

How to Interview Successfully

This can be the most intimidating and the most important part of the job search process, but there are resources here to help you succeed.



- ✓ If you are offered an interview follow these rules:
 - Prepare to answer interview questions by using Perfect Interview on CSM Career Website page. If that's not an option, practice answering interview questions out loud and in front of people if possible. Use the questions on this handout if not using Perfect Interview.
 - Go to the location once before the interview, so you know where it is and how long it takes to get there. **BE ON TIME OR EARLY.**
 - Dress professionally. Be clean and tidy. Avoid strong fragrances of anything (smoke, food, even perfume or cologne).
 - Cover tattoos and take out piercings, as much as possible, so you won't be prejudged.
- ✓ Turn your cell phone **completely off** during the interview.
- ✓ If a hand is offered, shake it with a firm and friendly grip
- ✓ Smile and look at the employer in the eyes (not doing so can be seen as untruthfulness)
- ✓ During the interview, use what you learned in speech class:
 - speak clearly and audibly
 - Avoid filler words: "like," "ummm." Instead say, "That's a good/ interesting/ intriguing question" while waiting for your brain to find the right answer
 - Try not to fidget
 - Breathe slow and regular to stay calm
- ✓ After the interview (that same day), mail a thank you card to the employer (read "How to Write a Thank You Letter" for information) even if you think the interview went badly!
- ✓ Congratulate yourself because interviewing is hard!!!

1. What are your greatest strengths?

From this list of common responses, think of examples from your work experience and/or academic achievements that you can use to back up your answer. You will want to give specific examples of each trait you list.

- Detail oriented
- Hard working
- Managerial skills
- Quick learner
- Team player
- Interpersonal skills
- Creative
- Organized
- Self-Motivated
- Asks good questions
- Efficient
- Analytical

For example: "I am very creative. At my last job, working at a very large Petco, I noticed that I spent a lot of time explaining where things were to customers. So I create a map of the store, and was able to use this to help customers more efficiently."

2. What are your weaknesses?

DO NOT respond with "I work too hard." This response is now considered cliché.

DO respond with areas **where you used to have problems, but have since fixed them.**

Example 1: If you used to be disorganized, tell the hiring manager what steps you took to create new habits and processes to keep yourself organized.

Example 2: If you used to work inefficiently, tell the hiring manager how you increased your work output by learning new skills or asking for help from more experienced team members.

If the hiring manager presses you for areas where you are currently weak, try to talk about an area where you might have a knowledge deficit, and outline the steps you are currently taking to get yourself up to speed.

3. Why are you interested in working for [company name]?

You'll need to research the company you're applying for to competently respond to this question. Here are a few general reasons why you may be interested in working for a specific company:

- You believe in their mission
- You have an interest in the industry
- You like their brand
- You believe your skill set can help the company succeed

4. Why do you want to leave your current company?

The golden rule with your response here: Do not say anything negative. If you talk negatively about your company or your boss, then the hiring manager will think that you're capable of doing the same to them. Frame everything in a positive manner.

- **If you got fired:** Resist the desire to blame your bosses and trash the company. Explain the situation as best you can, and tell the hiring manager how you've taken the decision to heart, and will improve yourself as an employee as a result.
- **If you got laid off:** Say that you understand management's reasoning behind the decision to lay off employees, and that it's freed you up to take on new challenges and explore different aspects of the industry. Although you regret the decision, you're excited to move on and earn new achievements.
- **If you're searching for new employment:** Tell the hiring manager that you have a different philosophy, and different expectations than your management. Inform them that you felt as though the time had come to take on more difficult challenges, and learn new skills. Explain that you felt that your skill base wasn't being used to its full potential, and that you'd like a new arena to test yourself in.

5. Where do you see yourself in 5 years, 10 years?

This question may seem tricky, but it's actually fairly simple to answer. The hiring manager asks this question to figure out if you're going to use the company as a stepping-stone, or if you have long term plans. No one really expects you to have a 5-10 year plan. Your answer should follow these parameters:

- You hope to increase your skills and learn more about the industry.
- You aren't sure exactly where you'll be in 5 years, but you'd like to have worked your way up into a management position.
- Avoid saying that you do not know the answer.

6. Why should I hire you?

In actuality, **you're answering this question the entire time** you're being interviewed. But, if you hear this question directly, this one is easy to answer.

- Tell them how your history and work experience makes you an ideal candidate.
- Reference the skills, abilities, and knowledge you have that is either directly applicable to the job, or transferable in some way.
- Tell the interviewer that you hope to make their job easier by taking on as much responsibility as possible.

Before the interview, you should **research what role you'd be filling in the company**. Have responses that directly respond to how you'd be the best candidate to do the job.

7. “Tell us about yourself!”

Some interviewers actually use this as a trick question, to make you reveal information about yourself that you should not. Older candidates can find themselves talking about spouses and children, which can give away their age, or make recruiters believe that you wouldn't be able to devote as much time to the company as another candidate. Legally, they aren't allowed to ask questions like that — so the more you spill, the better for them. How should you answer this?

- Stick to talking about the job, and why you're interested in it.
- Talk about yourself in terms of your interpersonal and communication skills.
- Let them know that you're a serious person who is goal and achievement oriented.
(Have an anecdote prepared.)