



The Interview

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 giving 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.

Match yourself to the organization and the needs of the position.

Those who do this the best get the jobs! Illustrate the skills and experiences that make you a great fit. Use examples from past jobs, projects, volunteer work, etc. that support the skills and achievements you are conveying. The responsibility of making this match is on you, so the amount of preparation and effort will determine how well you are able to do this.

Research the organization before the interview.

A common mistake most interviewees make is failing to do the proper research on the organization with which they are interviewing. Researching an organization before the interview gives you an impressive edge in the job search process. Find out about the overall mission or philosophy of the company. Check out recent trends in the business. Has the company recently down-sized? Has it been awarded any special recognition for its role in the community? An easy way to get the scoop is to simply check out a company's website or even call the human resources division 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, detail-oriented, etc...
- ***I know about...***: Be able to talk about content areas such as solar energy, cost accounting, etc...
- ***I can...***: Discuss transferable skills such as design research instruments, negotiate with angry people, etc...

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.

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. 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 Might Ask Candidates

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Please walk me through your resume and your nursing training and experience.
3. Why are you interested in this particular nursing job?
4. What are your strengths and weaknesses?
5. What do you plan to be doing in five years? What are your career goals?
6. How do you stay current with the nursing profession?
7. Why did you choose this career direction? Why are you interested in this position?
8. What is your philosophy of nursing?
9. What do you expect from your supervisor?
10. What are the qualities of an excellent nurse? Which of these qualities do you have?
11. What have you identified as your strongest clinical skill?
12. What specialty area did you like the best during clinicals?
13. Describe a clinical situation that taught you a memorable nursing lesson.
14. How do you handle the pressure of working as a nurse?
15. Can you give an example of a time you worked in a team?
16. Why do you want to work in this facility? What do you know about our facility?
17. Why should our facility hire you?

Behavior-Based Questions

1. Describe a situation in which you had to handle a difficult and demanding patient.
2. Tell me about a decision that you had to make quickly regarding a patient.
3. When have you disagreed with a colleague over the management of a patient? How did you handle it?
4. Describe a time in your clinical nursing experience when you demonstrated critical thinking.
5. Provide a specific example of how you utilize evidence-based practice in your nursing career.
6. Tell me how you would deal with a patient whose family was upset over the care he/she was receiving.
7. Tell me about a time you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get the job done.
8. Nursing work often involves a number of daily frustrations. Tell me about some of the frustrations you have dealt with.
9. What changes have you contributed to established practices to improve patient care?
10. Tell me about a time where you had to delegate care or take a leadership role.
11. Tell me about a project you did for a class or hospital unit, and what were the results?
12. What was your biggest problem throughout your nursing experience? How did you solve it?
13. Tell us about a time where you had to handle a problem arising while no other medical staff was available.
14. How do you handle stress on the job?
15. How would you handle a patient who constantly complains about pain?
16. Tell about a time that you asked an administrator or nurse for help.
17. Tell me about a time when you had too many things to do and you were required to prioritize your tasks.

Questions That Candidates Might Ask Employers

1. What is the nurse-to-patient ratio?
2. How long are your shifts?
3. How do you go about scheduling? Is self-scheduling an option, or does someone else dictate the schedule?
4. What are nurses' biggest challenges at this facility?
5. How much autonomy do you give your nurses to make decisions regarding patient care?
6. How often do you conduct performance reviews?
7. Is the administration open to suggestions that would improve patient care?
8. What have been this unit's most notable successes and failures over the year?
9. How long have most nurses been on the unit?
10. Why did the last person in this position leave?
11. What type of training will I receive for this position?
12. Is there room for advancement and do you promote from within?

Office of Career Services
Penland Building, Room 108 ~ Phone: (803) 641-3440 ~ Fax: (803) 641-3652
<http://www.usca.edu/career-services>

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