



How to Nail Your Interview

By Emily L. Breckenridge, Career Development Specialist with excerpts taken from the Stuart School of Business CMC's Interviewing Skills Packet.

After your successful day at the Career Fair, you're now presented with invitations to interview, and it's time to prepare. How should you get started?

Before the interview research the company. Researching an industry and company will allow you to demonstrate your enthusiasm for the job. It will also help you become knowledgeable about the critical skills and abilities employers are seeking. You will therefore be able to talk about your skills and experience in the context of that specific organization. Interviewers are impressed when you have conducted thorough research about their organization, and when you ask informed, intelligent questions about the industry, organization and position.

Next, prepare, and practice with family, trusted friends or your Career Management Center (CMC) Advisor. The interview requires that you can articulately and convincingly speak about your skills, knowledge, experience and education. In order to do so, it is a good idea to sit down, and take an inventory of your accomplishments and successes. Once you have a list of your accomplishments in front of you and the skills they demonstrate, you should begin to prepare a list of interview questions that you think you'll be asked. Think about, and practice your response to these questions. First write out your answers then practice them aloud. Have a friend ask you some of the questions, and practice your responses or schedule a mock interview at the CMC to practice your answers in a simulated interview situation. Another helpful tool for practicing your interviewing skills is Perfect Interview, an internet resource that the CMC has purchased access to for IIT students. To log-on visit <http://www.perfectinterview.com/>. The username is jedlicka@iit.edu and the password is GDX541.

You should also prepare questions to ask the interviewer. Your knowledge of the profession and the information you gather through research and networking will help you formulate questions of high quality.

Don't forget to prepare what you'll wear. What you wear to an interview will not get you a job, but it could prevent you from getting one. Making a good first impression, and looking professional and neat will only increase your chances of a job offer, and demonstrate to the employer that you are serious about your interest in the position. Looking professional can be the difference between you and another equally qualified candidate.

Lastly, remember the details! Print maps, and plan your transportation prior to the day of your interview so that you will not have to worry about those details before the interview. Overestimate the length of your commute. Print out some extra copies of your résumé on high quality résumé paper in case your interviewer(s) needs a copy. Prepare a

portfolio with the résumés, a pen and some notebook paper to take along with you. You should arrive about ten minutes early to your interview. Do not be late!

During the interview greet your interviewer by name with a firm handshake and a smile, and maintain eye contact with him/her. Make sure that the interviewer knows what you have to offer and how you can benefit the organization. You can do so by answering questions in a way that highlights your skills and accomplishments. For example, there are two ways you could answer the question, “What are your greatest strengths?” You could say only “I have excellent communication skills,” or you could say instead “My communication skills. For example, while a student at IIT, I noticed a communication gap between the faculty and the students. I devised and headed a committee of students and faculty to address the problem, and come up with solutions. As a result of the committee, a monthly social hour was developed during which faculty and students could talk, and network. In addition, I created a newsletter that both faculty and students contributed to in an effort to keep everyone abreast of the latest news, trends and policies.” This second answer much further details your strength, and provides an example of how you have put that strength into action. It also demonstrates that in addition to communication skills, you also have leadership skills, and show initiative. While answering questions, keep your key message in mind and choose your responses based on that message. What is the most important information you want to convey about yourself? Answer the interviewer’s questions with that message in mind.

Throughout the interview, you should be enthusiastic and sincere. Employers want to hire individuals who are interested in the company and/or the industry. Also, make sure you maintain good posture and eye contact throughout the conversation. You should also listen carefully to, and be respectful of the interviewer. If you do not understand what the interviewer is asking, do not be afraid to clarify or ask the interviewer to restate the question. During the interview, you should also make sure that you ask questions as well. If the opportunity presents itself while the interviewer is asking you questions, you can take it. Otherwise, the interviewer will usually ask you at the end of the interview if you have any questions for him/her. At that time, you can refer to the list of questions you created earlier. Make sure that you do not duplicate what has already been discussed. If your question has already been answered earlier in the interview, then do not ask it at the end. As your interviewer answers, you can feel free to jot down some notes. At the end of the interview, make sure that you ask for the interviewer’s business card. In an interview, you should not bring up salary. If the interviewer asks you what your salary expectations are then you can answer, but you should not ask.

After the interview, take a few moments to think about, and evaluate your performance. Write down the questions you were asked so that you can later practice your response to questions that may have stumped you. You should also send a thank you letter as soon as possible after the interview. In the letter, re-emphasize your interest in the position and briefly mention anything you may have omitted in the interview. If you do not get a response soon after the date that the interviewer indicated, it is a good idea to call or email, and inquire about the position and where the employer is in the hiring process.

Additional information and resources are available to you at the Career Management Center. If you have any questions or want to set-up an mock interview with your CMC Advisor, please call (312) 567-6800.