

# Interviewing

## What Recruiters Say You Need to Know

*Samford University Career Development Center*

---

### **Research the Company- *do your homework***

You *must* take the time to research the company with which you'll be interviewing.

- Find out what they think is important or what makes them stand out. What is their company culture? Where are they headquartered and where do they have offices? What is their vision and their values?
- Now think about how that vision and those values match yours, and be prepared to talk about why this particular company appeals to you and why you think you'd be a good match. Better yet, think about how you'd be able to support that mission, those goals, etc.

### **Self-Confidence- *act the part***

We constantly hear that students don't sell themselves or their accomplishments well enough. Be your biggest cheerleader! Recruiters WANT to hear about your biggest accomplishments.

- What kinds of things are you particularly proud of? How did you make a difference in your sorority, in your platoon, on your job or internship, in the community, or elsewhere?
- Think in advance of your four or five biggest accomplishments, and be ready to talk about them somewhat in depth. Even if you don't enjoy interviewing and just wish you could get it over with as quickly as possible, you must give some detail. You may think it is bragging, but it's not! You will be helping the employer understand what makes you tick, what motivates you. This is what they are looking for!
- Act the part. Even if you're embarrassed talking about yourself, do it. Act confident for those 30-60 minutes (dressing the part helps).

### **Behavioral-Based Interviewing- *tell the story***

Almost all employers will ask you about past situations and experiences to help them predict your future behavior. They want *specific examples*. So when they say "tell me about a time when...", be ready to tell a story with a beginning, middle, and end.

- Think **Situation, Action, Result**. Give the setting and challenge, tell them what you did, and how it turned out.
- To help you prepare, look at the job duties and candidate requirements, and think of examples/stories when you have done or demonstrated those things. When did you have to multi-task? Lead a group? Improve a process or contribute to an organization? Demonstrate good communication skills? Deal with a difficult customer? Deal with failure? Don't forget to also think about your biggest accomplishments and pull those into the stories when appropriate.
- If asked for an example and one doesn't immediately come to mind, it is okay to say "Let me think about that for a moment so I can give you a specific example." Good interviewers don't mind a moment of silence, and they'll know you're on the right track of giving an *actual example*.

### **Location- *be flexible***

We realize that you may want to stay in the Birmingham area. If you are planning to interview with an organization that is located in the area only, it is perfectly okay for you to express your enthusiasm for "staying put". However, if you are interviewing with a national company, you will greatly increase your chances of being hired if you are at least somewhat flexible.

- Keep in mind that preferences and circumstances change over time, so an interest to remain in one area could be swayed a few years from now by a promotion, change in personal life, etc.

- If asked about your thoughts on relocation, it is okay to say something like “My preference would be to *start* in the Birmingham area, but I understand that relocation may come with a promotion, so I would be open to moving within \_\_\_ (the state/ the region/ the country).

### **A Job... or a career?**

A big turnoff for employers is a candidate that they believe is looking for a job only, rather than a career. If they're not convinced you are truly interested in their company and their line of work, they won't hire you and invest the time, expense, and effort of training. You are obviously going to show enthusiasm for a position that you KNOW is the start of your dream career. However, you may not necessarily have that conviction until you actually start *in* a career and realize that you're really good in the area, enjoy it, and want to pursue it. So how do you interview if you aren't yet 100% sure *before* the interview that it is for you?

- Interview as if it IS your number one career choice. If you start an interview with evident doubts and lack of commitment, you've lost the interview. If you realize later in the interview that this really *is* something you're excited about, you no longer have the employer's confidence and you probably aren't going to get called back for a second interview. So be sure to show your strong interest from the very beginning, even if you aren't necessarily *feeling* it.
- Remember that an interview isn't a commitment. Go into the interview with an enthusiasm for the field/career, but know that you don't *have* to accept the offer when it comes if you realize after the interview that it isn't for you after all.

### **Attire- dress the part**

You *must* be professionally attired. What does this mean for different industries? You can never go wrong with a dark suit (skirt or pants suit for women), pressed shirt/blouse, and tie for men. For more casual environments or if you just can't get a suit, professional dress pants/skirt and blouse for women; dress pants, long-sleeve button-down shirt and tie for men. Make sure your shoes are shined, in good shape, and are appropriate for the outfit. No wrinkles please, and make sure blouses aren't too low or hemlines too high!

### **Have Questions- but not the wrong ones**

You will be asked near the end of the interview if you have any questions, so you always want to have some prepared for this opportunity. If you write them down in advance, then you won't have to worry about remembering them through the earlier part of the interview. Questions could be related to the next step in the process, company culture, training for new hires, what they would like the new person to accomplish in the first six months, and more. DO NOT ask about salary or benefits! The recruiter may bring them up at this point, but it is more likely they will be discussed at the time of the offer.

### **Your Best Behavior- always**

You may have some wait time in a lobby or office before an interview. Remember, you are “on” as soon as you drive into the organization's parking lot. You never know if/when you are being watched, or when a recruiter may walk in, so always be professional. For example:

- *Don't*: adjust clothes in public (except if necessary when getting out of the car, but be discreet), remove your suit jacket, use the telephone for calls or texts, carry unnecessary items (backpacks, cups, etc.), fidget, or express impatience at a long wait time.
- *Do*: leave your cell phone in the car, walk with purpose, and sit up straight and on the edge of the chair or couch as you wait.
- Keep all chit-chat with employees or other waiting candidates on a professional level at all times...even if you know them!

**For more information, stop by or call the Career Development Center  
217 Dwight Beeson Hall • 205-726-2980**