

Preparing for an Interview

The **BIG** Idea

- What questions do employers ask in an interview and how can I be prepared?

AGENDA

Approx. 45 minutes

- I. Warm Up: Why Interview?
(5 minutes)
- II. Being Prepared (25 minutes)
- III. Is This the Right Job for You?
(10 minutes)
- IV. Wrap Up: Interview Etiquette
(5 minutes)

MATERIALS

STUDENT HANDBOOK PAGES:

- Student Handbook page 103, Entry-Level Jobs
- Student Handbook pages 104–105, Interview Questions and Answers
- Student Handbook page 106, Questions for the Employer
- Student Handbook page 107, Job Interview Tips

FACILITATOR PAGES:

- Facilitator Resource 1, DO NOW, Finding a Job 5: Preparing for an Interview

OBJECTIVES

During this activity, the student(s) will:

- Recognize common questions asked in interviews and prepare their own answers.
- Identify relevant questions that they could ask employers during an interview.

OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students prepare for an essential step in a job search — the interview. They begin by discussing the importance and purpose of interviews. Next, they review common interview questions and tips for answering them. Then they write their own answers, as if they are interviewing for a specific entry-level job. Next they discuss questions that they could ask employers in an interview to make sure a job is a good fit for them. Finally, they review some basic tips for interviews, to make sure they come across as responsible and professional.

PREPARATION

- List the day's **BIG IDEA** and activities on the board.
- Write the day's vocabulary words and definitions on the board.
- The following handouts need to be made into overhead transparencies or copied onto chart paper:
 - **Student Handbook page 103, Entry-Level Jobs**
 - **Student Handbook pages 104 and 105, Interview Questions and Answers**
 - **Student Handbook page 107, Job Interview Tips**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Many teens might be nervous or uncomfortable about interviewing for a job. Unfortunately, if a teenager is nervous during an interview, he or she can come across as shy, disinterested, or even impolite. There are basic steps teens can take to prepare for an interview and bolster their confidence. In the last lesson, students identified some of their skills and ways they've demonstrated them. This self-examination is an essential step in preparing for an interview. In this lesson, they'll use this information to answer common interview questions. They'll also learn how important it is to research and understand the job they're applying for, and how to ask questions to make sure the job is right for them.

VOCABULARY

Employee: A person who works for and is paid by another person or business.

Employer: A person or business that pays others for work.

Interview: A meeting for a job in which a person is asked questions.

IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS

DO NOW:

*(You may choose to present the Warm Up activity as a written Do Now. Present the questions on the board or overhead, and have students write only their answers on index cards. You could also choose to give the students a handout by copying **Facilitator Resource 1, DO NOW.**)*

Questions:

1. If you were in charge of hiring a band for a dance at your school, would you hire a group without meeting them in person? Why or why not?
2. Today we are going to talk about job interviews. What do you think employers are trying to learn about you in an interview?

[Call on students to read their answers. Then continue with the **Warm Up** as written.]

You may wish to add one or two more jobs to the **Student Handbook page 103, Entry-Level Jobs**, such as jobs that are specific to their region or students' research.

Invite students to dress for next week's class as if they are going to an interview. You may wish to share these tips about dressing for an interview:

- clean, neat clothes that are not too casual (for example, dress pants and a button-down shirt rather than jeans and a T-shirt)
- clean and polished dress shoes
- well-groomed hairstyle
- clean and trimmed fingernails
- little or no cologne or perfume
- no visible body piercing beyond ear piercing for women
- well-brushed teeth and fresh breath
- no gum, candy, or other objects in your mouth

- minimal jewelry
- no body odor

In **Activity II, Being Prepared**, if you think your students will struggle to answer all eight questions on **Student Handbook pages 104–105, Interview Questions and Answers** in the given amount of time, you may choose to reduce the number of questions students need to answer. Students can discuss the remaining questions orally as a class or in pairs.

