



St. Joseph's College  
NEW YORK

OFFICE OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT  
AND ENGAGEMENT



# CAREER GUIDE

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INTERVIEWING

# BRUSH UP ON YOUR INTERVIEWING SKILLS

An interview is an opportunity for you and your interviewer to determine your suitability for the position. Consider the interview as an opportunity for you to market your skills and relevant experience to the interviewer and to evaluate the organization's appropriateness for you. It is a two-way evaluation of your fit with the organization. Interviewing is widely used as a means for selecting individual employees. Often times, the final decision on hiring is based on the interview. For many, the interview causes some degree of nervousness. While this is normal, be aware that excessive nervousness may work against you.

Preparation is key to making a positive impression. It is essential for you to know yourself, know the organization and be prepared to give specific examples as to why you are an excellent fit for the position. The interviewer will determine your suitability for the position based on many factors. Obviously, your answers are critical, but your nonverbal communication, appearance and personality will be incorporated into the decision, too. Remember the four P's before going on an interview: Prepare and practice, so that you can perform and be persuasive during the interview.

## TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

The type of interview and selection process varies from one organization to another. There are many types of interviews that you may encounter. Please visit Career One Stop to access a listing and description of various types of interviews. Three of the more common types of interviews that you can expect and therefore prepare for are described below.

### Screening Interview

A screening interview is brief, lasting less than 30 minutes. It can occur over the phone or in person. In some cases, Skype or video may be utilized. The main purpose of a screening interview is to eliminate unqualified candidates. Based on this interview, a determination is made whether or not to invite the candidate in for a second interview. This is not the time to slack off and be unprepared. For example, if it is over the phone, be organized with your résumé available and prepare yourself as if you were meeting directly with the interviewer.

### General Interview

A general interview is usually 30 minutes or more in duration. The purpose of this interview is to learn about the candidate and determine if another interview is warranted.

### Selection Interview

A selection interview is an opportunity for you and the interviewer to engage in an in-depth discussion concerning your qualifications for the position you are seeking. It is not unusual for this interview to last an hour and may include more than one interviewer. During this interview, it is important to develop rapport with everyone you meet and market yourself as the best candidate for the position.

## INTERVIEW PREPARATION

It is important to be prepared for an interview. Your preparation requires that you are knowledgeable about yourself and the position you are trying to attain. Being unprepared usually leads to a poor interview and decreases your chances of receiving a job offer.

- Prior to the interview, complete a self-assessment. Focus on your interests, skills, personality and values, as well as your education and work experience and how they match with the position and organization.
- Research the organization in a thorough manner. The simplest way is to use the employer's own website. Knowledge about the organization will increase your chances of a successful interview and job offer. For more information on your research, review this article in [U.S. News & World Report](#).
- Update your résumé before the interview with new experience and skills. Review the information on your résumé and be prepared to speak about anything that you have included. Be sure that your résumé is tailored to the position and organization.
- Practice interview questions. There are many types of interview questions. Some of the more common types of questions that you should expect are basic, behavioral, career development and salary questions. The following links will help you begin this process with a sampling of interview questions and even some suggested answers:
  - [About.com](#)
  - [CareerBuilder](#)
  - [College Grad](#)
  - [Forbes](#)
  - [Glassdoor](#)
  - [Monster](#)

Write down typical questions and then write out your answers to these questions. Next, practice your answers out loud and repeat them often. Consider a mock interview with a career counselor in the Office of Career Development and Engagement. The more you practice, the more ready you will be for a successful interview.

Develop your own questions to ask the interviewer. Good questions to ask focus on the position and the culture of the organization. To help you get started in creating some questions to ask, view a listing of questions on [CareerBuilder](#).

Before you say a word to the interviewer, you have already made an impression based on your appearance and attire. Dress in a manner that is professionally appropriate to the position for which you are applying.

Women should wear a suit with a skirt or pants. When in doubt, be conservative. For men, a suit is expected in almost all cases. A suit consists of a matching jacket and pants, dress shirt, tie, coordinated socks and dress shoes. A dark-colored suit with a light-colored shirt is a good option. For additional information, review the information in [What to Wear to an Interview](#).

