

Interview Basics

The **BIG** Idea

- How can I prepare for a job interview?

AGENDA

Approx. 45 minutes

- I. Warm Up: Interview Challenge Quiz & Tips (10 minutes)
- II. What Employers Really Want to Know! (20 minutes)
- III. Wrap Up: My Strengths & Skills (15 minutes)

MATERIALS

☐ STUDENT HANDBOOK PAGES:

- Student Handbook page 97, Interview Challenge Quiz
- Student Handbook page 98, Job Interview Tips
- Student Handbook page 99, Typical Interview Questions
- Student Handbook page 100, Job Ads
- Student Handbook page 101, Strengths & Skills Checklist

☐ FACILITATOR RESOURCE PAGES:

- Facilitator Resource 1, Answers to Interview Challenge Quiz
- Facilitator Resource 2, Interview Questions Discussion Points

OBJECTIVES

During this lesson, the student(s) will:

- Recognize appropriate interview etiquette, including dress, behavior, punctuality, etc.
- Brainstorm qualities all employers look for in an applicant.
- Identify personal strengths and accomplishments as they relate to specific jobs.
- Consider typical interview questions and how to answer them.

OVERVIEW

The lesson begins with students testing their interview smarts by taking a quiz about interview behavior. Students then review and discuss typical interview questions. Finally, they examine various job ads, select one that's right for them, and identify skills and strengths required for the job and evidence that they possess those skills.

PREPARATION

- List the **BIG IDEA** and the day's activities on the board.
- Write the day's vocabulary words and definitions on the board.
- Make transparencies of the following pages:
 - **Student Handbook page 100, Job Ads**
 - **Student Handbook page 101, Strengths & Skills Checklist**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Nearly everyone is nervous before a job interview. Preparation, practice, and knowing what to expect can help reduce anxiety. According to career counselors, it is not unusual for teens to feel nervous and shy during interviews. Unfortunately, nervousness can come across to potential employers as a lack of self-confidence. Shyness may also be interpreted as a lack of interest or enthusiasm for the job. Familiarizing teens with what to expect during an interview, typical questions employers ask, and appropriate behavior and etiquette, will help them feel more confident.

VOCABULARY

Applicant: A person who is applying for a job.

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.

Interviewee: A person interviewing for a job.

IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS

You may want to add more time to any one of the activities based on student need and interest.

ACTIVITY STEPS

I. Warm Up: Interview Challenge Quiz & Tips (10 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Last week, you learned how to complete a job application. The purpose of the application is to provide a potential employer with a picture of who you are and why you might be a good employee. If your application shows you might be a match for the job, you will likely be invited to interview for the position. This is the employer's chance to learn more about you, and your chance to learn more about the job. Interview skills are useful whether you're applying to college, volunteering, or looking for your first part-time job.

Today, we're going to talk about two important parts of the interview:

- Etiquette (how to behave)
- Interview questions (what will be asked, and how to answer so the interviewer knows what a great employee you would make)

Let's find out how much you already know about interviewing.

2. [Have students turn to **Student Handbook page 97, Interview Challenge Quiz**. Give them five minutes to complete the quiz. Then use **Facilitator Resource 1, Answers to Interview Challenge Quiz** to review their responses and discuss each answer.]
3. [After completing the quiz, invite the class to review the **Student Handbook page 98, Job Interview Tips**, which reiterates some of the tips in the quiz and more.]

II. What Employers Really Want to Know! (20 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Now that we've discussed what to wear to an interview, and how to behave, it's time to get to the heart of the matter, what the employer really wants to know about you. You may be surprised to learn that many employers, no matter what the job is, ask the same types of interview questions. Knowing in advance what you may be asked means you can prepare for the interview by reviewing the questions and considering how you will answer them.
2. [Ask students what questions they think an employer might ask during an interview. After they respond, direct them to turn to **Student Handbook page 99, Typical Interview Questions**. Review each question with students to be sure they understand

what each is asking. Refer to **Facilitator Resource 2, Interview Questions Discussion Points** to guide you in helping students understand some of the questions. Explain that in an interview, it's important to answer questions directly, clearly, and honestly. Their responses should involve more than just a simple yes or no, but they shouldn't go on and on.]

3. [After reviewing the questions, point out that while preparing answers in their head or writing them down is helpful because it gives them confidence during the interview, it's not necessary to memorize their answers. The goal is to sound natural, not like they're reciting something they practiced over and over.]

III. Wrap Up: My Strengths & Skills (15 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Today you have explored some important strategies that will lead to successful interviews and will help you land great jobs now and in your future. Remember that as part of the interview preparation, you are encouraged to consider your strengths, abilities and accomplishments as they relate to positions you're interviewing for. Thinking about these things before the interview will help you highlight your best qualities once you're there.
2. [Refer students to **Student Handbook page 100, Job Ads**. Give them a few minutes to review the ads and circle the one that interests them the most, and for which they believe they are best qualified.]
3. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Different jobs require different skills. For some jobs, you need to be good at interacting with people. Other jobs require specialized knowledge in a particular area, like computers. Still others involve teaching new skills to people. All jobs require you to work hard and to show up on time.

