

An interview is a conversation between you and a prospective employer about your skills and how they meet the organization's needs. It is an invitation extended to you because you made a positive impression via your resume and cover letter. The employer's goals during the interview are to confirm this positive impression, to develop a better understanding of your ability to contribute to the organization, and to determine "fit." Your goals during the interview are to help the employer achieve their goals, to generate a job offer, and to collect information that allows you to make an informed decision about whether to accept or decline the job offer. It is important to remember; ***your resume secured the interview and your interview secures the job offer.***

Generating a Job Offer

The amount of time you will have face-to-face with an interested employer in which to generate an offer (or an invitation to the next round of interviews) is limited. Use that time strategically - be well prepared (have multiple printed copies of your resume and cover letter to provide to the interviewer/s, practice your answers and be ready to engage). You cannot control the entire interview (e.g., the mood and/or skill of the interviewer, the qualifications and interviewing skills of the other candidate). Much of what you can control falls into the category of advance preparation. To be a more relaxed, articulate, knowledgeable, persuasive, and ultimately effective interviewee, you can:

Increase your Knowledge Base— expand on the research you conducted for your resume and cover letter (e.g., become familiar with the website, check professional publications and local newspapers for articles about the organization, speak with people you know who work there), read newspapers and industry-specific publications. Always know the mission statement, vision statement and the stakeholders of the organization. Think about how you "fit in" within that organization, and why you are an excellent match for the company.

Know the Interview Format— confirm with whom you'll be meeting, their role within the organization and how long the interview is expected to take; you can then better anticipate questions and topics that you may be asked about, target your answers to different audiences (e.g., your future boss will be interested in different things than your future co-workers) and determine what questions you need to ask. It is okay to ask Human Resources, the person who reached out to you offering the interview about the interview format and how you can best prepare, or what is expected of you during the interview.

Anticipate questions/topics—based on what you know about the field/position and your skills and experience and who will be conducting your interview, what are you likely to be asked?

Employer Questions:

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why are you interested in this position?
- Why do you want to work here?
- How does your education/prior experience qualify you for this position?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- Tell me about a time when you worked with a difficult person or customer, how did you handle the situation?
- What are your long-range career goals?
- Tell us about a time when:
 - you made a mistake on the job (focus on what you've learned)
 - worked as part of a team (focus on both your individual and collective contributions)
- Why did you leave your previous position?
- Describe the work environment in which you are most effective.
- Why should I hire you?

Telephone Etiquette

- Your voicemail may be the employer’s first impression of you. Have a professional, simple greeting message. Example: “You have reached Jane Jones. I’m sorry I missed you. Please leave a message.”
- Your interview begins as soon as you say “hello”. Let the call go to voicemail if you are in class or cannot speak readily, then return the call PROMPTLY when you are ready to schedule that interview without any interruptions.
- Use formal, professional speech. Avoid slang or informal language.
- When arranging an interview, be prepared with your calendar and daily schedule available for quick reference. Know what questions you need answered (e.g., Where should I park? Would a suit be appropriate? Is there anything I should know about the interview site? Besides my resume and references, what else should I bring?)
- Be sure to get the interviewer’s name and telephone number, and directions to both the location of the building and the location of the office within the building.

Prepare answers and practice aloud— know what points you want to make about how you can meet the employer’s needs and then get used to hearing yourself saying that; practice saying the same thing in different ways — be sure to provide concrete examples. If you are feeling challenged create a one page grid to help remind yourself of all of reasons why you are the best fit for the position. Use your resume to build the grid, the more you practice speaking from the grid, the less you will rely on the grid to craft your answers to the interview questions. A brief one-page grid is informal and used for your purposes of practice only, to help you internalize your answers. It might look something like this:

Education	Skills	Relevant Experience	What I know about the Company
Bachelor of Science in Nursing from UMASS Dartmouth a CCNE Accredited Nursing College Passed the NCLEX exam first time First in my class	Patient centered nursing care Patient education Ability to work calmly in a fast paced environment Exceptional record keeping and open communication	Clinicals completed in Medical Surgical Unit at Charlton Memorial Hospital Psychiatric at St. Luke’s Hospital Progressive Care at St. Luke’s Hospital	Population it serves Demographics of that population What you can research about that specific department on the website Mission/Vision

Generate questions - determine what you will ask the employer that demonstrates your interest and qualifications and helps you determine if this job is right for you.