### THE INTERVIEW

Plan to arrive about 15 minutes early. Make sure to allow for traffic and other issues that could delay your arrival. It is better to sit in the parking lot and wait 30 minutes than to be late for the interview. If there is a receptionist or someone else to greet you, be friendly and professional. This initial meeting is actually the beginning of your interview!

- Have a photo ID, résumé and any certificates or documents that will be needed for the interview.
- Don't bring any food or gum with you, and turn off your cell phone or leave it in your car.
- Remember the interviewer's name and use it, but do not call them by their first name.
- Make sure to ask for business cards to facilitate sending thank-you letters.
- Smile when greeting people and be engaging, positive and enthusiastic. Always look the interviewer in the eye and give a firm handshake.
- Listen carefully to each question. Make sure that you understand the question before answering it. If not, ask for clarification.
- If a question begins with words or phrases such as: "Describe ...", "Give me an example ..." or "Tell me about ..." it is a behavioral question. These questions can be among the most challenging. Your response needs to be specific and detailed. Answer with a particular situation that relates to the question and tell them briefly about the situation, what you did specifically and a positive outcome or result. To guide you in this process, use the four-step format known as STAR.
  - Situation
  - Task
  - Action
  - Result

To learn more about the STAR format, review examples at Job Interview Tools and view the video Interview Techniques.

- Throughout the interview, continuously market yourself with your experience, education, skills and personality as they relate to the position you are trying to attain. Utilize terminology of your profession in your answers.
- Remain positive during the entire process and never criticize past employers.
- If you sense that the interviewer is ending the interview, briefly highlight your relevant skills. This would also be the time that you should be able to ask the interviewer a question. Before you leave, thank the interviewer and ask what happens next in the process.

### THE INTERVIEW FOLLOW-UP

It is proper business etiquette to write a thank-you letter after the interview. In this letter, you should express your gratitude, refer to specific issues that were discussed and restate your interest in the position. The letter can be typed or handwritten and can be emailed or mailed within two days. If you don't hear from the organization in the specified period of time, it is acceptable to contact them by phone or email. If you do receive another interview, it is appropriate to send another thank-you letter.

As soon as possible after completing an interview, write up a summary of the questions you were asked and your answers. This way you will have a record of your responses for future reference should you have any follow-up interviews with that employer. It's much easier to remember what you said immediately after an interview than it is later on. Also, note what you wish you had said, but didn't get the opportunity to mention.

In addition, this assessment of your interview will also help you to identify any problem areas in your presentation for improvement in future interviews or to address in your follow-up communications.

It's important to keep track of job openings you pursue, contacts made and résumés sent. After the interview, write down who you met and the date of the meeting, what you talked about, what you learned, your impressions of the workplace and any concerns or questions you have.

### REASONS FOR NOT GETTING THE JOB

Sometimes a good interview does not lead to a job offer. You may have done everything right, but if another candidate stands out more, you may not get the job. However, there are times when an interview goes poorly. Here are some questions to consider if you were not offered the position after your interview.

- Were you on time and polite to everyone you met?
- Were your appearance, hygiene and attire appropriate?
- Did you actively listen and effectively communicate with the interviewer?
- Did you research the organization?
- Were you totally prepared for all aspects of the interview?
- Did you make it clear that you were a good fit for the position and organization?
- Did you lack confidence or did you appear too smug during the interview?
- Did you follow up with a thank-you letter?

### INTERVIEWING REVIEW AND PREPARATION

The Office of Career Development and Engagement is located at SJC Long Island in O'Connor Hall, Room E301, or at SJC Brooklyn in Tuohy Hall, Room 205. We welcome you to make an appointment with a member of our counseling staff to help you with any other career-related topic. Career counseling sessions are generally 30-60 minutes in length, and appointments can be scheduled by contacting the Long Island office at 631.687.1248 or the Brooklyn office at 718.940.5852.



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Founded in 1916, St. Joseph's College is an independent, coeducational college with campuses in Brooklyn and on Long Island, in addition to SJC Online. We have a long history of providing an excellent, yet affordable, education. Our reputation has consistently earned SJC a place in the *U.S. News & World Report's* annual "America's Best Colleges" issue. We also have been highly ranked by *Forbes* and named one of New York's "Colleges of Distinction."