ask questions and formulate opinions. On the basis of your resume or application, you have been given the opportunity to meet, face-to-face, with an individual or group who will play a leading role in determining whether you obtain employment.
- This is the first time and only time you will have to make a first impression. Within 10 seconds (yes, that is not fair, but, it is reality) individuals will have made some vital decisions about you as an individual. We will cover more concerning the concept of image later.
- A single individual may conduct the interview or there may be a panel of individuals. Panels are difficult because you are dealing with multiple personalities and agendas. A panel should not be viewed as an impossible situation, but as an opportunity to influence a group of people with whom you potentially will be working. A real potential exists to sell yourself as a qualified applicant desiring to do the best work possible.
- Besides this you have a concrete opportunity to see inside the company, to gain a better understanding of its workings, issues, and potential. “Do I really want to work here?” should be the question that is answered after the interview is completed.



What are Employers Looking For in a Resume?

- **Written and Verbal Communication Skills:** Employers want individuals who can write coherently, utilizing good grammatical skills. They also want employees to have good verbal skills that will enhance the flow of information rather than impeding understanding.
- **Interpersonal Skills:** Do you interact well with others? Are you able to work with individuals with differing personalities, ideas, and opinions? Are you able to implement constructive conflict resolution skills?
- **Work and Internship Experience:** The experiences that you have had should support the work that you are desiring to do. Have you identified the common elements between both?
- **Motivation and Initiative:** You should present yourself as one who is self-motivated who is willing to take the initiative to perform at an excellent level.
- **Team Player:** Can you exhibit a willingness to work with others in a consensus building effort.
- **Computer Skills:** You should have a general knowledge of computer functions as well as a working knowledge of specific programs.
- **Flexibility:** You should have the ability to adapt to a changing work environment.



The Job Interview Process

- **Preparation:** Applicants should take the necessary steps to prepare themselves physically and mentally for the interview.
- **Rapport Building:** Very quickly develop a positive connection with the interviewer.
- **The Interview:** Understand the motives of the interviewer and the process that generally is followed.
- **Closing:** This is the last chance to close the deal or keep the possibility of further interaction alive.
- **Follow-up:** There are activities that should be done by you that may keep communication open and positive.



Preparation



- **Image:** Be aware of the message your personal image sends. Before you go on an interview, decide the type of image you need to present in order to have the best possible chance of getting the job. Wear appropriate clothing for the interview. Make sure your clothing is clean, pressed and fits well. If necessary, get a hair cut or have your hair styled in a way that complements your facial features and body type. Make sure your hair and fingernails are clean and neat.
- **Background and Experience Assessment:** Review your job history, think about the various types of experience you have. Try to answer the question: “How does my background and experience make me qualified for this job? Which of my experiences most closely relate to the duties of this job?”
- **Data preparation:** Be prepared to provide the interviewer with pertinent information about yourself. Gather the information you will need in order to fill out a job application, such as:
 - Social Security Number
 - Dates of school attendance
 - Completion dates for courses or skills training
 - Dates of previous employment and descriptions of the job duties
 - Names of supervisors, addresses and phone numbers of former employers
 - Full names, addresses, and phone numbers of references



Preparation (Continued)

- In today's job market, for different types of industries, you may be required to fill out an online job application and/or a skills assessment via a personal computer or onsite at the prospective company's facility.
- You may also be required to send your resume and or a cover letter via a company web site or email address prior to filling out a job application.
- Once you are granted an interview, you should bring a copy of your current resume with you to the interview even if you have already sent an electronic copy. Some employers will accept the resume as a substitute for the employment history section on the employment application. Others will require you to complete this section of the application and the resume can be used as a source of information or attached to the application.
- In general, your resume is what gets your "foot in the door" for the interview. And it is up to the company or organization you are seeking employment with to determine when they require the job application. In many cases, it is at the time of the interview that you are asked to fill out a job application.



Investigate Company and Position



- You should know something about the company. Knowledge about the company gives you a better idea of how to evaluate the job opportunity and if you will fit into the position. Interviewers are impressed by applicants who take the time to find out about their prospective employers and show knowledge about and interest in the company.
- With today's technology, it is easier than ever before to gather information about a company. Most companies, especially large corporations, have established web sites where you can gather information ranging from the types of products and services they offer to the corporate culture and stock history all in one sitting.
- If you do not have access to a personal computer to conduct this research, you can use one at your local library. Friends who work for the company and the business section of the newspaper can also provide valuable information.



