

PREPARING FOR AN INTERVIEW



AGENDA

- Starter
- Get Ready
- What's the Question?
- Dress for Success
- Conclusion
- Student Assessment

Objectives

Students will identify ways to reduce the stress involved with interviewing.

Students will identify and prepare answers for potential interview questions.

Students will identify appropriate and inappropriate attire for interviews.

Materials Needed

- One copy of the “Any Questions?” activity sheet for each student (Part I)
- Magazines and scissors for each group of three or four students (Part III)

Starter (2 minutes)

Tell students, “Please clear your desks and take out a pencil and paper. We’re going to have a surprise quiz! Write the numbers one through seven on your paper. Okay, here we go!”

Ask students the following questions:

1. What’s the capital of North Dakota?
2. How do you spell “pneumonia”?
3. Name a single-celled organism.
4. Who was the third vice president of the United States?
5. What is the square root of 7,238?
6. Identify five paintings by Leonardo da Vinci.
7. List the laws of thermodynamics.

After asking students the seven questions, ask them how they felt. Were they nervous and anxious? Did they think that they could do better if they had a chance to study the material for the quiz?

Explain to them that they wouldn’t be human if they didn’t feel nervous. Point out that they could have done better if they had been given a chance to prepare.

Explain that an interview is somewhat like a quiz. The difference between this quiz and an interview is that in an interview the students have the answers to all of the questions—they just need to be prepared to answer them.

Part I Get Ready (10 minutes)

Purpose: Students discuss ways to reduce the stress involved with interviewing.

1. Students learn that preparation is the best way to remain in control of an interview.

Ask students to identify the person who decided what to include on their resumes and on the applications they completed. Lead students to the understanding that they were in control and they decided what to include. Explain that they decided which of their experiences and talents would show their best qualities to an employer.

Emphasize that students should also view an interview as a situation in which they should be in control. They decide which of their experiences and talents they will share with a potential employer. Explain that being prepared is the best way to remain in control while being interviewed.

2. Students discover ways to be prepared for an interview.

Ask students to brainstorm ways to prepare for an interview even before they leave home. As students offer responses, write key words on the board.

Students should respond:

- Bring a copy of your personal information sheet in case you need to complete applications, forms, or official documents.
- Keep your resume in a folder to protect it from getting folded or dirty.
- Think of questions that you might be asked in an interview and prepare responses.

3. Students create questions to ask interviewers.

Explain that generally when an interviewer is finished asking their questions, it is the interviewee's turn to ask questions. Tell students that before they go to an interview, they should prepare a list of two or three good questions about the job. Having prepared questions is very important. Have students identify the kinds of questions they might ask. Write student responses on the board. (Students may say: clarification about job responsibilities, hours of operation, benefits offered, dress code, etc.)

When students have offered possible questions, distribute copies of the "Any Questions?" activity sheet. Ask volunteers to read aloud the sample questions listed on the activity sheet. Encourage students to add appropriate questions from the class list to the activity sheet.

4. Students understand the importance of being on time for an interview.

Explain to students that another important part of preparing for an interview is calling the employer to confirm the time of the meeting and to get directions.

Ask students to consider how they feel when they're supposed to meet someone at a certain time and that person shows up late. After students have answered, point out that if they annoy an employer by showing up late to their interview, they will not make a good first impression. In fact, the interview will probably not go well, and it is unlikely that they will be offered the job.

Stress that students should plan to arrive a little early for the interview. They can use the extra time to make sure that they're organized and prepared.

Part II What's the Question? (20 minutes)

Purpose: Students identify and prepare answers for potential interview questions.

1. Students brainstorm job-specific questions that interviewers might ask.

Ask students to begin thinking about what some of the questions in an interview could be. Provide students with an example, such as, "If you were interviewing for a job in a restaurant, the interviewer might ask, 'What serving experience do you have?' What else do you think the interviewer might ask?" Write student responses on the board.

