Preparing for Interviews and Negotiating Salaries

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Preparing for Interviews
At NC State, the Career Development Center is the place to go for career advice. They provide various services to students, for free, including workshops, career fairs, and review of resumes, cover letters, and other documents. For more information, including upcoming events and hours, visit their website at careers.dasa.ncsu.edu/about/.

However, here at the University Tutorial Center, we are always happy to help you prepare writing and speaking elements that will help you succeed during your job search, including a review of your resume, application, and cover letter, as well as feedback on your responses to interview questions and scenarios. Below are some tips to help you prepare.

The 7-Step Plan to Prepare for an Interview (Princeton 2017):
1. Research the organization: Show that you have knowledge about the company. This step tells the interviewer that you are actually interested in the company, not just a job.
2. Compare your skills and qualifications to the job requirements: Make sure that you are a match for the company and that you can justify your skills within their requirements.
3. Plan what to wear: Come in business attire, EVEN if the company is casual. Adhere to conservative attire and colors (both men and women). Stick to the classics.
4. Plan what to bring: Bring any paperwork that the interviewer may request. This could include an extra copy of your resume, a list of references, samples of your work, or anything you might need to complete an application. It never hurts to bring a pen and paper to take notes as well.
5. Plan what to say: Based on your knowledge of the company and job requirements, try to anticipate the questions the interviewer might ask you. See section “Practice Interview Questions” for ideas to get started.
6. Pay attention to nonverbal communication: Nonverbal cues are just as important as verbal ones, so make sure you notice how others around you are interacting as well as what your body language says about you.
7. Follow-up - Make sure that you come with questions prepared for the inevitable “do you have any questions?” remark. However, remember not to cover any previously mentioned topics or anything available online. Good questions can include:
   ● What are the opportunities for advancement?
   ● What is this organization’s work culture like?
   ● Why is this a great place to work?
   ● What would my day-to-day responsibilities look like here?

Practice Interview Questions: Anticipating what an interviewer might ask you can help you feel more confident going into an interview. Come up with questions beforehand and practice answering them so that your confidence can shine!
   ● Tell me a little bit about yourself.
   ● Why did you choose to interview with our organization?
   ● What are some of your strengths/weaknesses?
   ● What job-related skills have you developed?
   ● Give an example of when you provided a solution to an employer and/or had to work under pressure.
   ● Do you prefer to work on your own, under supervision, and/or as part of a team?
*Questions provided by NC State Poole College of Management’s Career Resource Guide
General Tips for Interview Success

- **Be on time:** Not early and not late. Enter the building no more than 10 minutes before your scheduled interview; if you do arrive early just wait in your car or take a quick stroll.

- **Remember to smile:** Nonverbal communication is just as important as verbal. A quick Google search can provide ideas, but smiling, sitting up straight, and keeping your arms uncrossed communicates that you are friendly and reliable.

- **Positivity is key:** Keep in mind that interviews are not personal and that this job does not define you. Everything is a learning opportunity, even rejection, and even if you don’t get the job, you got the chance to practice and hone your interviewing skills for a job you were passionate about! This knowledge will only make you a better interviewee the next time around.

Thank You Letter

After interviewing, send a thank you letter or email within 24 hours. Thank the interviewer(s) for their time and reiterate your desire for the job. Additionally, restate your qualifications and what interested you about the company and your experience interviewing.

- **Email:** Send a short and formal thank-you email after the interview (within 24 hours). Include the items suggested in the paragraph above.

- **Letter:** If there is time between your interview and the hiring decision deadline, send a letter in the mail to show your appreciation. You can find appropriate outlines online. Remember:
  - Send the letter to everyone who interviewed you (ask for a business card before you leave to get their contact information).
  - Restate your interest in the position and why you would be an excellent candidate. Make sure to include another reason why you should be hired.
  - Avoid starting the letter using the word “I.”
  - Leave room at the end of the letter for you to sign your name in pen (above where your name is typed and below the closing (ex: Sincerely)).

Negotiating Salaries: Tips for Effectiveness and Composure

- **Research salaries and benefits of similar positions:** Gather all the necessary information to make a good case for yourself so your wishes will be taken seriously. If a company asks you what you believe your compensation should be, use this research to give them a realistic $3,000-5,000 range.

- **Understand their constraints:** Keep in mind that no matter what, sometimes you can’t get what you want or even deserve due to constraints in the company. Try to find out where a company might be flexible (ex: salary) and where they aren’t (ex: start date, vacation time, signing bonus, etc.) in order to negotiate effectively.

- **Don’t negotiate just to negotiate:** Pick issues that are important to you and that you feel you deserve.

- **Negotiate all issues together, not serially:** If you have multiple wants, mention them all at once so that the potential employer sees everything on the table and can give you the best deal on all factors.

- **Try not to give an ultimatum:** It can send the wrong message. People do not like being told what to do, and if your potential employer has to make a choice between company interests and hiring you it will frustrate both of you.

- **Think about the whole deal and remember, it’s not all about the money:** When choosing between multiple job offers, take the time to consider the extras. Things like location, the company culture, benefits (ex: health insurance), and potential experience can make one company a better fit than another. Ask yourself, “Does this company help me get to where I want to be in the future more than any other option?”

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