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Job Interview Guidelines

This event consists of two (2) parts: a letter of application, résumé, and a job application form; and an interview. Competitors are required to complete all parts for award eligibility.

GUIDELINES

Competitors will apply for a position at Merit Corporation. Merit Corporation is a large fictional national corporation headquartered in Washington, DC. Company benefits include paid holidays and vacations, sick leave, a retirement plan, and health insurance. Salary will be commensurate with experience and education. Merit Corporation is an equal opportunity employer.

Six (6) copies of the following items must be submitted in six standard file folders by the second Friday in May:

~A one-page letter of application (original or copy) addressed to:
Dr. Terry E. Johnson, Director of Human Resources, Merit Corporation, 1640 Franklin Place, Washington, DC 20041
~A brief résumé (original or copy) not to exceed two (2) pages.
~A job application must be completed. Download the form at www.fbla-pbl.org, click on FBLA, Competitive Events.

Folder tabs must be labeled with the event title, competitor’s name, state, and school. Include participant’s name on all pages submitted.

Preliminary round interviews are 10 minutes and final round interviews are 15 minutes.
Questions to Ask

An interview provides an opportunity to learn more about the tasks, responsibilities, and expectations of a position. Take advantage of this opportunity by asking questions to learn more about the position and the organization. The more information you have about the job, the easier your decision to accept or pass it up.

1. What is the main problem you would like me to solve if you hire me?
2. What are the first three assignments you would like me to accomplish?
3. How would you describe the responsibilities of this position?
4. What are your expectations for the person in this position?
5. How would you describe a typical work day in this position?
6. Who is the immediate supervisor for this position?
7. Is training offered? If so, how frequently is it offered?
8. What is the biggest challenge (name of organization) faces?
9. How do employees communicate with each other?
10. How is the employee in this position evaluated?
11. Why is this position open?
12. What is the next step in the hiring process?

Job Offer Checklist

Before accepting an employment offer, ask yourself the following questions to determine if the position would be a good fit for you.

- Do I know my specific job responsibilities?
- Do I think I will enjoy the job (tasks, responsibilities, and assignments)?
- Am I satisfied with the hours?
- Will I have to work overtime? Is this okay?
- Will I make enough money to support myself?
- Will I receive benefits? If so, are they acceptable benefits?
- Do I think I will like my supervisor?
- Is the commute too long?
INTRODUCTION
The FBLA-PBL job interview competitive event is designed to provide members with the opportunity to develop strong interviewing skills for future employment possibilities. Whether applying for an entry-level position or changing career fields after 20 years, interview skills are essential for securing a high-quality, high-income position. The interview tips included in this guide will prepare you for both the job interview competitive event and real life experience.

WHAT IS A JOB INTERVIEW?
A job interview is a conversation between an applicant and a hiring manager. It provides the applicant with an opportunity to learn more about the organization and the position applied for. It provides the hiring manager an opportunity to learn about the applicant and what he/she can contribute to the organization.

Applicants should answer each question honestly, and not be afraid to ask questions for a better understanding of job requirements and expectations. Remember, the purpose of an interview is twofold: the hiring manager extends a job offer to the number one applicant, and the applicant determines if the job would be a good fit for his or her knowledge, skills, and career goals.

1. Tell me about yourself, or why should we hire you?
This is your one to two minute elevator speech. Pitch yourself in a positive light and address skills, abilities, and past contributions. Focus only on academic or work experiences, not personal experiences that don’t pertain to the position. Plan your answer ahead of time since it’s the perfect opportunity to convey what you want the hiring manager to know about you.

2. What are your strengths?
Provide concrete strengths that can be proven with numbers, percentages, and facts. For example: Utilizing my marketing skills at XYZ company, their total revenue increased by $100,000 over six months.

3. What are your weaknesses?
Be honest about your weaknesses, but also include how you are working to improve those weaknesses.

4. Why do you want to work here?
This is when you share all that research about the company, position, and hiring manager/staff. Mention the mission statement or a few goals to show your values line up with the organization’s values.

5. Describe a challenge from your last job. How did you overcome it?
Use the STAR technique to answer this question. Address the Situation, Task, Action, and Results (STAR). See page 9.