Ask students to imagine that they are interviewing for a position in an office. Would they be asked the same questions? Students should realize that the questions will differ. Ask students what kinds of questions might be asked in an interview for an office position. Write their responses on the board.

Ask, “What if you were interviewing for a job as a computer technician? What would you be asked then?”

When the brainstorm is complete, point out that some interview questions are job-specific. Students need to be able to answer questions in the interview that show that they have the experience and knowledge to do the job well.

2. Students consider questions concerning themselves as individuals.

Explain to students that no matter what job they’re applying for, the employer will always want to know that they’re going to be reliable and honest hard workers. Even if they don’t have a lot of experience, the interviewer wants to know that they can learn what they need to know to do the job well.

Ask, “What kinds of questions will an interviewer ask to find out about you as a person?” Encourage students to suggest examples such as the following:

- Why would you like to work here?
- What are your strengths?
- What are your weaknesses?
- What are your goals for the future?

Point out to students that sometimes questions like these feel overwhelming in an interview. They should keep in mind that they know the answers to all of these questions—they’ve already answered some of them during this course. Refer students to the activity sheets that they have completed, particularly the “Strengths Interview” activity sheet from the *Confidence Building* module and the “Skills Translator,” “My Qualifications,” and “Ideal Job Equation” activity sheets from Module Eight. Remind students to review their resumes from “Lesson 5: Preparing a Resume” of *A Game Plan for Work*.

3. Students prepare answers to questions about their potential as employees.

Call on several students and ask each to name some of the reasons that they will make good employees. Write their responses on the board.

Ask students to consider what they would say if an interviewer asks them a tough question, such as “What is your biggest weakness?” Allow one or two volunteers to respond. Point out that as long as they stay focused on their strengths and the experiences that they have had, they’ll be able to use questions like that to their advantage.

As an example, describe a weakness that could be turned into a strength. For instance, explain, “I’m not a great speller, but this means I’m very careful about proofreading everything I write.”

Ask students what they would think if someone told them that was their biggest weakness. Explain that it shows that the person values paying attention to details and doing a good job. Those are qualities that all employers want.

Advise students not to use “fake” weaknesses, such as “I sometimes work too hard.” Explain that such answers don’t sound genuine.

Part III Dress for Success (15 minutes)

Purpose: Students identify appropriate and inappropriate attire for interviews.

1. Students recognize that proper grooming makes a good impression.

Say, “When you were putting your resume together, you learned how important it is for your resume to look neat and error-free.” Ask students to recall why those things are important. (Student responses might state that neatness and correctness make a good impression on a potential employer.)

Explain to students that the same rule applies to their appearance when they first meet an employer. The way that they dress will influence the impression that they make on the employer. Remind them that they want to dress appropriately.

2. Students discuss guidelines for appropriate interview clothing.

Explain to students that it can be difficult to decide what is appropriate attire for work. Students should wear clothes that they feel comfortable in, but they should also follow some general guidelines for what is appropriate for an interview:

- Don’t wear jeans, sneakers, sandals, or hats, no matter how nice they are. They’re too casual, and the potential employer may interpret them as an indication that you’re not taking the interview seriously.
- Make sure your hair is neat and that it isn’t falling in your face or bothering you. If you have to keep brushing it out of your face during the interview, it can be distracting to you and the employer.
- Too much jewelry, lots of makeup or perfume, saggy pants, shirts that show your stomach, and very bright nail polish can also detract from the impression you want to make.
- Here is a good rule for interview clothing: if there’s something you’re wearing that your eyes seem to focus on when you look in the mirror before your interview, change it. You want the interviewer to give you, not your clothes, all of their attention.

Point out to students that they do not have to spend a lot of money on clothes for an interview, particularly if they will not be required to dress up on the job. Have students suggest ways that they could get an outfit without spending a great deal of money. (Students might respond: borrowing an outfit from a friend or family member or purchasing one new item to complement clothes they already own.)