Planning for the Interview



- Planning for the interview begins way before the day of the actual interview. Once you are notified that you have been granted an interview, you should prepare in advance by practicing your answers to some of the top 10 interviewing questions.
- Give a list of common questions and a copy of the job posting to a trusted friend or relative, who will be honest with you, and role-play the interview. Once you are done, ask him or her for feedback.
- Practice speaking aloud and ask yourself some of the common interview questions and respond to them as you would in an actual interview.
- The goal here is not to make you sound rehearsed, but to get you prepared and comfortable with “any question” that may be asked of you during the real interview.



Getting There



- It is important to arrive on time for the interview. You should allow yourself at least 10 minutes before your scheduled interview to be in the building, visit the restroom for a last minute image check and arrive at the interview site on time. You do not want to start the interview on a negative note by arriving late and making the interviewer wait for you.
- Sometimes, accidents happen. If you are going to be late and there is nothing you can do about it, be sure to call the interviewer and explain the circumstances and ask to reschedule the interview. Everyone has been delayed at some point in their life due to circumstances beyond their control. If you don't call and let the interviewer know what happened, the interviewer's likely conclusion is you're rude, not interested in the job, or both.
- If you're not familiar with the location of the company, it's a good idea to make a "dry run" to find out how long it will take you to get there. If you are not familiar with the location, you may want to use a computer and look up the directions online or take a drive to the location a day or so in advance to make sure you can find it easily prior to the interview.
- On the day of the interview, allow yourself additional time in case the weather or the traffic increases travel time. It is better to arrive early, than to arrive late.



What to Bring



- Make sure you have the following for the interview. You will probably have to complete paperwork, so make sure you have:
 - A ball point pen
 - A copy of your current resume
 - Copies of other personal data (mentioned previously)
 - Complete contact information for your references
 - Letters of recommendation (if required)



Rapport Building



- Allows you and the interviewer to exchange information and begin to get to know each other before you get down to the serious business of the interview.
- One of the most important things you can do to build rapport is present a positive image. A positive image increases the probability of a positive response from the interviewer. When the interviewer first sees you, he or she will form first impressions about you. When the interviewer greets you and you are the picture of cleanliness and professionalism, you have the opportunity to make a positive first impression before the interview even begins.
- After making that all important positive first impression, you have established the first step in the rapport building process, helping the interviewer to form a positive attitude about continuing his or her interaction with you. There are other specific steps or behaviors that serve as “bridges” to building rapport with the interviewer, just as there are behaviors that are “barriers” to building rapport.



Rapport Bridges



Greeting

- A warm greeting is a rapport builder that presents opportunities to use bridges such as:
 - Smiling and introducing yourself to the interviewer.
 - Shaking the interviewer's hand if he or she extends it.
 - Offering a firm handshake and making eye contact with the interviewer. Make sure your palms are dry.
- Do not do the following in the greeting phase of the interview:
 - Look down or away from the face of the interviewer as you shake hands.
 - Slap the interviewer on the back.
 - Pump the interviewer's arm like a hand crank on a water well.
 - Grin unnaturally, like the "Cheshire Cat", at the interviewer.
 - Reach for the finger tips of the interviewer's hand or grasp the entire hand with both hands.



Rapport Bridges



Opening Conversation

- The interviewer will initiate some light conversation. For example, the interviewer might say:
 - “I hope you didn’t have any trouble finding us.”
 - “Traffic was awful this morning.”
 - “It looks like it might be another cold day.”
 - “I see on your application you listed football as a hobby. Are you an Atlanta Falcons fan?”

These types of comments do not require a long and drawn out answer. The interviewer is trying to “break the ice” before settling into the heart of the interview.

- You might ask a question about a trophy or certificate you notice in the interviewer’s office or make a comment about the helpful driving directions you were given as you settle into your seat. This brief exchange allows you and the interviewer to begin to see each other as people and begin to establish some common ground. *Remember, all conversation between you and the interviewer is part of the interview process, therefore you should remain professional at all times and not become too familiar or come across as insincere.*



Rapport Barriers



Rapport barriers are things that get an interview off to a bad start and should be avoided.