6. What was your greatest contribution to your last job?
Answer with a concrete example of a past contribution. For example, mention the 10 page evaluation essay you wrote, edited, and submitted to XYZ’s shareholders. It doesn’t hurt to have a copy with you to showcase.

7. Why are you looking for a new position?
Be honest, but also explain why this job would be a better fit than your current or last job.

8. What are your salary requirements?
Always provide a salary range, never give a specific amount. Take the salary you’d like to make, add $5,000 more and subtract $5,000 less for a $10,000 range. This gives the employer something to work with and offers you greater negotiating power. Before disclosing a range, research typical salaries in a specific career field at www.salary.com.
Common Questions

Before interviewing for a position, consider your answers to this list of sample questions. The more prepared you are, the more confident you’ll appear during the interview.

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Why should we hire you?
3. What are your strengths?
4. What are your weaknesses?
5. Why do you want to work here?
6. Where do you see yourself in five years?
7. Do you prefer working alone or with others? Why?
8. What did you like most about one of your supervisors? What did you like least?
9. How do you handle pressure?
10. Describe a challenge from your last job. How did you overcome it?
11. What was your greatest contribution to your last job?
12. How would your co-workers/past supervisors describe you in three words?
13. Why are you looking for a new position?
14. Are you available for overtime?
15. What are your salary requirements?
16. Do you have any questions for me? (always answer yes!)

Great Answers

Hiring managers ask questions related to five categories: the applicant’s employment background, knowledge of the job, personality, skills, and future goals. There are no tough questions if you’ve practiced these great answers on page 13.

Job Interview Process

Preparing for the Interview
- Know yourself
- Research the organization
- Review job description

Meet and Greet
- Initial greeting (first impressions)
- Firm handshake
- Smile and relax

Interview Itself
- Establish a relationship with the employer

Closing the Interview
- Ask about the next step in the hiring process
- Request a business card
- Thank the interviewer for his/her time
- Final handshake

Follow Up
- Mail a thank you note within 48 hours of the interview
- Call or email a week after the interview to follow up on the hiring status

Negotiating Salary
- Don’t discuss salary until it is brought up by the interviewer
- If asked for salary requirements, give a range (i.e. $45,000-$55,000)

Make the Decision
- Weigh the pros and cons
- Inform the interviewer of your decision

*FBLA-PBL competitive event interviews only include steps 1-4.
Clicking the submit button after completing an application is only the beginning of the job search process. An application may get your foot in the door, but an interview will land you the job. Prepare before every interview by completing the tasks below.

**KNOW YOURSELF**
- Skills
- Abilities
- Values
- Past achievements

**KNOW THE ORGANIZATION**
- Visit the website and determine the organizations' mission, goals, and values
- Read the organization’s online pamphlets, brochures, publications
- Consider company size/number of employers
- Review major products/services
- Research the organization's reputation and competitors

**KNOW THE JOB**
- Responsibilities/tasks
- Qualifications
- Skills required

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**Interview Formats**

Within job interview types are a variety of interview formats. Review each format and be prepared for all kinds of interview questions. When scheduling an interview, it’s helpful to inquire about the interview format or structure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>STRUCTURED INTERVIEW</strong></th>
<th>The hiring manager asks questions in a specific order and does not deviate from this order.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>UNSTRUCTURED INTERVIEW</strong></td>
<td>Similar to a conversation, the hiring manager knows what information he or she wants to learn about the applicant but does not necessarily have a structured order for questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BEHAVIORAL-BASED INTERVIEW</strong></td>
<td>Behavioral interview questions require an example of how the job applicant solved a work-related problem in the past.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SITUATIONAL INTERVIEW</strong></td>
<td>Situational interviews include hypothetical work-related questions, and require the applicant to explain how he or she would address the situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TASK-ORIENTED OR TEST INTERVIEW</strong></td>
<td>The job applicant is asked to complete a test or solve a problem on the spot that demonstrates analytical, creative, and problem-solving skills. Test scores indicate top prospects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>STRESS INTERVIEW</strong></td>
<td>The stress interview places an applicant in a pressure situation and evaluates how he or she responds.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*FBLA-PBL competitive event interviews fall under the structured interview format.*
Interview Types

