

# Interviewing

A firm handshake, direct eye contact, and professional dress show the interviewer that you are confident and ready to discuss your candidacy for the job. Now it's their turn.

*“Tell me about yourself....” is often one of the first things you’ll be asked to respond to in an interview. Here’s how a strong response can position you for success:*

“I will receive my Bachelor degree in Accounting in June from Cal Poly Pomona and have been working in the accounting field for more than two years, and have gotten some exposure to general accounting as well as auditing. This past summer I worked for the Los Angeles office of Ernst & Young in an Auditor Internship, where I worked on an audit team for a major client. Long-term, I’d like to become a CPA and manage people. I was interested in the position here because I understand that your firm emphasizes teamwork, and I really enjoy collaborating with my co-workers.”

## Career Center Calendar

Check [www.cpp.edu/~career](http://www.cpp.edu/~career) for current dates, times and locations for Drop-In Advising, workshops and career events.

## “Drop-In Advising”

Brief, 10-15 minute sessions with a Peer Advisor who can provide you the tools and resources to be successful. No appointment necessary!

Monday-Friday: 11am-3pm

### Summer Hours:

Please call office for Summer hours.

## THE INFORMATION EXCHANGE

An interview is an opportunity for the employer to learn about you, and for you to learn about them. It’s an **EXCHANGE** of information where each of you explores a potential professional relationship. The process allows both the interviewer and the candidate to get the information they need to make a good employment decision.

### What interviewers want to know:

- Why you want to work for that specific organization
- Details about your background — education, experience, career goals
- How you will contribute to the organization
- Whether you will fit in on the job

### What you want to accomplish:

- Convey your qualifications for the job in a positive, confident manner
- Summarize the education, skills and experiences that have prepared you for the job
- Gather information about the organization to determine if they are a good match for you

## PREPARE...BE YOURSELF...AND WIN!

Thinking you must be better qualified than all the other candidates can cause a lot of stress, but employers are often more concerned about finding candidates who are the best fit for their work environment and culture. So having confidence in being yourself can help. Some nervousness is normal, but the more prepared you are, the less stress you will feel - just like studying for an exam.

## PREPARING FOR A SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEW

**Research Yourself**—Employers want to know about YOU. So, refresh your memory about your education, your jobs, your interests, your goals, your strengths, your skills, in short—your SELF. Think of examples of times when you have used your creativity, leadership qualities, interpersonal and technical skills. Analyze your work values, attitudes and expectations. Take a hard look at your educational experiences...what did they teach you about your field and about yourself? Conveying a strong sense of self-awareness is paramount to successful interviewing. “Tell me about yourself” is often the first question in an interview, and with the right preparation it can be your invitation to shine.

**Research the Organization**—Become knowledgeable about the organization and the position before the interview. Interviewers will often ask questions to find out what you know about their organization. Be prepared to answer questions about what they do, the organizational philosophy or mission, the employer’s major clients, and contributions to the community. Doing your homework will make you feel more comfortable, and show your enthusiasm and interest in the job.

# DURING THE INTERVIEW

## Expect the Unexpected

All interviews will involve answering questions. Some interviews, especially technical interviews, will also involve testing or presentations. You must be prepared to meet with a group or a panel, or to have a series of one-on-one interviews.

You may be asked direct questions, or those that require you to describe experiences you have had. Sample questions are listed below for you to begin thinking about. Practicing how you will respond ahead of time to these commonly asked questions with a friend or Career Counselor will help you be more prepared.

### *Not Sure? Take a breath....*

It is appropriate to pause briefly before answering questions. Consider what information the interviewer is looking for before you answer. A slight pause will give you time to collect your thoughts.

## Typical Interview Questions

- Tell me about yourself....
- Why did you choose us over the competition?
- What do you know about our products and service?
- How did you decide on a major?
- Why did you choose Cal Poly Pomona?
- What skills related to this position have you developed?
- What motivates you the most/least?
- What types of projects were you involved in at Cal Poly Pomona?
- What does your GPA say about you?
- Give an example of a creative solution you had for a problem...
- What do you consider to be your greatest strengths?
- Are you willing to travel or to relocate?
- What are your short term and long term career goals?

## Now It's Your Turn...

You should be prepared to ask questions that you have about the position or the employer. Having questions implies genuine interest. If you've been researching the employer, you have probably generated a few questions and the answers will help you decide if you would want to work for them. **It is not a good idea to bring up questions about salary or benefits, sick leave, vacations, or holidays - this can give the impression you are more interested in your own welfare than in doing a decent job.** Finding a good job match is primary; the discussion about salary will come in due time.

## **QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK:**

- What will a typical day be like on the job?
- What do you like most about working here?
- What kind of training would I receive in this position?
- Who will I be reporting to?
- How do you measure success in this organization?
- When will you be making a decision?
- What is the next step in the process?
- When may I contact you?

## ENDING THE INTERVIEW & FOLLOW-UP

If your interviewer hasn't explained the interview process to you beforehand, it is very acceptable for you to ask about it. For example, this may be the first of a series of interviews. Or, it may be that the employer will hire based on only one interview. It is appropriate for you to ask what the process is and what the organization's hiring timeline is. Asking when you might expect to hear from them, or if there is a good time for you to follow up, is also appropriate.

Remember to ask for a business card from those with whom you meet. Send a thank you note within 24 hours to the interviewers expressing appreciation for the opportunity to discuss your background and the position. This courtesy note says a lot about your attention to detail and understanding of professional etiquette. Follow-up with the employer in a responsible manner will help to separate you from other candidates.

## Some Additional Pointers

### **ILLEGAL QUESTIONS**

Employers cannot ask questions that can introduce bias based upon race, ethnicity, religion, marital status and legal history. You **MAY** choose not to answer these questions!

- Are you married or have children?
- What race or national origin are you?
- What is your religion?
- How old are you?
- Do you have a disability?
- Do you own your own car?

### **LEGAL QUESTIONS**

- Do you fully understand the job description?
- Can you fulfill the responsibilities of the job?
- Can you work the required hours and be on time for work?
- Are you authorized to work in the U.S.?

### **PRACTICE! PRACTICE! PRACTICE!**

Schedule a mock interview with a Career Counselor to practice your interviewing skills. This will help build your confidence and be more relaxed for the real thing.