

# Session Plan

## *Interviewing Skills*

**Area:** Career Readiness

**Time:** 60-90 minutes, or 2 sessions

**Standards:** Take Action; Students demonstrate the ability to present themselves for the transition to college/workforce.

**Purpose/Goal:** Students will practice skills and behaviors that lead to successful interviews.

### **Materials Needed:**

#### Required

- Copies of *The Five-Part Interview* (pgs. 3-5)
- Copies of *Interview Questions to Think About* (pg. 6)
- Copies of *Mock Interview Evaluation Form* (pgs. 7-8)

#### Optional

- Video Cameras (one camera per pair of students, or one camera per class)
- Smart Board
- Laptop or PC

### **Evidence of Growth:**

Students will practice interview strategies learned during workshop with peers; student will complete a *Mock Interview Evaluation Form* in order to provide their peers with feedback on areas of growth.

### **Agenda**

Opening	10 -15 minutes
Activity/Content	45-60 minutes
Closing Connection	20 minutes

### **Facilitator Talk:**

- Guiding Questions: *Has anyone participated in an interview before? If so, what are some things that happened during the interview? Do you feel you were prepared? Why or why not?*
- Ask the group to brainstorm the reasons why interviews are used? This should include more than just whether or not to hire someone for a job, but also:
  - Employers making promotion decisions
  - Colleges making admission decisions
  - Scholarship committees making financial aid decisions
  - Volunteer and internship opportunities
- Explain/discuss the use of a “sales pitch” to students and the importance of being a good “salesperson” during an interview. The interviewee’s (aka salesperson’s) goal is to

convince the interviewer that they should be selected. Good salespeople know their product. Self-knowledge and the ability to express it are the keys to successful interviewing.

### **Activities:**

- Hand out copies of *The Five-Part Interview*. Walk students through the five stages of the interview process.
  - Emphasize that small details are very important in interviews.
- Ask students to brainstorm some possible questions for an employment interview (optional: and a college admissions interview).
- Hand out *Interview Questions to Think About*. After students look over the questions, ask them which ones would be difficult for them to answer.
  - Guide them through appropriate responses for difficult questions.
- Have students pair up and practice interviewing. They can decide upon a basic job (retail, an office job, etc.) for ease of the activity, and take turns answering questions and practicing behaviors.

### **Role Playing Interviews:**

- Next, each student (if time permits) will role play an interview with you as the employer. They will role play from the very start of the interview process, coming into the room and asking the receptionist for the employer, shaking your hand, etc.
  - First, provide a basic scenario for the job, such as “You’re interviewing for a position as a sales clerk in a shoe store.”
  - Next, hand each student a few copies of the *Mock Interview Evaluation Form* and explain how it is used. They will practice using it when you model the role play for them.
  - Then, model the role play for students. Invite one student to be the employer and you role play the student. Model the entire process for them, having the student “employer” use the questions from *Interview Questions to Think About* to ask you. You should illustrate for students proper body language, hand shake, eye contact, etc.
  - Students will use the *Mock Interview Evaluation Form* to rate your interview when you are finished. Discuss their ratings before asking for volunteers to go through the role play themselves.
- Ask for volunteers to come to the front of the room and model a mock interview with you as the employer.
- As the student goes through the role play, have his/her classmates complete the “Mock Interview Evaluation Form” to provide feedback.

### **Suggested Follow-Up**

If a video camera is available, it is useful for students to watch their interviews on tape. They could then complete a Mock Interview Evaluation form critiquing *their own* performance. Show students a short video on Smart Board on professional interview skills such as:

<http://video.about.com/jobsearch/Job-Interview-Tips-for-Teens.htm>

## THE FIVE-PART INTERVIEW

The interview is the final hurdle most people have to cross in getting a job. Some colleges and scholarship committees also require interviews. Being chosen for an interview means someone is interested in your skills, knowledge and experience. However, a great application or resume can quickly find its way into the garbage if you do not come across well in an interview. You now must become a sales person. The interviewer is the buyer. They want to see if your talents meet their needs for the job or for admission to the college. Sell yourself!

The interview is when you want to tell the employer or admissions representative about your strengths, skills, education, and work experience. Knowing yourself - positively selling your strong points - is what is going to get you the job or admission to the college.

The easiest way to learn something is to break it down into parts. The interview process has five distinct parts.

