

Prepare for an Interview

Unit: Career Exploration

Problem Area: Career Planning and Job Seeking

Lesson: Prepare for an Interview

- **Student Learning Objectives.** Instruction in this lesson should result in students achieving the following objectives:

- 1 Identify types of interviews.**
- 2 Identify elements of a successful job interview.**
- 3 Identify some pitfalls of interviewing.**

- **List of Resources.** The following resources may be useful in teaching this lesson:

Badash, Shirley, and Doreen Chesebro. *Introduction to Health Occupations: Today's Health Care Worker*, 6th ed. Prentice Hall, 2004.

"Dress to Impress," *Apparel, Merchandising & Textiles and Career Services*. Washington State University. Accessed Sept. 11, 2007 <<http://amdt.wsu.edu/research/dti/index.htm>>.

"Guide to Interviewing Resources," *Quintessential Careers*. Accessed Sept. 24, 2007 <<http://www.quintcareers.com/intvres.html>>.

"Job Interviewing Tutorial for Job-Seekers," *Quintessential Careers*. Accessed Sept. 24, 2007 <http://www.quintcareers.com/job_interviews/>.

"Virtual Interviews: Healthcare," *Interview Centre Home*. Accessed Sept. 11, 2007 <<http://interview.monster.ca/virtualinterview/healthcare/>>.



■ **List of Equipment, Tools, Supplies, and Facilities**

- ✓ Overhead or PowerPoint projector
- ✓ Visual(s) from accompanying master(s)
- ✓ Copies of sample test, lab sheet(s), and/or other items designed for duplication
- ✓ Materials listed on duplicated items
- ✓ Computers with printers and Internet access
- ✓ Classroom resource and reference materials

■ **Terms.** The following terms are presented in this lesson (shown in bold italics):

- ▶ behavioral interview
- ▶ interview
- ▶ panel (or group) interview
- ▶ screening interview
- ▶ traditional interview

■ **Interest Approach.** Use an interest approach that will prepare the students for the lesson. Teachers often develop approaches for their unique class and student situation. A possible approach is included here.

Survey the class to determine how many students have jobs. Ask the students how they obtained their jobs and if they went through a formal interview process. Ask them to describe their interview experiences. Discuss the emotions they may have experienced, the questions they were asked, and their impressions of the experience. Ask what suggestions they have for other students who have not yet experienced a job interview. Encourage the students to write a list of interview tips and guidelines that could be shared with the class. Use this class discussion as a springboard for introducing the lesson on preparing for an interview.

SUMMARY OF CONTENT AND TEACHING STRATEGIES

Objective 1: Identify types of interviews.

Anticipated Problem: What are the different types of interviews?

I. Types of interviews

- A. An **interview** is a formal meeting between an employer and a job applicant with the primary purpose of assessing the job applicant’s qualifications. A secondary purpose of the interview is to provide the job applicant with information about the position for which she or he is applying.
- B. A **screening interview** is a brief, preliminary interview with a job applicant. It is often conducted over the telephone by a human resource professional to determine the applicant’s basic job qualifications.
- C. A **traditional interview** is a one-on-one interview conducted by the employer with the job applicant.
- D. A **panel (or group) interview** is an interview in which there is more than one interviewer. Panel or group interviews often involve two or more interviewers who question the applicant together or individually.
- E. A **behavioral interview** is an interview in which the interviewer asks behavior-oriented questions that require the applicant to recall specific examples of past behavior at a previous job. For example, the person conducting the interview may say, “Give me an example of how you dealt with a particularly stressful situation in your last job.”

Many techniques can be used to help students master this objective. Students can be asked to share their job interview experiences with the class. They could also be asked to brainstorm how and why different types of interviews might be conducted and what benefits each type of interview might have. Alternately, students could be encouraged to do an Internet search to research different types of job interviews using the Internet resources provided. Use VM–A.

Objective 2: Identify elements of a successful job interview.

Anticipated Problem: What are the elements of a successful job interview?

II. Elements of a successful job interview

- A. Be prepared. (See VM–B.)
 - 1. Do your homework.