ACTIVITY STEPS

I. WARM UP: Why Interview? (5 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** For the past several weeks, we've been talking about jobs for teens. Last week, you identified some of your own skills that you could bring to a job, and ways that you've demonstrated those skills.
2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Now, you might be wondering why employers need to interview you in the first place—or why it really matters what you say or do in an interview. After all, you've filled out the application with all the important information, right? Actually, the interview is often much more important than the application.

Imagine this: You're in charge of hiring a band for prom. Not only will they play the music, the lead singer will emcee the event as well. Would you hire a group just by looking at a flyer or their website? Why or why not? Why does it help to meet them in person?

3. [Discuss the overall purpose of interviews. Ask some guiding questions, such as:
 - Why are job interviews important?
 - What are employers trying to learn about you in an interview?
 - What can you show an employer in an interview that you might not be able to show during a job application?]

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: In a job interview, the employer is trying to find out what kind of employee you would be—your overall attitude, your work ethic, how you get along with people, and how you might handle different situations. At the same time, it gives you a chance to shine and really prove yourself as a positive, hard-working team player, in a way you just can't in a job application.

[If your students have a hard time speaking well of themselves, explain that interviews are a way of reassuring the employer that they are capable of doing this job. Basically, the goal of an interview is to back up your skills with specific evidence of your personal strengths and accomplishments. This isn't the same as bragging.]

4. [Ask students to brainstorm questions they would expect to be asked in an interview.]

II. Being Prepared (25 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** If the thought of an interview makes your stomach do flips, keep in mind that there's a lot you can do to prepare. One of the best ways is to know in advance what questions might be asked and consider how you would answer them. This will help you feel more confident and comfortable as you go into an interview.

The good news is, many employers ask the same questions—no matter what level of job you're applying for. After all, most interview questions are meant to find out what kind of employee you would be, whether you're interviewing for an entry-level position or a manager. Chances are, you'll be answering these questions again and again throughout your career.

2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** The other good news about interviews is that there's no one, single right answer. You just need to be clear, honest, and positive. However, there is a difference between a good answer and a bad answer. Say you're interviewing at McDonald's and the interviewer asked why you want a job as a cashier. Which of the following are probably the wrong answers? Why? Which is the best answer?
 - a. My dream is to pursue a lifelong career in fast food. *(This is probably not an honest answer, and could come across as sarcastic or disrespectful.)*
 - b. For the free Happy Meals. *(This is not a positive answer. It doesn't show maturity or respect for the company.)*
 - c. I think it will give me great work experience. *(This answer is honest, direct, and positive—and it shows maturity and a respect for the employer.)*

Now let's say you're interviewing at an amusement park (Six Flags Amusement Park) and the interviewer asks you why you want to work there. I will read out two possible responses. You need to figure out what the best response would be and why.

- a. Well, I saw your ad and I've been to Six Flags every summer since I was six. *(It's not a horrible answer—at least we know the candidate is familiar with the park.)*
- b. I like working with people and making sure they're having a good time. I always help my aunt organize my niece's birthday parties, and I keep the kids entertained and the adults from going crazy. *(This is a good answer because it shows that the candidate has an idea of the energy required to do this job.)*

3. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Now, before we look at some typical interview questions, I'd like you to choose a specific job from the list on **Student Handbook page 103, Entry-Level Jobs**. In this week's and next week's lessons, you are going to imagine you're interviewing for this specific job. This is important because in an interview, you should always keep in mind the job you're interviewing for. Your answers should show that you've considered the environment, tasks, and skills of this job. For example, if you're applying for a job as a sales clerk, it's relevant to say you enjoy working with people. It's probably not relevant to talk about your interest in movies.

[Give students a few minutes to read the job descriptions and choose one.]

4. [Have the class turn to **Student Handbook pages 104–105, Interview Questions and Answers**. Take a few moments to talk about the first question, "Tell me something about yourself."]

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: This is a question you're going to answer throughout your life, so it's very important to be able to answer it comfortably and succinctly. This is often one of the first questions you'll answer in an interview, so this is how you'll present yourself to the employer. It's important to have a brief, positive description of yourself. Of course, you'll want to adapt this "pitch" to the specific job.

