Many people are anxious or even fearful at the thought of interviewing for a job. Reducing that anxiety and interviewing successfully requires careful preparation. This guide provides you with the information you need to ace an interview.

**Purpose of a Job Interview**

The interview provides an opportunity for both the organization and the job seeker to determine MUTUAL suitability for each other. Interviews provide a professional setting in which the job seeker and the employer can become acquainted, learn more about each other, and ultimately determine if a “Good Fit” exists.

**Skills to Demonstrate at an Interview**

Interviews allow the candidate to demonstrate skills or characteristics that may not be conveyed by their resume or cover letter.

- Interpersonal Skills
- Communication Skills
- Professionalism
- Personal Presentation

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Self-Assessment: The First Step

Interviewing is selling yourself to an employer. To effectively sell yourself, you must know precisely your strengths, skills, and weaknesses.

Prior to an interview, take time to define your skills, strengths, and abilities so that you can best communicate them to an employer.

- Interests
- Educational Skills
- Values
- Short & Long Term Goals
- Abilities
- Related Experiences
- Personal Strengths & Weaknesses

List Your Top 3 Personal Qualities:

1. ____________
2. ____________
3. ____________

List Your Top 5 Employment Skills:

1. ____________
2. ____________
3. ____________
4. ____________
5. ____________

What Are Your Short-term Professional Goals (3-5 Years)?

1. ____________
2. ____________
3. ____________
4. ____________
5. ____________

What Are Your Long-term Professional Goals (5-10 Years)?

1. ____________
2. ____________
3. ____________
4. ____________
5. ____________

Sample Personal Qualities and Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Qualities</th>
<th>Employment Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ambitious</td>
<td>Accept Supervision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assertive</td>
<td>Administer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capable</td>
<td>Advise Others</td>
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<tr>
<td>Competitive</td>
<td>Arrange Events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competent</td>
<td>Articulate Ideas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conscientious</td>
<td>Build/Repair</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creative</td>
<td>Coach</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dependable</td>
<td>Communication Skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diplomatic</td>
<td>Computer Skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Efficient</td>
<td>Confront Others</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enthusiastic</td>
<td>Correspondence Skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Flexible</td>
<td>Counsel People</td>
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<tr>
<td>Get Along With Others</td>
<td>Create New Ideas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Good-natured</td>
<td>Delegation Skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hard Working</td>
<td>Demonstrate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Honest</td>
<td>Design</td>
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<tr>
<td>Imaginative</td>
<td>Direct Others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Explain</td>
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<tr>
<td>Industrious</td>
<td>Help Others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligent</td>
<td>Initiate New Tasks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intuitive</td>
<td>Instruct or Teach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn Quickly</td>
<td>Interview People</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logical</td>
<td>Language Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mature</td>
<td>Listen Carefully</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivated</td>
<td>Make Decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organized</td>
<td>Manage Deadlines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outgoing</td>
<td>Manage Money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patient</td>
<td>Manage People</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perceptive</td>
<td>Manage Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persistent</td>
<td>Motivate Others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Productive</td>
<td>Observe or Inspect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliable</td>
<td>Organize Events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resourceful</td>
<td>Persuade Others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsible</td>
<td>Run Meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results Oriented</td>
<td>Solve Problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-confident</td>
<td>Speak Publicly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tactful</td>
<td>Supervise</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Write Clearly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

List Your Top 5 Employment Skills:

1. ____________
2. ____________
3. ____________
4. ____________
5. ____________
Research the Organization

Preparing for an interview requires you to do some homework. The more knowledge you have about a company or industry, the more capable you will be in communicating your strengths and enthusiasm for the position.

Attempt to learn as much of the following information as you research an organization.

- History of the Organization
- Recent News About the Organization
- Company Products or Services
- Key People in Organization
- Size in Terms of Sales and Employees
- Principal Locations and Subsidiaries
- Organizational Structure
- Competitors and Their Products
- Profile of Customer Base
- Sales and Profit Trends
- Industry Trends
- Possible Future Ventures
- Perce onc of Company by Employees, Customers, or Competitors

Demonstrating your knowledge of the company will impress an employer. Your preparedness will:

- Confirm your interest in the employer and position.
- Allow you to engage in intelligent conversation at the interview.
- Enable you to demonstrate your awareness of the major issues that face the employer or industry.
- Demonstrate your potential to be an asset to the employer in meeting their challenges.

Potential Sources of Information

- The Career Development Center, Third Floor Wertz Student Center
- The CDC Website has several pages dedicated to researching companies and organizations  
  www.lycoming.edu/cdc
- Snowden Library Research and References  
  www.lycoming.edu/library
- Public library, job centers and reference areas
- Company Websites
- Annual Reports, Press Releases, and Company Literature
- Trade Magazines and Newsletters
- Newspaper and Internet Articles
- Trade Associations and Professional Organizations (Available on the Internet)

Identify Your Main Selling Points

Prior to the interview, determine your main selling points for the prospective employer.