3. Students identify appropriate interview clothing.

Divide students into groups of three or four. Give each group a magazine and scissors and instruct them to cut out clothing that would be appropriate interview attire for them.

Allow students about five minutes to choose clothing. When students have finished, have each group briefly explain the clothing they chose.

4. Students recognize that attention to detail is important.

Ask students to suggest the final details they should consider when dressing for an interview. (Student responses might include: ironing clothes, straightening a tie, shaving, shining shoes, and making sure to have clean hands and fingernails.)

Point out that these things are like proofreading a resume. Even though these details don't specifically relate to your ability to do a job, they are factors that, if neglected, might cause an employer to immediately lose interest.

5. Students recognize the benefits of creating an interview preparation checklist.

Ask students to recall the time management activities from "Lesson 2: Managing Your Time" of *Module Six: Skills for School and Beyond* and the techniques that were presented to help them complete tasks. Ask students what techniques can be applied to interview preparation. (Student responses might include prioritizing and creating to-do lists.)

Conclusion (2 minutes)

Ask students to explain that they can successfully prepare for an interview. Elicit from students the following **key points** that were taught in this lesson:

- By preparing possible questions and answers, you can feel prepared and confident in an interview.
- Focusing on strengths can enable you to answer tough questions well.
- We have control over what an employer sees and hears about us in an interview. By preparing well and dressing appropriately, we will be able to confidently present ourselves as excellent candidates for employment.

Student Assessment

1. Imagine that you are going on a job interview tomorrow. Create your own interview preparation checklist.
2. What does it mean to dress appropriately for an interview? Why is this important?
3. Answer the following questions as if you were at an interview:
 1. What would you add to our company?
 2. What are your weaknesses?
 3. What are your goals for the future?

LESSON EXTENSIONS

Using Quotations

“Depend on the rabbit’s foot if you will, but remember it didn’t work for the rabbit.”

Have students discuss what they need (besides luck) to ace an interview.

Addressing Multiple Learning Styles

Have students write a short story about a successful interview, casting themselves as the hero.

Have students read the stories in small groups.

Writing in Your Journal

Have students read the “I Got Fired” activity sheet.

Have students write about an experience they wouldn’t want to admit in a job interview.

Using Technology

Have students visit www.monster.com, which gives dozens of links for researching potential employers.

Have students report on industries and employers of interest. Students should also list three strengths or skills that might be useful to their business or company of choice.

Homework

Have each student create a poster that lists their three greatest strengths. Have them choose their interview clothing and wear it to school for interview role-playing.

Take photos and display them with students’ posters in the classroom.

Additional Resources

Copy appropriate questions from *The 250 Job Interview Questions You'll Most Likely Be Asked...and the Answers That Will Get You Hired!* by Peter Veruki onto index cards.

Have students role-play job interviews, with the “interviewer” selecting questions from the list. Have students critique interview techniques in small groups.

ANY QUESTIONS?

What are the responsibilities of the job?

Are there opportunities for advancement? To what other jobs?

Do you offer any benefits?

What are the regular work hours of the job?

What are the qualities you're looking for in a candidate?

I GOT FIRED

AFTER THREE WEEKS AT MY JOB

I got fired after three weeks at my job because I wasn't good at making burgers. Now I'm going for a job at a different type of restaurant. Do I have to tell them about my last job?
Dave, 16, New York

While you're not obliged to bring up your previous job, don't lie if you are asked about it. Even though making burgers wasn't your thing, there are many other restaurant jobs available—hosts and hostesses, wait staff, table prep and cleanup crew, to name just a few. Bradley G. Richardson, founder of JobSmarts, a

firm that deals with career-development issues, says, "A rule of thumb in the business world is that you don't have to list a job on your resume unless you worked there at least 30 to 90 days. Never be dishonest, though, if you are asked if you've ever been fired."

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