[Provide an example of a short, positive self-"pitch." Here's an example of a pitch from a student interviewing as a sales clerk at a toy store: *I'm a sophomore at Smith High. My real passion is working with kids. Last summer, I volunteered as an assistant coach for a girls' soccer team. I also have a lot of experience babysitting, especially for two families that I babysit for every week. I love being with those kids, watching what they like to do, and helping them come up with new games. Of course, I often have to help them work through problems, too. They've taught me a lot about how to talk to kids! I'd love to have a job where I can work with kids and parents.*]

5. [Review the other questions and tips with the class.]
6. [Have students work independently to answer each question in no more than three sentences.]
7. [After students have completed their answers, review them as a class. For each question, have one or two students share their answers.]

8. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** What you've done today will help you answer many questions in an interview, but there's bound to be a question or two that you're not expecting. Don't worry if you're asked a question you can't answer right away. For example, you might just say, "I need some time to think about that."

[Briefly talk about other ways you might handle unexpected, difficult questions.]

III. Is This the Right Job for You? (10 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** An interview isn't just about making sure you're a good fit for the job—it's also a chance to make sure the job is a good fit for you! Almost every interviewer is going to ask you if you have any questions. It's not rude to ask questions—in fact, it's important that you do have a few questions ready. This is also your chance to ask questions that let you know if the job is right for you.
2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** What are some concerns that you might have before taking a job? For example:
- Will I be treated fairly?
 - Will they expect me to work all the time? Will I still have time for other things in my life?
 - What will I learn at this job?
 - What if I have a problem at my job?

The key is to ask these questions in a positive, constructive way. What are some questions you wouldn't ask? [Give a few examples, such as: "I'm not going to have to work overtime, am I?" or "What if I hate someone I'm working for?"]

3. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Now, let's look at some questions you might ask an interviewer. [Have students turn to **Student Handbook page 106, Questions for the Employer.**]

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: Take a minute to read through these questions and check any that you would like to ask if you were interviewing for a job. You may also write down your own questions.

[Review questions, pointing out the concerns that are tactfully being addressed, as time permits.]

IV. WRAP UP: Interview Etiquette (5 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Before we wrap up, let's turn to the **Student Handbook page 107, Job Interview Tips**. Take a minute to read through these tips.

You probably noticed that some of these tips have nothing to do with the answers you give in an interview. While your answers in an interview are important, you can say a lot about yourself without words, like what time you show up, what you wear, and how you carry yourself.

2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** In the next class, you'll have a chance to practice what you learned today in a mock interview. Each of you will interview a partner, and assess each other's interview with a checklist similar to these interview tips you just read. I encourage each of you to ask a friend or family member to interview you using the questions from today's lesson. As you practice, keep these interview tips in mind.

DO NOW

Finding a Job 5: Preparing for an Interview

Directions: You will have three minutes to read the questions and write your answers.

Questions:

1. If you were in charge of hiring a band for a dance at your school, would you hire a group without meeting them in person? Why or why not?

2. Today we are going to talk about job interviews. What do you think employers are trying to learn about you in an interview?

Entry-Level Jobs

Circle the job that you would like to interview for.

<p>File Clerk Needed</p>  <p>Part-time File Clerk: Busy medical office is looking for a part-time clerk to assist with filing. We are looking for someone who is extremely organized and detail-oriented.</p>	<p>Sneakers 'R' Us Wants You!</p>  <p>Part-time Sales Associate: Help our customers select from a variety of sneakers and other athletic apparel that fit their needs and interests. We are currently looking for someone who works well in a fast-paced environment, likes to help people, enjoys teamwork, and is motivated to sell.</p>
<p>Work for a Theme Park!</p>  <p>Seven Flags Amusement Park is hiring! If you enjoy games and entertainment, come join our team. As a part-time games host, you'll explain rules and procedures of games, hand out prizes to winners, as well as provide park information to guests.</p>	<p>Volunteer at Little People's Playhouse!</p>  <p>Are you a fan of the stage? Can't get enough of those bright lights? Love kids? If this sounds like you, be a volunteer at Little People's Playhouse. We are always looking for assistance in our afternoon and weekend classes. High school students welcome!</p>
Empty space for student response	Empty space for student response

Interview Questions and Answers

Below are some common interview questions, along with tips on what the interviewer is really asking. Write your answers in the boxes to the right.