Identify in specific detail how your skills will accomplish one or more of the following:

- Increase Business or Profit
- Save the Company Money
- Retain Present Customers
- Enhance Reputation of Company
Prepare For the Following Interview Questions

Interview questions are often asked to determine a candidate’s “fit” with the company rather than to determine a candidate’s overall qualifications for the position.

Tell me about yourself.
What are your short-term and long-term goals?
Why did you choose to attend Lycoming College?
How has your college experience prepared you for this position?
What was your favorite course outside your major?
Why do you want to work in this industry or field?
Describe a major issue in this field.
Describe the ideal company to work for.
Why are you interested in this corporation/company?
What is your greatest strength/weakness?
Describe a specific instance when you motivated someone.
What motivates you?
What was the toughest decision you have ever made?
What was the biggest mistake that you have ever made?
What accomplishment are you most proud of?
What is your leadership/supervisory style?
How do you deal with stress?
What do you do to relax?
Describe a challenge you faced and how you handled it.
Why should we hire you over other candidates?
Are you willing to relocate?
What are your salary requirements?

Questions and Answers

Make the most of your chance to demonstrate your “fit” by following these tips.

- Follow the interviewer’s lead on small talk.
- Listen to the entire question before answering.
- Sit were directed. Use body language to display interest.
  - Face the Interviewer
  - Sit Up Straight
  - Smile
  - Use Hand Gestures
  - Cross Legs Only at the ankle
- Be aware of distracting personal habits. (Playing with hair, jewelry, or clothing, overuse of hands, etc.) When nervous, habits tend to be accentuated.
- Avoid verbal fillers (I.E. um, ahh, you know, like) when answering.
- If you don’t know an answer, admit it and move on!
- Do not use one-word answers. Answer the question briefly but give specific examples to support your statement.
- Ask questions of the interviewer. Refer back to points made earlier in the interview.
Interview Types and Tips

Employers often use a variety of interview techniques and settings to determine your hire-ability. It is to your advantage to be aware of which type of interview you’ll be having and how to respond accordingly. Following are common interview types and suggestions on how to be successful in each situation.

SCREENING INTERVIEW
Screening interviews may be conducted in person, in a group setting such as a job fair, or over the phone. Screening interviews enable employers to determine if you have the minimum qualifications for the position, if your skills generally meet the needs of the company, and if you are a candidate who deserves additional consideration.

TIP: Screening interviews are the first step in the hiring process and must be carefully prepared for.

TIP: Research the company prior to the interview so that you can demonstrate your knowledge and interest.

TIP: Emphasize the skills and abilities that you possess that qualify you for the position.

PEER GROUP INTERVIEW
This type of group interview will introduce you to your potential co-workers. They will probably not have the ultimate authority as to whether or not to hire you. Rather, they will be evaluating you and making recommendations as to whether or not you will fit in well in the work culture.

TIP: Focus on being agreeable and approachable rather than someone with all the answers.

TIP: Remember that co-workers’ acceptance and respect for you will have significant impact on your ability to perform and succeed in the office environment.

LUNCHEON INTERVIEW
The lunch interview is to assess how well you can handle yourself in social situations. You will probably be dining with your potential boss and co-workers, as well as HR professionals.

TIP: Make your meal choices that are easy to eat gracefully. Do not order alcohol selection carefully. Select light, healthy, foods and even if others do.

TIP: Make yourself comfortable in fine dining situations prior to your interviews that you can concentrate your energies on the employer’s questions and your answers.

SECOND INTERVIEW
Second interviews are usually longer than first interviews, involve more people, and are often held at the company headquarter. You may have a combination of individual, panel and peer group interviews throughout the process. The focus of the second interview is to ensure that you have the necessary skills and will fit well with the organization’s culture.

TIP: Switch your focus from emphasizing your specific strengths to selling yourself as a well-balanced package.

TIP: Listen carefully to the interviewers to determine any underlying concerns and attempt to dispel them. Prove that you’ve researched the company and emphasize that you will work as a dedicated member of the organization.

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### Professional Appearance

Appearance matters, candidates must be well-groomed, neat in appearance and professionally dressed. The following checklists indicate “appropriate” attire for a job interview.

#### Professional Appearance for Women

**Shoes:**
- Clean, polished, and free of scuff marks
- Concealed toe
- Free of mud/dirt on the sole edges
- Leather or high quality material
- Heels two inches or less in height
- Free of ankle straps and loud decorations
- Color complements outfit

**Hose:**
- Discreet or a subtle shade
- Free of runs or bags
- Free of seams or other decorations

**Skirts/Dress:**
- Clean and pressed
- Length at or below the knee
- Fit properly (i.e. pockets don’t bulge; hip area is not stretched tight)
- Skirt is lined or wearing a slip
- Slip is completely concealed
- Pockets free of jingling keys and coins
- No visible undergarments or lines

**Blouse:**
- Plain collar and solid pattern
- Free of any emblems or patches
- Long sleeved or covered by jacket
- Neat, wrinkle free
- Close to the neck
- Simple pattern (no extras/fluff)
- Wear a camisole
- Blouse fits properly, (i.e. buttons don’t pull; no gaps visible between buttons)

