



GOAL: Interview for a job

Contributed by Tom Wright & Jan Lenhart
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Introduction

Working to achieve this goal will prepare you for that all-important job interview. By practicing and rehearsing what you will say, you will build confidence and lower anxiety. You'll learn a lot about the interview process from researching the company to tips on how to dress, including an interview day checklist. Soon you will be able to showcase yourself professionally to a new employer. This final step is crucial in the job search process. You may have the exact qualifications and experience for a position, but it's a strong interview that will get you the job.

Getting Started

Begin by discussing your goals with your tutor. Talk about your current employment situation and how you plan to begin the job search or how you are already progressing in your job search. Go over the ideas presented here so you can see what will be covered and choose the books and materials that you would like to review.

Books & Materials

Books

Check your library shelves and literacy collection shelves for these suggested books. Don't hesitate to ask your librarian for help in locating other books about job interviews.

The Complete Get That Job! A Quick and Easy Guide with Worksheets, New Readers Press, 2001.

The Everything Practice Interview Book by Dawn Rosenberg McKay, Adams Media, 2004.

Fearless Interviewing by Marky Stein, McGraw-Hill, 2002.

Websites

- <http://www.videojug.com/tag/job-interviews>. Offers many on-line videos up to 10 minutes in length dealing with the complete interview process. You could review these in your tutoring session or do them as homework.
- http://education-portal.com/video_library/Job_Interviewing_Videos.html. This site contains 8 short, high-quality videos.
- <http://www.collegegrad.com/videos/the-most-important-aspect-of-successful-interviewing.shtml>. A small site with 2 excellent videos dealing with effective interviewing and reducing the process to the “most important impression to make.”
- Using Google, type in “Job Interview videos download” for additional websites.

Key Vocabulary

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|---------------|------------------|--------------|--------------------|
| ◆ employment | ◆ career | ◆ interview | ◆ face-to-face |
| ◆ grooming | ◆ qualifications | ◆ experience | ◆ response |
| ◆ preparation | ◆ professional | ◆ assertive | ◆ first-impression |

Reading Practice

Research jobs and careers. Locate information about jobs that interest you. There are many resources available in the library; talk to the librarian about the best way to find them. You can also find various articles on the Internet. (See the “Get a job or get a better job or a promotion” goal in this curriculum guide.)

Research a selected company. Again talk to the librarian about the best way to find information about a company whether it’s local or global. As you gather information, keep it all together in a notebook or file folder.

Check your resume. Read over your resume to determine whether it needs to be updated or revised to fit the jobs you plan to apply for. You may even want to create more than one version of your resume to fit different job descriptions. (See the “Write a resume” goal in this curriculum guide.) Use this activity to review your goals and to highlight those items that you most want to discuss in your interview.

All about interviews. Here are topics that you will want to read through and discuss before you go on an interview:

Types of Interviews:

- Personal – this is where you are interviewed by one person.
- Panel – this is where you are interviewed by several people at once, typically seated around a large table.
- Telephone – you could be interviewed over the telephone.

Preparation:

- Research – find out information about the jobs and companies that interest you.
- Questions – think of questions you want to ask an employer and prepare answers to questions they may ask you.
- Rehearsal – rehearse what you will say about yourself.
- Checklist – you can be well-prepared for an interview by checking off all the things you need to do.

Interview Day:

- Personal Grooming – discuss do's and don't's, what to wear, etc.
- Body Language – your gestures, facial expressions, etc. play a big role in how you communicate.
- Travel Time – making sure you are on time and know how to get to the destination.

The Interview:

- Greeting Receptionist – how to walk in confidently and settle in.
- Introductions – how to introduce yourself and make a good first impression.
- Small Talk – how to comfortably talk about things in general before the questioning actually begins.
- Information Exchange – the employer talks about the position and the company and you talk about your qualifications.
- Typical Questions – see “Write the Dialogue” on page 4.
- Illegal Questions – marital status, children, age, personal questions.
- Final Summary of Your Qualifications – your “pitch” as to why you should be hired.
- Closing – anything not yet mentioned and thanking the person who interviews you.

Follow-Up:

- Thank-You Card – write a thank-you note and mail it directly to the person who interviewed you within 24 hours.
- Call Back – call him or her within 48 hours if you have not heard from them.

You're Offered the Job: Now what?

- Salary Negotiations – how and when to negotiate your salary and benefits
- Getting Started – how to prepare for your first day on the job

Writing Practice

Write a “pitch.” Write and practice a pitch about yourself. A pitch is a one to two minute statement designed to introduce you and present your unique set of skills to a potential employer.