Your Questions- asking questions to demonstrates interest.

Refrain from asking questions that:

1. Focus on what the organization can do for you (e.g., questions about salary and other benefits)
2. To which you could have easily found the answer if you had made a reasonable effort.

Rather, ask questions that demonstrate your interest in and understanding of the position and/or those that will help you decide if the position is right for you. Examples:

- How might the results of the upcoming election impact funding for this project?
- How does this position/division fit in the organization’s strategic plan?
- I understand that the person previously in this position was promoted; what role did you play in facilitating their promotion?
- What is your expectation of the new hire in the next 3-6 months?
- What training do you provide for new hires?
- How often is an employee’s performance evaluated and what criteria are used?

60 Second “Commercial”- Practice creating a brief summary about what your professional background is, your education and experience and what your future professional goals are. You may wish to end this brief introduction by tying it back to the organization/job you are applying.

Example: Hi I am Cynthia and I am a recent University of Massachusetts Dartmouth Marketing graduate of the Charlton College of Business. I am interested in working in social media and communication and I have worked on the E Board at one of our University’s collegiate clubs called, Fishbowl. I really enjoyed my work on the E Board and increased our social media followings on Twitter and Instagram by 300% in 14 weeks. When this happened, I was very pleased, because it reaffirmed that my coursework in marketing and social media have improved my work abilities and professional skills. So naturally, when I saw the position here at XYZ Company I was excited to apply because the position focuses on my area of expertise.

Select your “uniform”— be aware of the appropriate professional attire for the field; be sure your attire is clean and pressed the day before. Opt for no scents/cologne or perfume so as not to offend anyone, unknowingly. In general, it is always better to dress up than dress down, for example you may take off a suit jacket to “mirror” the other interviewers in the room once you begin the interview.

USE THE FOLLOWING AS A GUIDE:

Dress for Success!
 A GUIDE ON HOW TO DRESS FOR YOUR NEXT JOB INTERVIEW

Business Professional
 JOB INTERVIEWING ATTIRE

CLOTHES SHOULD BE:

- SOLID, DARK OR NEUTRAL COLORS
- LIGHT COLORS CAN BE WORN UNDERNEATH
- NO STRIPES OR BRIGHT PRINTS/COLORS

SHOES SHOULD BE:

- CLOSED-TOE HEEL OR DRESS SHOES

SUIT JACKET & PANTS/SKIRT SHOULD BE MATCHING COLORS

PERSONAL ITEMS & CELL PHONES
 Keep cellphones turned off and out of sight with personal items. Carry a portfolio, professional bag or simple purse.

BRING ESSENTIALS ONLY!

Business Casual
 DAILY WORK ATTIRE

BUSINESS CASUAL COLORS & STYLES

- NICE PANTS/SLACKS
- DRESSES
- NO JEANS, SHORTS, SUNDRESSES OR ATHLETIC WEAR

TIES
 Ties should be worn with shirts, blouses, or button-down shirts for working in business casual.

JACKETS & SHOES
 Blazers & cardigans with flat, low, closed toe shoes, or comfortable shoes for walking in.

SKIRTS & DRESSES
 Should be knee length when standing and thighs covered while seated.

General Recommendations
 IT'S ALL ABOUT THE FIRST IMPRESSION

CLOTHES SHOULD BE:

- TAILORED
- IN GOOD CONDITION
- WRINKLE & LINT FREE

HAIR
 Well groomed hairstyle

NAILS & MAKEUP
 Natural in style

JEWELRY & FRAGRANCE
 Wear moderate jewelry with mild fragrance.

PIERCINGS & TATTOOS
 Align to company culture or standards.

NEAT & CLEAN DRESS SHOES
 Belts should match the color of your shoes and attire.

Infographic courtesy of Stetson University.

Be geographically savvy — make a trial run to determine how long it takes you to get there, where you can park and how much parking costs — add extra time to account for surprises. It's **NOT** okay to be late. In the event that you are late, having the hiring manager/front desk's phone number programmed into your phone may aid you in communicating your arrival time and the traffic situation. This exercise is very important, because knowing what to expect may help you to feel more prepared on the day of the interview.

