The Interview—Different Types

There are many different types of interviews. Once you are selected for an interview, you may experience one or more of the situations described below. When you schedule an interview, try to get as much information as possible about whom you will be meeting. Note that it is rare to have only one interview prior to a job offer. Most employers will bring back a candidate a number of times to be sure a potential employee will fit into the company culture.

Traditional Face-to-Face Interview
- Most interviews are face-to-face. The most traditional is a one-on-one conversation.
- Your focus should be on the person asking questions. Maintain eye contact, listen and respond once a question has been asked. Don’t interrupt the interviewer.
- Your goal is to establish rapport with the interviewer and show them that your qualifications will benefit their organization.

Panel/Committee Interview
- In this situation, there is more than one interviewer. Typically, three to ten members of a panel may conduct this part of the selection process. This is your chance to put your group management and group presentation skills on display.
- As quickly as possible, try to ‘read’ the various personality types of each interviewer and adjust to them. Find a way to connect with each interviewer.
- Remember to take your time in responding to questions. Maintain primary eye contact with the panel member who asked the question, but also seek eye contact with other members of the panel as you give your response.

Behavioral Interview
- The basic premise behind this type of interview is that your past behavior is the best predictor of your future actions. These types of questions may be asked in any interview format—telephone, panel or one-on-one.
- If the employer asks behavior-oriented questions, they are no longer asking hypothetical questions but are now asking questions that must be answered based on facts.
- With a behavioral question, the interviewer is looking for results, not just an activity list. They are listening for names, dates, places, the outcome and especially what your role was in achieving that outcome.
- This type of question generally starts with the words “Give me an example of” or “Tell me about a time when”
- See the Career Center tip sheet "Behavioral Interviews" for additional tips

Case Interview
- In some interviews you may be asked to demonstrate your problem-solving skills. The interviewer will outline a situation or provide you with a case study and ask you to formulate a plan that deals with the problem.
- You do not have to come up with the ultimate solution. The interviewers are looking for how you apply your knowledge and skills to a real-life situation. Speak and reason aloud so interviewers have a full understanding of your thought process.
- Before answering a case interview question, be prepared to ask the employer numerous questions for clarity and informational purposes. Most employers will provide responses that could result in additional inquiries.
- The more you are able to analyze and dissect the case study, the more you will likely impress your interviewer.
- This is the only interview for which it is acceptable, even encouraged, to bring a pad of paper and pencil. Most interviewers will allow you to take notes and jot down thoughts as you work through the case.
Telephone Interview

- Many organizations will conduct interviews by telephone to narrow a field of candidates. Telephone interviews may also be used as a preliminary interview for candidates who live far away from the job site.
- It is important to treat this interview as you would a face-to-face connection. Arrange for a quiet space and time to schedule the conversation. Clear a work surface to minimize distractions.
- Focus on the conversation. Listen to the questions carefully before you answer. Since your voice is key, convey energy with inflection in your voice.
- Have a copy of your resume and the job description nearby as a reference.
- Avoid using a phone with call waiting. You do not want to be interrupted during a phone interview.
- Try to use a landline phone or a cell phone that is not prone to dropping calls.

Group Interview

- A group interview is usually designed to uncover the leadership potential of prospective managers and employees who will be dealing with customers.
- The front-runner candidates are gathered together in an informal, discussion type interview. A subject is introduced and the interviewer will start off the discussion.
- The goal of the group interview is to see how you interact with others and how you use your knowledge and reasoning to influence others.

Lunch/Dinner Interview

- The same rules apply at a meal as those in an office. The setting may be more casual, but remember that it is a business meal and you are being watched carefully.
- Use the interview to develop common ground with your interviewer. Follow his/her lead in both selection of food and etiquette.
- Avoid messy foods and do not drink alcohol at any point in this part of the interview process.
- See the online Career Center tip sheet “The Interview—Etiquette” for additional tips.

Stress Interview

- This form of interview was more common in sales positions and is rare today. However, you should be aware of the signals. The stress interview is usually a deliberate attempt to see how you handle yourself under pressure.
- The interviewer may be sarcastic or argumentative, or may keep you waiting. Do no take it personally. Calmly answer each question. Ask for clarification if you need it and never rush into an answer.
- The interviewer may also lapse into silence at some point during the questioning. This may be an attempt to unnerve you. Sit silently until the interviewer resumes the questions. If a minute goes by, ask if he/she needs clarification of your last comment.