

THE INTERVIEW

(EDUCATION)

So, you've perfected your résumé and cover letter for the position you want, and now you've landed the interview. The best advice for a successful interview is to **BE PREPARED**. Here are a few tips to help you put your best foot forward and make the best impression with your prospective employer.

Research the organization before the interview.

A common mistake most interviewees make is failing to do the proper research on a district with which they are interviewing. Researching a district before the interview gives you an impressive edge in the job search process. Find out what the overall mission or philosophy of that district is. Check out any specific programs that are unique to that district or a particular school in that district. Has there been any special awards or recognitions? An easy way to get the scoop is to simply check out a district's website or even call the human resources office for information.



Practice makes perfect.

Practicing your interviewing skills out loud, by way of a mock interview with a friend or career counselor or by just sitting before a mirror, is an ideal way to perfect your technique. It is important to be prepared to talk with employers and answer questions thoroughly and articulately. Be prepared to explain *why* an employer should hire *you* by being able to discuss three basic areas:

- **I am...:** Be prepared to convey personal characteristics such as being ambitious, assertive, detailed, etc...
- **I know about...:** Be able to talk about content areas such as classroom management, grading, etc...
- **I can...:** Discuss transferable skills such as computer skills, relating to children, etc...

Always remember to use **examples!** Examples, results and achievements help to validate the skills and characteristics that you are trying to convey to an employer.



Dress for the occasion.

Look like a professional; be a professional. It's important to make a great impression when going on an interview. You want to present yourself as someone who takes a job seriously-- someone who is together, in-the-know, and ready to make things happen. One way to achieve this is by dressing for the occasion in a nice business ensemble and appearing clean and neatly dressed. Remember, the only thing you completely control before the interview is how you look!

Be courteous and polite.

This includes everyday courtesies like smiling, shaking hands, and listening attentively. Never interrupt the interviewer while he or she is speaking. Use body language to convey that you are engaged, such as nodding your head and making eye contact.

Be calm.

If you have any interesting habits like playing with your hair or unconsciously tapping your foot, try to control them during the interview. Giving in to these little quirks may seem harmless, but they will only emphasize that you are nervous, and they tend to be interpreted as unprofessional.

Ask questions.

It's inevitable that you'll be asked if you have any questions, so it's a good idea to have some questions in mind, even if the interview is quite thorough. Asking questions shows that you're interested, and it is important to remember that you are interviewing them as well to see if you are a good fit for their organization.

Send a Thank You note.

This act should actually be a common courtesy. It is often underestimated how much a thank you letter can mean. Sending a thank you letter after an interview achieves three often overlooked imperatives: 1) Reminds the employer who you are and helps to set you apart. 2) Illustrates an important social grace that communicates two important characteristics sought by many employers--politeness and respect. 3) Presents a great opportunity to briefly restate your qualifications and compatibility with the organization. Stop by the Office of Career Services and pick up a "Thank You Letter" handout to see examples and learn more about thank you letters.



Questions That Employers in Education Might Ask Prospective Teachers

1. Why do you want to teach? What is your philosophy of education?
2. Describe your style of teaching. Describe an ideal classroom.
3. What are your strengths and weaknesses?
4. What do you plan to be doing in five years? What are your career goals?
5. Describe your student teaching experiences. What was your biggest problem in student teaching? How did you solve it?
6. What three words would your students use to describe you as a teacher?
7. How and when do you discipline a student? What is your approach to classroom management?
8. What do you expect from your supervisor?
9. What are the qualities of an excellent teacher? Which of these qualities do you have?
10. Some of your students always finish their assignments early. How would you deal with the free time that they have?
11. How would you work with students who perform below grade level, especially those from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds?
12. What grade level do you prefer? Why?
13. How do you relate with minority students in the classroom?
14. Are parent/teacher conferences important? Why or why not?
15. Why do you want to work in our district? What do you know about our school district?
16. Why should our school district hire you?

SAMPLE BEHAVIOR-BASED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Describe a two-week unit that you have taught.
2. How have you integrated writing skills into your curriculum?
3. Describe a lesson plan that exceeded your expectations when you taught it.
4. Describe a lesson that did not succeed and how you would change it for a future class.
5. How have you ensured coverage of state-mandated standards in your planning?
6. Describe an experience you have had becoming established with a new group of students.
7. What rules and rewards have worked in your classroom in the past?
8. Describe a conflict you have encountered with a student and how you dealt with it.
9. Describe a grading policy that has worked well in the past.
10. How have you assessed student achievement informally without grading?
11. Tell me about a typical homework assignment in your class.
12. How have you modified assignments for gifted or special education students?
13. What are some strategies for teaching your subject to students who may not be good listeners?
14. Describe an experience where you identified a student's special need and modified a lesson for that individual.
15. Share an example of a communication with a parent that helped you understand a student in your class.
16. Tell about a time that you asked an administrator or teacher for help.
17. How have memberships in professional organizations or attendance at conferences and workshops improved your teaching?
18. What have you read recently that led to an improvement in your classroom?

Questions That Prospective Teachers Might Ask Employers

1. What is the teacher/student ratio in your district?
2. How many classes a day will I be expected to teach?
3. Do you have teachers serving in areas for which they do not have full certification?
4. Tell me about the students who attend this school.
5. What textbooks does the school use in this subject area?
6. Do teachers participate in curriculum review and change?
7. What support staff members are available to help students and teachers?
8. What discipline procedures does the district use?
9. Do parents support the schools? Does the community?
10. Do your schools use teacher aides or parent volunteers?
11. What allowances are provided for supplies and materials?
12. Does the administration encourage field trips for students?
13. How are teachers assigned to extracurricular activities?

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<http://www.usca.sc.edu/careers>

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