Beginning the Interview

Arrive 10 minutes early into the front office or reception space. Introduce yourself to the receptionist and let them know your name and whom you are interviewing with and what time. Seat yourself if asked and wait to be received by your hiring manager.

When your hiring manager arrives, stand up and shake their hand. Always remember your smile throughout the interview process - it speaks volumes about your interest and appreciation of the opportunity. Once you are in the space where you are being interviewed you should wait to sit until the interviewer sits, or the committee sits (this is a formality that shows respect).

Use your 60 second "commercial" as an introduction to you and your interest in the job/career field — the commercial can then be used as your response when the interviewer invites you to tell them about yourself.

Interviewing is an oral skill — anticipate questions and practice your answers aloud. Practice different levels of formality depending upon with whom you will interview.

Great interviewers transform an employer's image of them from an outsider to an inside contributor by:

Owning it - clearly state your critical skill or competency

Proving it - provide a concrete example of when/where you've used it effectively

Connecting it - discuss how it directly benefits the employer by meeting their needs

Your non-verbal cues speak more loudly than your verbal cues— be sure they are consistent. Remember, you cannot accept or decline a job offer you do not get! Use good eye contact with the interviewer/s, smile and use appropriate body language. Avoid fidgeting, pen clicking, tapping your fingers or a busy knee/foot moving (these things are distracting to an interviewer).

Closing the Interview Experience

Remember, an interview is a two way street. You will almost certainly have a chance to ask questions at the end, or even throughout your interview. Be ready with a few from this list:

- What is the top priority for the person in this position over the next three months?
- What is the biggest challenge in your department?
- What have you enjoyed most about working here?
- How would you describe a typical week/day in this position?
- Can you explain the organizational structure? Who would I report to? Who would be on my team?
- If I am extended a job offer, how soon would you like me to start?
- What training is involved for this position?
- How will my performance be measured? By whom?
- Who is your biggest competitor for your products/services? How is what you offer different from your competitor?
- Can you describe your ideal employee?
- Are there any other questions I can answer for you?

Do not ask questions that have obvious or readily available answers (e.g., on the company's website), or that were answered for you already in the interview. The questions above are designed to help you gather more information, and possibly find a way to provide additional valuable information to the employer that did not come out while you were answering their questions.

After the Interview - Send a thank you letter. This is your last opportunity to sell yourself as the ideal employee. See the sample below, and follow these guidelines:

- The thank-you letter should be brief. The main point of the follow-up letter is to thank the interviewer and to reiterate why you are a wonderful candidate for the position.
- Send a letter within 24 hours ideally. If you met with a group at once, you can send them all the same thank you letter, addressed to each individual person. If you meet with people separately, they should each get a unique thank you letter.
- Personalize your correspondence by using information or a point that was discussed in your interview. Draw correlations to reiterate why you are a good fit for the position and organization.
- Offer to provide any additional information and provide all of your contact information. Make it easy for the organization to offer you the position.

Follow up. Call the person with whom you met. Check on your status with that company. Be tactful and follow the guidance they gave you in the interview about their decision timeline (in other words, if they said they would need at least two weeks, don't call them a week after your interview).

SARAH B. KIND

508-999-8658 • sbkind@umassd.edu

Date

Mr. Art Williamson
Director of Human Resources
ABC Builders
122 High Rise Lane
Great City, RI 04321

Dear Mr. Williamson:

I want to thank you for your time on Wednesday. Our discussion left me even more excited about joining the ABC Builders team as a Marketing Intern and convinced me that I would be a perfect fit.

I am tremendously excited by the prospect of working in the challenging and highly innovative environment you have established. I am happy to learn of the new projects that have recently been awarded to ABC Builders and know that I can make a contribution to these projects' success. In return, I will bring you proven strengths in drafting technique and fresh approaches. I am eager to prove my abilities and successes to you on a first-hand basis. I will keep in touch to see when we might meet again and if there is any other information I can provide you in the meantime.

Thank you again for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Sarah B. Kind