2. Bring the necessities.
- B. Practice responding to common interview questions. (See VM–C.)
- C. Dress for success. (See VM–D.)
 1. Know the general appearance guidelines.
 2. Review the suggestions for females.
 3. Review the suggestions for males.
- D. Become familiar with interview tips. (See VM–E.)
- E. Remember to follow up. (See VM–F and VM–G.)
 1. Determine your follow-up plan.
 2. Send a thank-you letter.

Many techniques can be used to help students master this objective. Use VM–A through VM–G and LS–A. Students can also be encouraged to brainstorm other elements of a successful job interview and to share those ideas with the class. Instructors may consider asking industry professionals to conduct mock interviews (on a volunteer basis) with students.

Objective 3: Identify some pitfalls of interviewing.

Anticipated Problem: What are some pitfalls of interviewing?

- III. Pitfalls of interviewing (VM–H)
 - A. Inappropriate appearance, dress, or hygiene
 - B. Unprofessional behavior or attitude
 - C. Being unprepared for the interview
 - D. Poor communication skills

Many techniques can be used to help students master this objective. Use VM–H. Alternately, ask students to brainstorm and create a list of reasons why an interviewer may develop a negative impression of a job applicant, thereby making the job applicant an unlikely candidate for the job.

■ **Review/Summary.** Use the student learning objectives to summarize the lesson. Have students explain the content associated with each objective. Student responses can be used in determining which objectives need to be reviewed or taught from a different angle. Questions at the ends of chapters in the textbook may also be used in the review/summary.

- **Application.** Use the included visual masters and lab sheet to apply the information presented in the lesson. Use LS–A to help students practice interviewing skills. Consider asking human resource personnel or recruiters from health care facilities to perform mock interviews for students to help them develop their interviewing skills.
- **Evaluation.** Evaluation should focus on student achievement of the objectives for the lesson. Various techniques can be used, such as student performance on the application activities. A sample written test is provided.
- **Answers to Sample Test:**

Part One: Matching

1. c
2. b
3. e
4. a
5. d

Part Two: Short Answer

1. Acceptable answers could include any of the following: research the company; obtain a job description of the position for which you are applying; prepare answers to common interview questions; prepare a list of your own questions; have résumé prepared and ready; practice interviewing skills; and obtain clear and accurate directions to the interview site.
2. Acceptable answers could include any of the following: résumé, driver’s license, certified birth certificate, social security card, list of references, portfolio, pen and paper, directions to interview site, and cell phone.

Part Three: True or False

1. F
2. T
3. T
4. F
5. F
6. T
7. F
8. F
9. F
10. T

Prepare for an Interview

► Part One: Matching

Instructions: Match the term with the correct definition.

- a. group or panel interview
- b. screening interview
- c. interview
- d. behavioral interview
- e. traditional interview

- _____ 1. A formal meeting between an employer and a job applicant with the primary purpose of assessing the job applicant's qualifications
- _____ 2. A brief, preliminary interview with a job applicant that is often conducted over the telephone by a human resource professional to determine the applicant's basic qualifications for a job
- _____ 3. A one-on-one interview that is conducted by the employer with the job applicant
- _____ 4. An interview in which there is more than one interviewer
- _____ 5. An interview in which the interviewer asks the applicant to recall specific examples of past behavior at a previous job

► Part Two: Short Answer

Instructions: Complete the following.

1. Describe two items that are considered essential "homework" when preparing for an interview.



- List three items that you should bring with you to an interview.

► **Part Three: True or False**

Instructions: Write T for true or F for false.