Examples:

- Bumping into the interviewer as you both try to go through the office door.
- Taking a seat before the interviewer directs you to a seat.
- Asking where the restrooms are once the interview is to begin.
- Asking for a cup of coffee or water without being offered one.
- Lighting a cigarette during an interview.
- Answering a conversational question from the interviewer with a long, detailed account of your hobbies, life story, Uncle Harry's surgery, or some other irrelevant speech.
- Not paying attention when the interviewer is speaking. (e.g. trying to read papers on the interviewer's desk).
- Failing to maintain eye contact with the interviewer.
- Accepting a cup of coffee and then spilling it.
- Answering an opening question from the interviewer with a very opinionated response and finding out that the interviewer has the exact opposite opinion.



The Interview - Common Interview Questions

- Why did you leave your last job?
- Why do you want to leave your present position?
- Tell me about yourself?
- What are your greatest strengths and greatest weaknesses?
- What are your long term/short term goals?
- Do you have any questions about our company?
- Do you prefer working with others or by yourself? Why?
- What are your salary expectations?
- Describe a problem situation and how you solved it?
- Would you be able to work overtime?
- Tell me about a goal you set for yourself recently and how you accomplished it.



The Interview - Applicant Question List

- What are the responsibilities of this job?
- Did the individual who had this position previously transfer within the company?
- How does this position fit into the organization? department?
- Do you see the company/department changing in the future?
- What are the plans for future expansion for the company/department?
- Thank you Mr. or Mrs. ____, I believe you have answered my questions.
- Mr. or Mrs. ____ can you explain what the next step is in the process?



The Interview

Do:

- Research information about the company.
- Prepare answers to common interview questions before the interview.
- Plan your outfit. One should at least dress one level above what the actual job entails.
- Allow extra time to get to the interview site. Arrive at least ten minutes early for the interview.
- Visit a rest room before entering the interview office for a last minute appearance check.
- Greet the interviewer warmly, make eye contact, and use a firm handshake.
- Wait to be seated when invited.
- Maintain eye contact throughout the interview, maintain good posture.
- Answer the interviewer's questions completely.
- Pause to think about your answers if necessary, don't try to fake an answer or be dishonest.



The Interview



Don't:

- Don't arrive late.
- Don't chew gum.
- Don't ramble when answering the interviewer's questions.
- Don't ask about salary until the interviewer brings it up.
- Don't say negative things about former employers or supervisors.
- Don't say negative things about yourself.
- Don't focus on your weaknesses.
- Don't scowl or frown.
- Don't slouch.



The Interview - Closing

- Last opportunity to make a favorable impression
 - In many cases the way an applicant leaves an interview will determine in the interviewer's mind whether to consider the individual for a second look.
 - Understand that the interviewer is looking to fill the position with the best possible candidate. This person should have stayed engaged in the process looking and searching in your answers for solutions to their problems.
- Assess your performance during the interview
 - As a job applicant your goal is to meet and exceed the interviewer's expectations. Assess how well you did that. Did you convey your skills to the interviewer in such a way that the match between your skills and the skills needed in the new position is apparent.
- Closing the interview
 - An expression of appreciation for the interviewer's time should be offered and if the individual offers their hand it should be shaken firmly.



Favorable interview Indicators

- Interviewer schedules a second appointment.
- Interviewer speaks enthusiastically about the position and the company and gives you salary information.
- Interviewer asks for references.
- Interviewer gives a definite time frame for a final decision and asks you to let him or her know if you receive any other offers.
- Interviewer asks questions that indicate a level of interest.

If any of the favorable indicators listed above are given be sure and provide the interviewer with any information that is requested.



Follow-Up



- Send the Interviewer a Thank You Note or Brief Follow-Up Letter
 - Prepare a note of appreciation to be sent to the interviewer immediately following the interview.
- Assess Your Performance in the Interview
 - Make notes that will enable you to make improvements in any future interviews that you might have.
- Select Call Back Dates and Make the Follow-Up Calls
 - Determine when a follow-up call is needed. This should be done within a week. Make those inquiries positive as to the status of the interview process.
- Send Information to the Interviewer
 - Any information requested by the interviewer should be provided as quickly as possible.
- Set Up an Interview File
 - Any information obtained or prepared for the interview should be kept in a file, Your notes and reactions should also be placed there, as well as, copies of any information that is sent to the interviewer and the date it is sent.



10 Keys to Successful Interviewing

1. Practice
2. Be concise and limit your responses
3. Concrete information (provide details of your experiences.)
4. Make a good first impression (55% of your messages are non verbal.)
5. Discuss short stories (be prepared to offer examples.)
6. Put yourself on their team.
7. Maintain a conversational flow.
8. Ask questions at the end of the interview.
9. Recognize your stress and nervousness.
10. Find opportunities to mention strengths.