### (1) BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

**Do your homework!** Learn as much as you can about the company or college before the interview.

- Do some research: speak with people who currently work there, look on the internet, or make an anonymous call to the secretary to ask for basic information about the company.
- Find out what services/products the company provides, how long they have been in business, whether the company is growing or downsizing, the company's reputation, etc.
- An interviewer will be impressed that you have made an effort to learn about the company or college. Read any material they send you!

**Know where you are going.**

- Go by the site of the interview a day or two before the interview.
- Arrive early, but no more than 5-10 minutes early.

**Be prepared when you go to the interview.**

- Bring extra copies of your resume, your portfolio (if applicable), a notepad with some questions prepared for the interview, and a pen.

**Dress for Success!**

- Hair should be clean and combed
- Fingernails must be clean with no gaudy polish
- Keep perfume, cologne and aftershave to a minimum
- Brush your teeth
- Don't forget deodorant

**Women:** dress or skirt (not too short), or dress pants with a nice blouse or blazer. No excessive jewelry, make-up, or “big hair.” Keep shoes basic – no flashy high heels or strappy sandals.

**Men:** pants (not jeans!), collared shirt, tie, sport coat and shoes. A suit is not always necessary. Do not wear loud clothes! Be conservative!

## **(2) THE START OF THE INTERVIEW**

- Inform the secretary/receptionist that you have an interview, with whom you have the interview, and the time of the interview. Make sure you have the name of the person you are interviewing with, or that it is with “HR” or the “Hiring Director” if that is what you have been told.
- When you meet the interviewer, look straight into his/her eyes, shake hands firmly, introduce yourself, smile, be confident, and wait until you are offered a seat.
- Be positive in your communication (Remember: You’re selling yourself!) Don’t slouch, try not to be too bold or too shy. Let the interviewer lead the interview. Express that you are happy to have the opportunity to interview.
- When all else fails: SMILE!

### **DO NOT!**

- Smoke before, during, or after the interview
- Chew gum
- Use inappropriate language or slang
- Slouch
- Put your hands on items on the interviewer’s desk
- Fidget with rings, pens, ties, change, or other things in your reach

## **(3) DURING THE INTERVIEW**

- Always face the interviewer with good posture and body language.
- Stay positive with your attitude and your answers. Let the interviewer know about the skills, knowledge and experience that make you a qualified candidate.
- Know your resume and portfolio well and be prepared to answer questions about them.
- Don’t be a know-it-all! Express your willingness to learn!
- Be honest with all answers. Experienced interviewers can see right through “little white lies.”

- Give details with your answers. Never answer with just a “yes” or “no.” Always provide explanations and examples.
- If you don’t understand the question, ask the interviewer to explain.
- Pay close attention to what the interviewer is saying.
- Organize your thoughts before speaking. Feel free to think for a moment about tough questions. You can even say “That’s a good question. Let me take a minute to think about it.” Silence is not a bad thing as long as you do not take an excessive amount of time.
- Watch for illegal questions, such as information about your age, religion, race, ethnicity or marital status.

**DO NOT!**

- Draw attention to negative attributes such as poor attendance, grades, being fired, etc.
- Criticize former employers, co-workers, or school personnel.
- Discuss personal issues, good or bad, which are irrelevant.
- Discuss salary or benefits unless the interviewer brings it up first.
- Remember that you represent a risk to the employer. A hiring mistake is expensive. Show you are highly motivated and energetic.

**(4) THE INTERVIEW (END)**

- Ask the job-related questions you prepared for the interview.
- You may be offered the job immediately. In that case, you should ask about specific salary, benefits, and work hours. You do not have to give them an immediate answer. Ask for a day to think about it.
- If you are told you will be contacted, ask about how long it will be. Offer to call in a few days to find out the decision. This shows your continued interest.
- Make sure the interviewer knows how best to contact you and that you are available for any additional information that may be needed.
- Thank the person for the interview and their interest in you as a potential employee or student.
- Shake hands firmly on the way out.

**(5) THE FOLLOW-UP**

- Send the interviewer a thank-you email soon after the interview.
- Call the company or college about a week after the interview to find out if they have made a decision.
  - If they have not, find out when they expect to have a decision.

