Acing Your Interview

Morrisville State College Career Services
308 Whipple Administration Building
www.morrisville.edu/careerplanning
315.684.6615
Today you’ll learn:

- purpose of an interview
- types of interviews and interview formats
- preparing for an interview
- the content of a traditional interview
- follow up on your interview
- work with Career Services to ensure your success
Purpose of an interview: jobseeker

- convey your relevant qualifications and interest
- distinguish and differentiate yourself from other candidates
- determine if the opportunity is a good fit for your skills, interests, and goals
- obtain an offer, or be invited to the next round of interviews (if applicable)
Purpose of an interview: employer

- determine if you have the relevant qualifications and interests to succeed in the job
  - evaluate if you can and are willing to develop any required skills that you don’t already have

- determine if you are motivated to do the job

- determine if you are a good fit for the job and the team
  - “hard skills get you the interview, soft skills get you the job”
Types and formats of interviews

Types:
- traditional
- behavioral
- case

Formats:
- in-person
- telephone
- Skype
- individual
- panel
- group
- presentation
- Twitter
Before the interview

- assemble your interview wardrobe
  - both men and women: well-fitted, dark-colored suit, with dress shirt, belt (if applicable), polished shoes
    - all clothing should be neatly pressed
    - clothing does not need to be new, but does have to be in good shape and fit well
  - accessories should be modest in size and limited in number
  - grooming should be impeccable
  - use our on-line “Dress for Success” handout as a guide

- create your reference list and/or speak with your references
  - see our “Assembling Your Reference List” handout
Before the interview

- know your story
  - review your resume, cover letter, and notes from any previous contact with the employer
  - get comfortable telling your story
    - do a mock interview or interview prep session with Career Services
    - prepare possible questions in advance and practice, practice, practice responses
  - practice reviewing your portfolio, if applicable

- create a list of questions for the interview

- map out the logistics of your visit
Before the interview

- know the job and industry
  - job description from employer
  - resources on the “Get Started” page on the Career Services site
  - “What you should know about an industry or job” handout
  - your network: faculty, alumni, references, etc.

- know the employer
  - a frequent complaint employers have is that candidates do not know their organization
  - your network: faculty, alumni, references, etc.

- know your interviewers
  - Google search, LinkedIn
  - your network: faculty, alumni, references, etc.
Day of the interview

- eat a good breakfast – and don’t drink too much caffeine!

- review your resume, cover letter, job description, interviewer profiles, and portfolio

- bring a couple of extra copies of your resume and your reference list

- allow extra time for travel

- be mindful of your behavior anywhere within the vicinity of the employer or interview
At the interview

- check your grooming when you arrive, and as the day progresses, if applicable
- be polite to everyone you meet
- shake hands firmly, smile appropriately, make eye contact when speaking
- listen carefully and actively
- show enthusiasm, confidence, and poise
At the interview (cont’d)

- connect the dots between your qualifications and the employers needs
- own your accomplishments
- respond to the questions asked
  - if you have any doubts, ask
- claim only the current level of skill you possess
- speak positively about previous and current employers, faculty, academic institutions
- keep your answers to 1 ½ to 2 minutes, unless you get signals from the interviewer to go longer
Anatomy of a traditional interview

- icebreaker
- questions from employer
- questions from interviewee
- close
Icebreaker

“so, tell me about yourself” is the most common icebreaker

- your response should be 45 to 90 seconds long and oriented towards the position you are interviewing for
- can include
  - academic experiences, particularly those that relate to your career interests
  - one or two relevant significant, relevant accomplishments from an internship or job
  - strengths demonstrated by those accomplishments and how they relate to the position for which you are applying
- should not be a summary of your entire life, or of your resume
“I’m an Applied Psychology major at Morrisville with a strong interest in marketing. I’ve pursued this interest in class projects such as xxx, in which I xxx, and my role as marketing chair for xxx club, where I xxx. Last summer, I interned in marketing research at YNN in Syracuse in which I….. I am eager to continue building on my interest and experience in marketing since it is such a good fit for what I’m good at and what I like to do.”
Typical questions from employer

- why are you interested in (the position)? (the employer)?
- why do you think you are qualified for this position?
- why did you choose Morrisville? Your major?
- what are your strengths? Your weaknesses?
- have you had any setbacks? How have you dealt with them?
- walk me through your resume.
- tell me something about yourself that is not on your resume or cover letter.
- where do you see yourself in five years?
- questions related to your GPA or academic performance.
- questions related to a skill or experience you don’t have that they are seeking.
Typical questions from interviewee

- more information about something you learned from your pre-interview research
- about the interviewer that you could not have found from your research
- follow up on information provided in the interview
- do not ask about salary, time off, benefits, etc.
  - this could open the door to negotiating, which you don’t want to do until you have the offer
Close of the interview

- repeat your interest in the position and employer
- inquire about the next step in the process
- request permission to follow up within the indicated timeframe
- secure the interviewer’s business card
After the interview

- make notes about the interview in the event there is a future interview or you need clarification before you accept an offer

- send a thank you note within 24 hours

- touch base with your recommenders about the interview

- contact the interviewer at the indicated timeframe
  - telephone is preferred, although e-mail may be appropriate if all other contact has been by e-mail
  - inquire as to whether you can provide any additional information
  - reiterate your interest in the position and request if you can follow up again
Best practices for interviewing

- make sure your resume and cover letter accurately and fully demonstrate your key qualifications

- do a mock interview even before you get an interview

- prepare, prepare, prepare, then prepare some more
  - keep in mind that employer research counts - a lot!

- be confident, but not arrogant

- don’t discuss salary, benefits, vacation unless asked

- write a thank you note

- follow up, follow up, follow up
Partnering with Career Services

- editing and tailoring your resume and cover letter
- research a career field, industry, and/or employer
- developing your elevator pitch and response to “tell me about yourself”
- identifying alumni or other contacts in the organization or industry
- crafting answers to specific question about your education, experience, skills, GPA
- doing a mock interview
- writing a thank you note
- following up on your application
Next Steps

Career Services
308 Whipple Administration Building
(down the hall from the Registrar)
www.morrisville.edu/careerplanning

Individual advising appointments daily:
call 315.684.6615 to schedule an appointment
(please note that appointments cannot be made by e-mail)

Advising Express Office Hours
(15 minutes, no appointment necessary):
  Tuesdays, 2:30 pm to 4:30 pm
  Wednesdays, 10:00 am to 12:00 pm
  Thursdays, 9:00 am to 11:00 am
Check the Career Services calendar for other times and locations