**Suit Jacket:**
- Wool or wool blend
- Loose fitting across the chest

**Hair, Hands, and Face:**
- Hair neatly kept and out of your eyes
- Nails clean, subtle shades, and neatly trimmed
- Makeup applied in a subtle manner
- No more than one ring per hand
- Earrings small and simple
- No more than two earrings in each ear

**Accessories:**
- Classic style watch (leather or metal band, not digital)
- Simple, small, uncluttered purse
- Classic pen, note pad, organizer

#### Professional Appearance for Men

**Shoes:**
- Clean, polished, and free of scuff marks
- Brown, black, or burgundy
- Leather or other high quality material
- Free of mud/dirt on the sole edges

**Socks:**
- Above the calf length
- Contain a discreet pattern
- When seated, bare legs are concealed

**Pants:**
- Clean and pressed with a crease in front
- Free of hanger marks
- Part of a matching suit
- Fit properly, (i.e. the pockets don’t bulge, thighs are not too tight)
- Have belt loops
- Wearing a classic belt
- Belt buckle small and discreet
- Pockets free of jingling keys and wallet

**Blouse:**
- Clean and pressed
- Long sleeved
- Cuffs extend to the base of the hand
- Free of burrs and stains on the collar and sleeve ends
- Free of patches or emblems
- Loose fitting across the chest and shoulders
- Wear a cotton blend undershirt

**Suit:**
- Single breasted suit jacket
- Wool or wool blend
- Jacket buttoned while standing unbuttoned while sitting.
- Wallet/pen/cell phone concealed in the breast pocket of your jacket

**Hair, Hands, and Face:**
- Hair neat and out of your eyes
- Fingernails clean and neatly trimmed
- Clean shaven
- Mustache/beard neatly trimmed
- Face free of piercings
- Wear no more than one ring per hand

**Accessories:**
- Classic style watch (leather or metal band, not digital)
- Classic pen, note pad, organizer
Asking the Employer:
Great Interview Questions

Develop questions for the employer. Good questions demonstrate your interest in the position or the company.

Prepare 3 - 5 well thought-out questions that demonstrate you have done your homework about the company and/or industry. These questions can provide you with a feeling of your fit with the company.

Never ask questions about salary or benefits during the interview. These questions demonstrate what you want to get out of the job not what you want to put into it.

Sample Questions to Ask Employer

How does this position impact the financial success of the company?

What type of professional development opportunities exist?

How does the company evaluate the performance of employees?

Are employees encouraged to participate in professional organizations?

How does the mission of the department build the success of the company?

What advantages does the company have over its competition?

What challenges face the company in the short and long term?

How do current economic/political conditions effect the company?

Are new markets/services/ventures being contemplated?

At the Interview

- Arrive 10 minutes prior to your meeting time.
- Introduce yourself in a courteous manner to the receptionist or secretary. Secretaries, Receptionists, and Administrative Assistants are crucial to your success. Hiring Managers seek input from these co-workers and highly value their opinions.
- While waiting, observe your surroundings. They say a lot about the organization, its culture, and its pride points.
- Use body language to show your interest. Smile, nod, and give positive, nonverbal feedback to the interviewer.
- Set the stage for the interview with brief small talk. Address something that you have seen in the office or express appreciation for some kindness offered you.
- Before concluding the interview, ascertain the next step in the process and its time frame.
- Thank the interviewer and follow-up with a thank you letter.

Informational Interviewing

The purpose of an informational interview is to gather information about a job, company, or industry that can help you later in your career search. Most professionals are happy to share their knowledge with others and are flattered by the request.

The following guidelines will assist you with the process.

- Informational interviews occur via phone or in person.
- In arranging the interview, be specific about its purpose and duration.
- Gather information about the job, company, or industry prior to the meeting.
- The focus of this type of interview is on questioning.
- Prepare questions that can fill in what you don’t know and help you determine if this is an career area that you may be well-suited for.
- Use open ended questions or probing (Why, How) questions to solicit in-depth information.
  Sample Questions:
  How did you get into the field? Could you describe your daily tasks? What do you enjoy most/least about your job? What skills are most needed to perform this job?
- Thank the person for their time and information. Send a thank you note stating how the interview helped you.
May 23, 2008

Mr. David Boyer  
Director of Administrative Services  
Lycoming College  
Campus Box 161  
Williamsport, PA 17701

Dear Mr. Boyer,

Thank you for providing me the opportunity to interview yesterday for the position of Admission Counselor. I enjoyed our conversation and learning more about the role of the Admissions Office at Lycoming College. I am very impressed with the College and the growth in enrollment that your staff has accomplished over the past five years. Your student-centered marketing philosophy and the initiatives that your department has instituted are well matched to the mission and vision of the College.

Our interview confirmed my initial interest in this position. I believe that my personal experience at Lycoming College, my educational experience in Corporate Communications, and my personality and communications skills would enable me to be a productive member of your staff.

Once again, thank you for your consideration. If you are in need of any additional information as you proceed with your hiring decision, please do not hesitate to contact me at (570) 321-4034. I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Sincerely,

Nathan L. Joyner