[Help students connect skills to jobs by asking a few guiding questions, such as these:

- What are some jobs that involve working with the public?
- Which jobs involve teaching new skills to others?
- In which jobs would some sort of specialized knowledge be helpful?]

4. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Next week each of you will get a chance to try out your interviewing skills by taking part in a "mock interview" for the job you selected in step 2. To get ready for the big day, start thinking about what makes you qualified for the job, your skills and strengths.

- [To assist with this exercise, have students use **Student Handbook page 101, Strengths & Skills Checklist** to identify skills they think they need to do the job they circled on **Student Handbook page 100, Job Ads**. After they identify the necessary skills and/or strengths, instruct them to choose two of the skills and/or strengths, and describe how they've demonstrated those before. You may provide an example, such as if the job requires you to "show up for work every day, on time," you might point out that you missed only three days of school last year and were never tardy.]
5. [Remind students that next week each person will have a chance to be interviewed by one of their classmates for the job they've selected. They should be dressed as if this interview were for an actual job. Finally, suggest to students that as part of their preparation, they should spend time reviewing **Student Handbook page 99, Typical Interview Questions**.]

Answers to Interview Challenge Quiz

1. When interviewing for a job you should:

The answer is A: Look the interviewer in the eyes.

Explanation: It's important to make good eye contact with your interviewer. It shows that you're confident and serious about the position. Making eye contact, along with showing enthusiasm for the job, company, or industry, is rated by employers as the most important keys to successful interviews. Speaking clearly (and loudly enough) is also very important.

Source: http://www.quintcareers.com/interview_ans7.html

2. True or False: It's OK to wear jeans and a T-shirt to an interview since I'm a teenager.

The answer is B: False

Explanation: Appearance is more important than you may think. While skills, experience, and other qualifications are key, so too is your dress and grooming. Knowing the culture of the place where you're applying can be very helpful. For example, piercings might be acceptable at music stores and trendy clothing shops. When in doubt, be conservative. The rule is to "dress up" a level from the clothes you'd wear to work every day. For example, if the job requires jeans and a T-shirt, wear khakis and a dressier shirt or sweater to the interview. By appearing professional, you are letting the interviewer know that you are serious about the job. Here are some tips for how to dress for an interview:

- 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

3. When should you arrive to an interview?

The answer is C: 10 minutes early.

Explanation: Plan to arrive 10 minutes before your interview. Ten minutes gives you extra time for unexpected events, such as traffic. It also provides time to complete an application, if needed. If you arrive early, and there is nothing to fill out, take the time to relax and collect your thoughts. Before interview day, make sure you know the exact location of the meeting by taking a practice run.

4. True or False: Play up previous jobs even if they're babysitting or lawn-mowing

The answer is A: True

Explanation: Since you're a young person, you probably have not held many jobs yet, so mentioning any prior experience, no matter what it is, is a good thing. Previous jobs, from babysitting to delivering newspapers, reveal to an employer key qualities like work ethic, responsibility, and promptness—traits important to all jobs. In the process of explaining your previous jobs, you should describe for the employer how you believe your skills apply to the job you're interviewing for. For example, if the job requires physical labor, then your work mowing lawns would be very relevant.

5. If the employer asks if you have any questions, you should...

The answer is A: Ask questions because it shows that you've researched the position and are interested in the job.

Explanation: Near the end of most job interviews, the interviewer will ask if you have any questions. It is important that you ask at least one question because it shows the interviewer that you're interested and enthusiastic. If you ask specific questions about the company, it shows that you've done your research. Don't ask too many questions, especially if the answer is very obvious or the topic has already been discussed during the interview. Questions should not be about salary and benefits until those subjects are raised by the employer.

Below is a sampling of typical interview questions and some information and insight to share with the class about how they can best answer these questions.

How would you describe yourself?

This is usually the first question an interviewer asks. Because it is open-ended, it is your chance to shine. Take the opportunity to introduce your qualifications and good work habits. Use positive, work-oriented adjectives, like conscientious, hard-working, honest, and courteous.

How has your high school experience prepared you for this job?

Toot your horn! Talk about the skills you've gained in high school, including extracurricular activities, especially those that match the job description.

Why should I hire you?

Emphasize your qualities as they are related to the job. Include compliments you've received from previous jobs (even if just babysitting or lawn mowing) or in school.

What skills and strengths make you qualified for this job?

Point out skills and strengths that are directly related to the job.

What past accomplishments have given you satisfaction?

Describe one to three projects, either from school or extracurricular activities, which make you proud. Focus on what you did more than the reward. For example, if you won a science fair, focus on the project you made and how you did it, and less on the fact that you won.

Why do you want to work for our company?

To answer this one, research the company before the interview. Your answer should reflect that you've done your research. Rather than say, "Because it's a great company," tell them why you think it's a great company.

In what kind of work environment are you most comfortable?