Job Applying for: _____

Interview Question	Tips	Your Answer
<p>Tell me something about yourself.</p>	<p>This is often the first question an interviewer asks. Because it is open-ended, it is your chance to shine. Keep it short and sweet. Highlight two or three interests or skills that show your ability to do the job. Use positive, work-oriented adjectives, like <i>responsible, hard-working, honest, and courteous.</i></p>	
<p>Why do you want to work here?</p>	<p>Emphasize your value to the employer, not your need for a job. Also, show that you've done your research. Rather than say, "Because it's a great company," say <i>why</i> you think it's a great company.</p>	
<p>Tell me about your work experience.</p>	<p>Many high school students won't have work experience. If you've been part of a club or team at school, or have volunteer experience, talk about skills you've gained — especially those that match the job description. Make it clear that you're eager to learn.</p>	

Interview Questions and Answers (continued)

Interview Question	Tips	Your Answer
Why did you leave your last job?	The interviewer may be worried that you'll leave this job, too. Don't complain about your last boss, how hard the work was, or how little money you made. Give a neutral or positive reason for leaving, like returning to school, or looking for a job where you can learn new skills.	
What are your strengths?	Choose skills that show how you can do this job. Be prepared to give examples of your accomplishments. Include compliments you've received from previous jobs (even if it was just babysitting or lawn mowing) or in school.	
What are your weaknesses?	Don't leave the interviewer with the impression that you'll be a terrible employee. Choose a weakness that you've taken steps to overcome. For example, "Math isn't my strongest subject, so I signed up for after-school tutoring. I went from having a D my freshman year to a B my sophomore year."	
What do you like to do in your spare time?	Be honest, but choose an answer that demonstrates that you have a life, and that you'll fit in with your coworkers.	
What are your plans for the future?	Your answer shows how realistic you are, whether you think ahead, and how hard you're willing to work.	

Questions for the Employer

An interview gives an employer a chance to learn about you. But it's also a chance for you to learn more about the job and the employer you'll be working for. Before going into an interview, think about what you'd like to learn to make sure the job is a good fit for you. Then consider what questions will help you find out that information.

Below are some questions you might ask. Check the questions you'd like to ask if you were in an interview. Then in the spaces below, add any other questions you might have.

- _____ What are the day-to-day responsibilities of this job?
- _____ Will my job responsibilities change over time?
- _____ What are some of the skills and abilities necessary for someone to succeed in this job?
- _____ What are some skills I'll learn with this job?
- _____ What kind of training will I receive? Who will be training me?
- _____ Who is my supervisor? How will s/he give me feedback on my work?
- _____ Who would I speak with if I have questions or concerns about my job?
- _____ How many hours a week would I work in this position? When and how would you notify me if you needed me to work extra shifts?
- _____ What are some of the things you like about working for this company?

Job Interview Tips

- Research and know the job you're interviewing for and the company where you're interviewing.
- Ask friends and family members to conduct practice interviews with you.
- Present a professional appearance.
- Don't chew gum.
- Arrive 10 minutes early to the interview.
- Greet the interviewer by title and name (Ms. Gomez).
- Shake hands firmly.
- Make eye contact with your interviewer.
- Speak clearly. Try to avoid "um" and "like."
- Show your enthusiasm, and don't forget to smile.
- Emphasize your strengths, skills, and achievements.
- Emphasize the previous experiences that demonstrate your ability to do the job.
- Don't complain about past jobs or employers.
- Show enthusiasm and interest by asking questions.
- At the end of the interview, say thank you—and if you really want the job, say so!
- After the interview, write a thank-you note.