Prepare your pitch for the likelihood that at the beginning of an interview, you will be asked, “Tell me about yourself.” It’s one of the hardest questions to answer, and people sink or swim by it. You could also be asked a question like, “Why should I hire *you*?” Here are some tips for writing your pitch:

- Think carefully about the company where you will interview. You’ve done your research and are confident about who they are, their product, and the position you are interviewing for. What are the problems faced by the company? What are you offering that will solve these problems? Do your talents fit the job description? What is it that makes you different from other applicants? You want to tailor your qualifications to the position.
- Remember that your pitch must be competitive. You are no doubt one of several candidates for the job. Highlight your strengths and the ways you have been successful in a workplace.
- Write down the main points of your pitch, but don’t memorize it word for word.
- Practice your pitch in front of a mirror, and don’t forget to smile and make eye contact! Give it to a friend or family member and ask them for feedback. You want to sound spontaneous, enthusiastic, and sincere.
- Avoid talking too fast or too slow, and be sure to speak clearly. End the pitch with something like, “After researching your company, I believe I have the skills and qualities you are looking for in this position.”
- It takes time and effort to make a short yet persuasive pitch, but it’s worth it if you want to stand out in the job market.

Write the Dialogue. Create an interview dialogue between you and a potential employer. First think of the most typical questions asked by an employer at an interview, including:

- Tell me a little bit about yourself.
- What are your strengths?
- What are your weaknesses?
- Why did you leave your last position?
- What are your career goals?
- Why do you think you are the best candidate for this position?
- Describe a situation in which you had to work with a difficult person (a co-worker, customer, supervisor, etc.). How did you handle the situation?
- What interests you about our product or service?
- Why did you decide to seek a position with our company?

Then, together with your tutor, dictate your answers with your tutor writing your ideas down or write your answers down yourself, almost like a play. For instance:

Interviewer: Why do you think you are the best candidate for this position?

You: After reading the material about your company, I see that it is very similar to the company I previously worked for. I have very strong

office skills and know how to use the computer software required for this position. In your ad, you mentioned a need for flexible hours, and I can easily adapt my schedule to fit your needs.

Say Thanks. After your interview it is appropriate to write a short thank you note. Bring notecards to the tutoring session and practice writing a brief thank you that includes the name of the person that interviewed you and the name of the position. This would also be a good time to highlight why you think you are the best person for the job. If you would prefer not to hand-write the note then you can compose the thank you on the computer and print it out on nice paper.

Real World Practice

Mock Interviews. Spend a lot of your preparation time in pretend interviews, particularly with people you don't know very well such as other tutors or literacy staff. They can ask you some of the typical interview questions (above). At the end of the mock interview, ask them to give you advice and pointers on improving your interview skills. This will help you feel more confident and professional as you look forward to your real interviews!

Video Tape Yourself. If you have access to a video camera, have a friend or family member videotape you practicing your pitch and answering interview questions.

Job Interview Checklist. Use the following checklist to prepare for your job interview:

One Week Before the Interview

- Research:
 - * The company
 - * The industry
 - * The position
- Confirm details of the interview: date, time, where it will take place, and, if possible, who will be there.
- Decide what you are going to wear.
- Go to the location where the interview will take place and decide on the best mode of transportation to get there on time.
- Anticipate questions you may be asked and prepare answers to those questions.
- Prepare a few questions you may want to ask the interviewer(s).
- Practice your pitch by yourself and with someone else.
- Imagine how the interview will go and how well you will perform!

The Day Before the Interview

- Go through your materials one last time.
- Review your resume, cover letter, and any other documents you submitted as part of your job application.
- Watch the news to be well-informed about current events in case these are discussed during small talk preceding the interview.

- Set aside what you intend to bring with you, including your clothing.
- Make sure your car is running well and full of gas.

The Morning of the Interview

- Plan to arrive 15 minutes early.
- Don't wear excessive perfume, after-shave lotion, or jewelry.
- Don't eat food that will upset your stomach.
- Don't stress. Listen to music or whatever relaxes you best.
- Be positive and don't forget to smile!

Milestones

- ◆ **Initial Effort** – Think about the different types of interviews, how to research a company, and how to write a thank-you note. You should become familiar with Internet resources and practice interviewing with your tutor, family and/or friends. Consider how to create a professional appearance including clothes and grooming.
- ◆ **Making Progress** – You have completed research on at least one company. You have prepared a 30 – 60 second pitch and have completed mock interviews with acquaintances. You have videotaped yourself giving your pitch and answering interview questions, if possible.
- ◆ **Accomplished** – You have interviewed with a company. Whether you were offered the job or not, you were able to accomplish the following: you researched the company in advance of the interview; you selected professional attire for the interview; you memorized and presented your “pitch;” you answered the interviewer’s questions; you had a few questions to ask the interviewer; and had a strategy in mind for salary negotiations. Congratulations on all your hard work; it *will* pay off!

Contributors' Biographies

Tom Wright. Tom has a BA in Business Marketing and was a Field Marketing Manager. He is now retired from a large multi-national oil company. His responsibilities included hiring and training which gives him an insiders' view on the interview process, and an advantage in preparing this particular curriculum.

Jan Lenhart. Jan has a BA in Spanish, a Multiple Subjects Teaching Credential, and a M.A. in Education. As a teacher, she has enjoyed designing and implementing elementary level curriculum for over ten years. She currently teaches ESL at Palomar College and conducts a bi-weekly writing class for adult learners.