- ___ 1. Job applicants do not need to bring a copy of their résumé to the interview.
- ___ 2. In behavioral interviews, you will be expected to answer questions using examples of past behavior and work experience.
- ___ 3. It is recommended that body piercings and tattoos not be visible during the interview.
- ___ 4. Accessories worn by the applicant (e.g., shoes, jewelry, body art, bags and purses) do not have any impact on the outcome of the interview.
- ___ 5. It is acceptable to voice complaints about previous employers and co-workers as long as everything you say is true.
- ___ 6. A prepared portfolio will help you highlight your experience and accomplishments during an interview.
- ___ 7. Interviewers do not pay attention to body language, eye contact, or the strength of your handshake.
- ___ 8. You should always arrive a little late for the interview so you do not appear desperate for the job.
- ___ 9. Using some sarcasm and some slang is acceptable during an interview because it creates the impression that you are casual and relaxed.
- ___ 10. A formal letter of thanks should be sent by the applicant within 24 hours of an interview.

INTERVIEWS

Interview

- ◆ This is a formal meeting between an employer and a job applicant with the primary purpose of assessing the applicant's qualifications.

Screening Interview

- ◆ This is a brief, preliminary interview that is often conducted via telephone.
- ◆ It verifies the applicant's basic job qualifications.
- ◆ It is often used to set up or arrange a traditional interview.



Traditional Interview

- ◆ This typically consists of a one-on-one meeting conducted by the employer with the job applicant.

Panel or Group Interview

- ◆ This type of formal meeting involves more than one interviewer.
- ◆ Typically it involves two or more people who interview the applicant as a group or individually.

Behavioral Interview

- ◆ In this type of formal meeting, the interviewer asks behavior-oriented questions that require the applicant to recall specific examples of past behavior at a previous job.

BE PREPARED

Do Your Homework

- ◆ Research the company (products, services, philosophy, mission, size, clientele).
- ◆ Ask for a copy of the job description for the position in which you are interested.
- ◆ Have answers (in your mind) to common interview questions.
- ◆ Have some questions of your own ready, such as:
 - ◆ What are the responsibilities of the job?
 - ◆ Can you tell me what a typical day is like?
 - ◆ Are there advancement opportunities?
 - ◆ Have your résumé ready.
 - ◆ Practice your interviewing skills.
- ◆ Get clear and accurate directions to the interview site.



Bring the Necessities

- ◆ Directions to the interview site and the phone number
- ◆ Cell phone (in case of an emergency on the way)
- ◆ Driver's license
- ◆ Social Security card
- ◆ Birth certificate (or certified copy)
- ◆ Résumé
- ◆ Portfolio
- ◆ List of references
- ◆ Paper/pen

COMMON INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- ◆ What kind of job are you looking for?
- ◆ What are your strengths? What are your weaknesses?
- ◆ Why did you leave your previous job?
- ◆ How do you deal with stress?
- ◆ Why are you interested in this job? Why should we hire you?
- ◆ What are your goals? Where do you see yourself in five years?
- ◆ Why are you the best candidate for this job?
- ◆ What would your former boss/teacher say about you?
- ◆ What were the best and worst aspects of your previous job?
- ◆ What motivates you?
- ◆ Tell me what you liked or disliked about high school.
- ◆ Tell me about yourself.
- ◆ Tell me about your proudest achievement or accomplishment.
- ◆ Tell me about an ethical dilemma you have faced and how you dealt with it.
- ◆ Tell me about a major obstacle you faced at work and how you dealt with it.
- ◆ Describe your ideal job.
- ◆ Give an example of how you dealt with a conflict at your previous job.

DRESS FOR SUCCESS

General Appearance—Males and Females

- ◆ Dress as if you were going to church, not as if you were going on a date.
- ◆ No piercings should be visible (except ears for females). If you have multiple piercings, remove the jewelry for the interview. If and when you are offered the job, you can ask the company's policy regarding visible piercings in the workplace.
- ◆ Tattoos should not be visible.
- ◆ Shower, comb, and style your hair.
- ◆ Iron your clothes.



Females

- ◆ Dress in conservative, neutral colors.
- ◆ Wear a suit, dress, skirt and blouse, or dress pants and blouse, with neutral-tone nylons.
- ◆ Don moderate-heel dress shoes with closed-toes (no stilettos).
- ◆ Wear minimal jewelry (i.e., watch, one conservative ring, and one small set of conservative stud earrings).
- ◆ Wear only minimal make-up.
- ◆ Go easy on the perfume.
- ◆ Hairstyles should be neat and conservative.
- ◆ Nails should be neatly trimmed. If polished, a soft and neutral shade is recommended. (Avoid black.)

