What is an Interview?
An interview is THE part of the job-seeking experience where the decision to hire you or not to hire you is made. By this time, you probably have completed the application and submitted your résumé with an impressive cover letter. Think of those as ONLY your introduction. It’s generally during the interview that the employer decides if you have the knowledge, skills, and personality to fit into their work culture.

Remember, first impressions are important! Employers begin forming opinions about you from the moment you walk in the door.

So, basically the interview is an opportunity for two or more people to meet (including you) to decide if you will be a good fit for the position. You might think of the interview as a conversation between two or more people who are getting to know each other. A good interview lasts about one hour.

What the Employer Wants to Know About You?
● Do you have the skills, knowledge, and training to do the job?
● Are you dependable and loyal? Will you fit in well with the work culture that already exists?
● Are you honest and trustworthy?
● Are you able to communicate well, both verbally and in writing?
● Do you have appropriate computer skills?
● Are your skills adequate to perform the job, and what other personal skills or qualities will you bring to their workplace?
● Do you have a positive attitude?

What Should You Do to Prepare for the Interview?
● Decide what you will wear in advance.

WOMEN:
● A solid color suit or blazer with skirt or slacks, a business-type dress, or a solid color skirt with blouse (make sure no cleavage is showing);
● Dress shoes that allow for comfortable walking; always wear hose;
● Minimal jewelry; no face piercing; only one earring per ear;
● Light cosmetics and fragrances if you use them;
● Clear or neutral non-decorated nails; and
● A simple hairdo.

MEN:
● A solid color suit (black, brown, navy, or tan); a blazer with dress pants; or a pressed dress shirt with dress pants;
● A necktie, socks, dress belt, and polished leather shoes;
● No earrings or too much jewelry;
● Very light cologne or after shave;
● Clean shaven or groomed beard or mustache; and
● Clean finger nails.

● Know where you are going and with whom you will meet.
● Prepare a list of your skills and be prepared to discuss them.
● Be prepared to discuss your strengths and weaknesses (turning those weaknesses into positives).
● Learn as much as you can about the company and what might be current news about them. HINT: The Internet is a valuable tool.
● Prepare some questions to ask the employer.
● Leave home early enough to arrive at least 10 minutes before the interview. DON’T BE LATE.
● Bring a copy of your résumé, a picture ID, prepared questions, and a positive attitude.
● Practice giving a good handshake and establishing eye contact if you tend to be shy, uncomfortable, or nervous in unfamiliar settings.
● If you include your home or cell phone number on your résumé or application, make certain your voice mail message is clear and business-like. Get rid of the music or cute messages from the kids. CAUTION: Be careful how you answer your phones when they ring. “Ya, talk dude!” won’t impress an employer.
What Will Happen During the Interview?

● You should have a firm handshake, good posture, and be able to maintain eye contact. Practice with a friend before you go to the interview.

● You will be asked questions about your skills and previous employment experience. Listen carefully, take your time in answering questions, and don’t interrupt the interviewers.

● The interviewer may create scenarios and ask you what you would do if faced with the same situation. Some questions may center on specific challenges you experienced while working and how you handled them.

● The first question will most likely be something like “Relax and tell me about yourself.” This question is asked in 84 percent of interviews. It’s designed to make you feel more comfortable.

HINT: Before the interview, think about how you might answer this question. Focus on your goals and skills. Don’t discuss your personal life.

● Your responses to questions should be complete, not just a “yes” or “no” answer. When you can, give an example based on your previous experiences. Don’t make your answers too long.

● Be positive, enthusiastic (but not overly), and remember that everyone you meet from the moment you enter their doors could be a decision maker.

“Give me someone who’s enthusiastic and motivated, someone who’s alert and alive, someone who’s interested in what we do here, someone who’s excited about coming to work for me, someone who wants to help me as much as I want to help them.”

● Control signs of nervousness. Sit still and avoid foot-tapping, frequent arm movement, and talking with your hands too much.

● Don’t discuss your personal problems. Never say anything negative about a previous employer.

● You will be asked if you have any questions for the interviewer. That’s why it was strongly recommended in a previous section to prepare some questions before going to the interview.

LITTLE HINT: Once you have the questions you would like to ask the interviewer in mind, write them down and bring them with you. It’s perfectly OK to say that you have some questions and wrote them down earlier as a reminder.

BIG HINT: At the end of the interview, you should thank the interviewer. If you like what you have learned about the company and want the job, ASK FOR IT.

With conviction, you might say:

“I want to thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. I learned a lot more about the job and the work environment in which I will work. I want you to know that I want this job and hope you will select me for it.”

TELL THEM YOU WANT THE JOB!

HINT: Nine out of ten people don’t ask for the job at the end of the interview.

What’s Next? . . . the Wait!

● Send a thank you note the same day. Get their business cards while you are there so you will have the correct names, titles, company spelling, and address.

● To take away some of the anxiety of waiting for an offer, you should ask the interviewer when he/she will be making a decision. Will they call you or should you call them? If so, when?

S.T.A.R./P.A.R.

Know yourself . . . what significant accomplishments or contributions have you made to other employers?

Use the S.T.A.R. or P.A.R. to answer questions and give examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>R</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Situation</td>
<td>Task</td>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Results</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These suggestions for a successful interview have been prepared for “Choices for Success” by Durham Technical Community College’s Career Services Coordinator Tom Russo.