Consider where you'll be working when answering this question. For example, if the job is a sales associate at a popular clothing store where you will be helping customers, putting away clothing, ringing up sales, etc., say that you enjoy working with people.

How do you handle stress?

It's honest to admit that you do feel pressure and stress some times, but express that you find positive ways to handle the stress, like exercising after school or listening to your favorite music.

What major challenge have you faced and how did you deal with it?

The interviewer is looking for an example of how you solve problems, an important skill in most jobs. Caution students not to use this question as an opportunity to complain about a bad boss or mean teacher from the past. Focus on what you learned from the challenge, rather than the circumstances of the challenge itself.

Interview Challenge Quiz

Circle the correct answer for each question.

1. When interviewing for a job you should:
 - a. Look the interviewer in the eyes.
 - b. Look at the interviewer, but not directly in the eyes because it's rude.
 - c. Don't look at the interviewer at all.

2. True or False: It's OK to wear jeans and a T-shirt to an interview since I'm a teenager.
 - a. True
 - b. False

3. When should you arrive to an interview?
 - a. 1 hour early
 - b. 30 minutes early
 - c. 10 minutes early
 - d. 10 minutes late

4. True or False: Play up previous jobs even if they're babysitting or lawn-mowing.
 - a. True
 - b. False

5. If the employer asks if you have any questions, you should:
 - a. Say no because it's rude to take up his or her time.
 - b. Ask questions because it shows that you've researched the position and are interested in the job.

Job Interview Tips

- Take a practice trip to the interview site.
- 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.
- Dress nicely and appear well groomed.
- 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.
- Show enthusiasm and interest by asking questions.
- Emphasize your strengths, skills, and achievements.
- Emphasize the previous experiences that demonstrate your ability to do the job.
- After the interview, write a thank-you note.

Typical Interview Questions

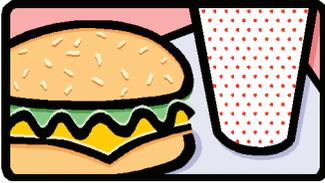
Review these questions as you prepare for job interviews.

- How would you describe yourself?
- How has your high school experience prepared you for this job?
- Why should I hire you?
- What skills and strengths make you qualified for this job?
- What past accomplishments have given you satisfaction?
- Why do you want to work for our company?
- In what kind of work environment are you most comfortable?
(for example: sitting at a desk, working outside)
- How do you handle stress?
- What major challenge have you faced and how did you deal with it?

Questions excerpted from “The Interview Guide,” Rice University Center for Student Professional Development,
<http://cspd.rice.edu>

Job Ads

Circle the job that interests you the most and that you think you are best qualified for.

<p style="text-align: center;">Cashier Wanted</p>  <p>Cashier Wanted: Fast food chain is looking for a part-time cashier to work in a fast-paced, people-oriented environment. If you enjoy people, and are reliable, and detail-oriented, we want you!</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Join our Team!</p>  <p>Come join the team at the Book & Music Mega Store. As a part-time sales associate, you help customers select books and music to fit their needs and interests. We are looking for someone who works well in a fast-paced environment, likes to help people, enjoys team work, and is motivated to sell.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Stock Clerk Needed</p>  <p>Part-time Stock Clerk: Central City Supermarket is looking for a conscientious and honest person to help with stocking products. You must be strong and able-bodied to do this job.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Part-Time Instructor</p>  <p>Are you the creative type? Do you enjoy helping others express their creativity? Paint-It-Yourself Pottery Shop is currently looking for a part-time instructor to teach afternoon and weekend classes. High school students welcome!</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Boys & Girls After-school Program</p>  <p>The Boys & Girls After-school Program is searching for a part-time assistant coach who plays sports and enjoys helping children. Athletic, reliable, and energetic individuals are encouraged to apply.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Hospital Volunteers</p>  <p>Wellville Hospital is seeking volunteers. Help us make our patients' stays as comfortable as possible. Responsibilities include delivering flowers to rooms, wheeling the book cart to patients, refilling water pitchers, and just providing a smile.</p>

Do you have the skills employers want? Use this page to show what you're great at.

Strengths & Skills Checklist

Choose the job that you'd most enjoy doing. Then check the skills that you think you need to do this job.



I'm applying for _____ (name job).

A. Workplace Skills

- Show up for work every day, on time.
- Work hard.
- Finish what you start.
- Stay calm when things are busy.
- Manage lots of things at once.

B. People Skills

- Be Kind.
- Understand how someone else is feeling.
- Treat customers politely.
- Get along with all kinds of people.

C. Job-Specific Skills

- Great with kids.
- Good at explaining things step by step.
- Good at selling things.
- Good at helping people choose gifts.
- Good at sports.
- Understanding of people who are sick or disabled.
- Strong.
- Creative.
- Know a lot about books.
- Know a lot about music.
- Read written instructions.
- Able to make change.

Choose two skills or strengths that you checked and write about how you've shown those skills before.

1. Skill or strength: _____

How I've demonstrated this skill or strength: _____

2. Skill or strength: _____

How I've demonstrated this skill or strength: _____