Males

- ◆ Wear a suit or dress pants with a white or neutral-colored long-sleeved shirt.
- ◆ Shirts should be tucked into pants that are held up by a belt (no droopy drawers).
- ◆ Wear a conservative tie.
- ◆ Wear dress socks and dress shoes.
- ◆ Remember to shave.
- ◆ Go easy on the after-shave or cologne.
- ◆ Wear minimal jewelry (i.e., watch and a conservative ring).
- ◆ Make sure nails are cleanly scrubbed & trimmed.

INTERVIEW TIPS

- ◆ Go alone to the interview. (Do not take friends or family.)
- ◆ Be on time or a little early.
- ◆ Shake hands firmly.
- ◆ Smile and make eye contact.
- ◆ Listen carefully.
- ◆ Be positive.
- ◆ Speak clearly and use proper English. (Avoid slang!)
- ◆ Keep your answers clear and concise.
- ◆ Show an interest in the job and in the company.
- ◆ Discuss what you can offer the company, not what you are hoping the company can do for you!
- ◆ Give examples of situations that reflect your initiative and your skills in problem-solving, teamwork, multitasking, customer service, and communication.
- ◆ Avoid sarcasm and negative remarks.
- ◆ Be conscious of posture and body language. (Sit up straight; lean slightly forward; and do not fidget.)
- ◆ Use your portfolio as a tool to showcase your skills and accomplishments.



FOLLOW UP

After the interview:

- ◆ Smile, shake hands firmly, and thank the interviewer for his or her time.
- ◆ It is acceptable to ask the interviewer when you might expect to hear from them regarding a decision.
- ◆ It is acceptable to ask the interviewer if it would be all right if you followed up in several days with a phone call. (If you say you will call in several days to follow up, be sure you do it!)
- ◆ Within 24 hours, send a letter of thanks (in formal business-letter format) to the interviewer(s), thanking them for their time and consideration, and reiterating your interest in the position.



THANK-YOU LETTER FORMAT

Your Full Name
 Your Street Address
 City, State ZIP Code
 Current Month and Date, Year

Name of Interviewer
 Business Name
 Full Business Address
 City, State ZIP Code

Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms. <Name of Interviewer>:

The first paragraph should attract attention and inform the reader why you are writing (to thank him or her). Remind the interviewer of who you are, the date you interviewed, and the position for which you were interviewing.

The second paragraph should help distinguish you from other applicants. Consider recalling some part of the conversation from the interview, or remind the interviewer why you are interested in the job. Briefly reiterate why you would be a good candidate for this particular position, what you could offer the company, or how your qualifications match the needs of the company.

The third paragraph should briefly restate your appreciation for the interviewer's time and consideration during the interview process. If you intend to follow up with a phone call, you can also state your follow-up intentions in this paragraph.

Sincerely, (or Gratefully)

Your signature

Your Full Name

Leave four spaces between the closing and your typed name so there is enough room for your signature.

PITFALLS OF INTERVIEWING

Inappropriate Appearance, Dress, or Hygiene

- ◆ Unshaven and unclean; unkempt hair
- ◆ Jeans, shorts, mini-skirts, tank-tops, crop-tops, midriffs
- ◆ Beer-logo tee-shirts or tee-shirts with inappropriate sayings
- ◆ Baggy, drooping pants with boxers visible
- ◆ Purses or bags with inappropriate logos or sayings
- ◆ Multiple piercings or visible tattoos

Unprofessional Behavior and Attitude

- ◆ Being late for the interview
- ◆ Lack of courtesy
- ◆ Chewing gum during the interview
- ◆ Discussing personal problems during the interview
- ◆ Lack of enthusiasm (i.e., failure to ask questions about the job)



- ◆ Negative comments about previous employers or co-workers
- ◆ Poor posture or negative body language (e.g., slouching or fidgeting)
- ◆ Answering cell phone or text messages during the interview
- ◆ Overly concerned about salary and vacation time
- ◆ Lying, fibbing, fabricating, and exaggerating about qualifications