There are many types of job interviews along the path to securing a job, and it's important to understand each interview type you might encounter along the way.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW</th>
<th>Intended to gather information, an informational interview results a greater understanding of a specific job or career field.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MOCK INTERVIEW</td>
<td>Practice interview skills with a career coach, friend, or family member. A mock interview provides insight into your ability to answer questions effectively, concisely, and confidently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHONE/SCREENING INTERVIEW</td>
<td>Typically the initial contact between the hiring manager and a job applicant, a phone interview may include general questions to weed out applicants with less experience or a lack of desired attributes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW</td>
<td>A face to face interview, or individual interview, provides the opportunity for a hiring manager and job applicant to learn more about each other and determine if there is a potential for employment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PANEL INTERVIEW</td>
<td>A panel interview consists of the hiring manager and executive team interviewing the job applicant. The interviewers take turns asking questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOLLOW-UP/SECOND INTERVIEW</td>
<td>A second interview probes deeper into the knowledge, skills, and ability of a job candidate.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*FBLA-PBL competitive event interviews fall under the panel mock interview type.

KNOW THE INTERVIEWER

- Position in the organization
- Job responsibilities
- Management style

REFERENCES

- Inform references they may be called
- Don’t give references until asked, but prepare ahead of time

PRACTICE!

- Set up a mock interview with a parent or teacher
- Write down your answers to common interview questions

PROFESSIONAL ATTIRE

- Gentlemen, wear a collared shirt with a tie, jacket, dress pants, dress shoes, and socks
- Ladies, wear an appropriate suit (pants or dress with a jacket) and appropriate shoes
- Review the Dress Code regulations found in the CMH

THE NIGHT BEFORE

- Print materials the night before
  - Two copies of your cover letter on resume paper
  - Two copies of your resume on resume paper
  - List of three references
  - Letters of recommendation
  - Work samples
  - List of questions for the interviewer
  - Paper and a pen
- Know where the company is located
- Sleep well the night before
- Leave early in the case of traffic
- Go in with a positive attitude
Follow these tips for rewarding interview experiences.

**ENTRY-LEVEL POSITION**
- Use academic projects, internships, and volunteer experiences as examples of work performance
- Stress knowledge learned through educational coursework
- Use FBLA experience to showcase leadership skills
- Create an electronic portfolio that includes your skills, abilities, and coursework; print and bring the portfolio content to the interview
- Tailor your cover letter and resume for each position you apply for
- Be prepared to answer questions about past experiences and the details in your cover letter and resume
- Write down five accomplishments using the STAR technique; address the situation, task, accomplishment, and results for each of the five accomplishments
- Answer questions directly, do not stray off topic
- Remember, it's okay to request a minute or two to think about an answer
- Exhibit positive body language and nonverbal communication; don't fidget, roll your eyes, slump over in the chair, or avoid eye contact
- Express a clear understanding of short-term and long-term career goals
- Ask questions at the end of the interview to learn more about the position and express interest
- Don't ask personal questions during an interview; keep it strictly business
- Let the interviewer bring up salary and benefits first, but be prepared with a salary range and a list of desired benefits
- Let the interviewer mention overtime and time off first
- Maintain a positive attitude

**CAREER-CHANGE POSITION**
- Be prepared to explain why you want to change careers
- Market your transferable skills
- Express an understanding of the position's environment and culture
- Explain the advantages to starting a new career with experience from other career paths
- Use numbers and percentages to provide concrete examples
- Match future career ambitions with the position
- Use examples from previous work experiences and apply them to the new position
- Address what appeals to you in the position you are interviewing for, not what you disliked in your previous position(s)

**STAR Technique**

When preparing for an interview, it's important to know the skills, strengths, and past accomplishments you want to share with an interviewer. Think of five times during your academic or work experiences when you reached a goal, overcame an obstacle, or took charge of a situation that resulted in positive outcomes. Use the STAR technique described below to create your stories.

**Situation:** Describe the situation and context (who, what, where, when, how)

**Task:** Explain the task to be completed and highlight any challenges or obstacles

**Action:** Describe the specific actions you took to complete the task while highlighting the traits you used (initiative, intelligence, leadership, etc.)

**Results:** Identify the results of your action/efforts; include figures to quantify the result if possible