**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT...**

*Below are some frequently asked questions during interviews, as well as some suggestions for questions you might want to ask the employer during your interview.*

<b><i>Questions Often Asked By Employers</i></b>	<b><i>Question Often Asked By Applicants</i></b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tell me about yourself.</li> <li>2. What are your short-range and long-range career goals, and how are you preparing to achieve them?</li> <li>3. Why did you choose this career? To new employees?</li> <li>4. What do you consider to be your greatest strengths? Weaknesses?</li> <li>5. How would you describe yourself? How would a friend or professor describe you?</li> <li>6. How has your college experience prepared you for your career?</li> <li>7. Why should I hire you?</li> <li>8. How do you determine or evaluate success?</li> <li>9. In what ways do you think you can make a contribution to our company?</li> <li>10. Describe the relationship that should exist between a supervisor and those reporting to him/her.</li> <li>11. Describe your most rewarding high school/college experience.</li> <li>12. If you were hiring for this position, what qualities would you look for?</li> <li>13. What led you to choose your field or major? Reimbursement offered?</li> <li>14. What have you learned from participation in extracurricular activities? And changes anticipated?</li> <li>15. How do you work under pressure?</li> <li>16. Describe the ideal job/college.</li> <li>17. Why did you decide to seek a position with this organization and what do you know about us?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What are the strengths of the organization or department?</li> <li>2. What are the career opportunities for someone entering this position?</li> <li>3. What kind of orientation and training is available</li> <li>4. How large is the company/college? How large is this particular department/major?</li> <li>5. To whom would I be reporting and what kind of communication channels are there?</li> <li>6. What are the long-range plans for this organization?</li> <li>7. How long was my predecessor in this position? Why did he/she leave?</li> <li>8. How will I be evaluated? How often?</li> <li>9. Is there an opportunity to transfer from one division to another?</li> <li>10. What are the prospects for promotion in the future? What are some of the qualities or accomplishments you would consider important for promotion?</li> <li>11. What is the management philosophy of this organization? What is the general philosophy?</li> <li>12. In what areas of the organization do you expect growth?</li> <li>13. Is continuing education encouraged? Is tuition reimbursed?</li> <li>14. Can you tell me about the history of this position?</li> <li>15. What are your expectations of the person in this position?</li> <li>16. Is overtime the norm in this office?</li> <li>17. What kind of support staff is available? What is the ratio of support staff to professionals, and how is work distributed?</li> </ol>

### MOCK INTERVIEW EVALUATION

INTERVIEWER: \_\_\_\_\_

STUDENT: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE OF INTERVIEW: \_\_\_\_\_

Rate the student interviewee on a scale of 1 (lowest) and 5 (highest) in the following areas of interviewing skill.

#### NON-VERBAL BEHAVIORS

- ❖ Dressed Appropriately  
1      2      3      4      5
- ❖ Firmly shook hands before and after  
1      2      3      4      5
- ❖ Maintained eye contact with interviewer  
1      2      3      4      5
- ❖ Maintained good posture  
1      2      3      4      5
- ❖ Did not fidget  
1      2      3      4      5
- ❖ Used hands for emphasis where appropriate  
1      2      3      4      5

#### VERBAL BEHAVIORS

- ❖ Greeted interviewer by name  
1      2      3      4      5
- ❖ Listened closely to questions  
1      2      3      4      5
- ❖ Answered questions completely, yet briefly  
1      2      3      4      5
- ❖ Emphasized qualifications  
1      2      3      4      5

*(Continued on following page)*

- ❖ Pointed out work-related skills  
1      2      3      4      5
- ❖ Displayed enthusiasm  
1      2      3      4      5
- ❖ Focused on strengths; avoided weaknesses  
1      2      3      4      5
- ❖ Acted in polite manner  
1      2      3      4      5
- ❖ Stayed calm  
1      2      3      4      5
- ❖ Responded to questions promptly, but not hurriedly  
1      2      3      4      5
- ❖ Knows when a decision will be made  
1      2      3      4      5
- ❖ Asked appropriate questions  
1      2      3      4      5
- ❖ Spoke clearly at a reasonable volume  
1      2      3      4      5
- ❖ Demonstrated knowledge of the field/company  
1      2      3      4      5
- ❖ Avoided use of phrases such as “um” and “you know”  
1      2      3      4      5
- ❖ Stated career goal(s) and related it to position  
1      2      3      4      5
- ❖ Thanked interviewer  
1      2      3      4      5