Being Unprepared for Interview

- ◆ Poor responses to questions
- ◆ Lack of knowledge of company
- ◆ Lack of knowledge of position for which one is applying
- ◆ Failure to bring copy of résumé, references, and proper identification

Poor Communication Skills

- ◆ Improper grammar; use of slang terms or profanity
- ◆ Frequent verbal ticks (i.e., umm, like, ya know)
- ◆ Weak handshake or no handshake
- ◆ Talking too much
- ◆ Poor eye contact

Mock Interviews

Purpose

The purpose of this activity is to allow students the opportunity to practice and improve their interviewing skills.

Objectives

1. Identify elements of an effective interview.
2. Identify elements in student's interviewing skills that require improvement and practice.

Materials

- ◆ lab sheet
- ◆ writing utensil

Procedure

1. In this activity, you will work with two other students and participate in three mock interviews.
2. Each student, in turn, will act in the role of Interviewer, Job Applicant, and Observer/Evaluator.
3. Decide with your classmates who will act in each role for the first mock interview.
4. Decide with your classmates what job or position the Job Applicant will be applying for at this time. (This should be something realistic for which the student is currently qualified.)
5. Decide with your classmates what fictitious company the Interviewer will represent. (This should be a realistic organization for which students could be working.)



6. Then follow the instructions below, according to the role you are playing:

Interviewer: Conduct a professional interview of the Job Applicant using some of the common interview questions presented in the lesson.

Job Applicant: Conduct yourself professionally using the interview guidelines presented in the lesson as you are interviewed.

Observer/Evaluator: Observe the entire mock interview process without interrupting, paying particular attention to the Job Applicant and his or her skills during the interview. Note areas of strength and areas that could use improvement. Use the Mock Interview Evaluation Form to document your observations. (Please be sure that your observations and comments are reasonable and constructive.)

7. Following the first mock interview, students will change roles until each student has played the role of Interviewer, Job Applicant, and Observer/Evaluator.
8. Use the comments and scores on the Mock Interview Evaluation Form to evaluate your skills during an interview.
9. On the back of your Mock Interview Evaluation Form, write several paragraphs discussing how you can improve your interviewing skills, based on the scores and comments you received.

Mock Interview Evaluation Form

Part I.

Name of Job Applicant: _____

Date(s) of Mock Interview: _____

Name of Interviewer: _____

Name of Observer/Evaluator: _____

Instructions:

- ◆ The student acting as Interviewer will use commonly used questions to interview the student acting as the Job Applicant.
- ◆ The student acting as the Job Applicant should demonstrate the skills learned in the lesson as he or she participates in this mock interview.
- ◆ The student acting as the Observer/Evaluator will observe the entire interview process and then rate the Job Applicant on strengths and areas needing improvement, using a scale of one to five, with 1 being the lowest (“needs lots of practice”) and 5 being the highest (“did an excellent job”).

Firm handshake	1	2	3	4	5
Eye contact	1	2	3	4	5
Greeted interviewer by name	1	2	3	4	5
Attitude/enthusiasm/courtesy	1	2	3	4	5
Appearance and dress	1	2	3	4	5
Posture and body language	1	2	3	4	5
Movements and hand-gesturing	1	2	3	4	5
Attention and listening skills	1	2	3	4	5
Quality of answers (clear, concise, complete)	1	2	3	4	5
Emphasized qualifications honestly	1	2	3	4	5
Highlighted skills	1	2	3	4	5
Focused on the positive	1	2	3	4	5
Verbal skills (grammar, tone, professionalism)	1	2	3	4	5
Asked appropriate questions	1	2	3	4	5
Firm handshake; thanked interviewer	1	2	3	4	5
Inquired about or indicated intended follow-up	1	2	3	4	5

Additional comments or observations:

Part II. For the Job Applicant (student who was interviewed):

After reviewing the evaluation of your interviewing skills during the mock interview, write several paragraphs describing how you could improve.