



# **Be a Star!**

## **Interview with Confidence**

Career Services Office

Henry Ford College

The job interview provides an opportunity for the applicant and the employer to exchange information. The interview enables the employer to find an employee whose knowledge, skills and personality traits fit the qualification for the position. Job applicants have the opportunity to determine if the position will meet their expectations.

The purpose of this booklet is to offer practical information to enable you to be a STAR during your interviews. The first section of the booklet is devoted to preparing for your interview, the second section is about the actual interview, and the last section is about what to do after the interview.

If you need further assistance, the HFC Career Services specialist are available to help. Call the Career Services Office to get further information.

Career Services Office  
Office: A-115  
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A GOOD RESUME GETS YOU THE INTERVIEW  
A SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEW GETS YOU THE JOB.

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## Be prepared!

Being prepared when you arrive to the interview not only lets the interviewer know you are serious about the position; it will also calm those interview jitters. You can be confident in yourself and feel ready to answer whatever questions come your way. Here are some things you can do to get ready for your interview.

**1. Take a look at your skills and compare them in the job description.**

Draw a line down the center of a piece of paper. On the left side, make a bulleted list of what the employer is looking for based on the job posting. On the right side, make a bulleted list of the qualities you possess that fit those requirements. Be prepared to share those in your interview.

### Job Posting Skills

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### My Skills

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2. **Research the employer.** When you take the time to research a potential employer it is an investment in your future. Researching the company not only helps you be well prepared; it will boost your credibility and send a message to the employer that you are very interested in the position. Employers will see you as a thorough, detail-oriented, interested candidate which is an image that can only help your chances of the landing job. Research does *not* mean that you have to learn every possible detail about the company. It does mean that you select several key areas and become knowledgeable about them. Consider researching three to five of the following areas:



Size of the organization



Product line or services



Major competitors



Geographical locations



Location of headquarters



Number of plants, stores, sites



Organizational structure



History of the company



Mission of organization



Financial status or rating



Names & titles of key professionals



Growth pattern over the past 5

years

**Source of Information**

- Employers website
- Barron's
- Michigan Business Directory
- Network of friends and family

- Employer literature
- Business trade publications
- Internet search
- Contacts within the company

3. **Prepare your 90 second response to, “Tell me about yourself.”** Employers ask this as well as other open-ended questions to see how well you can focus your answers to the position for which you are interviewing. Responses to this question should be geared to show understanding of your skills and interests, and how these and your past experiences would contribute to the position and organization.

Use the 90 second when answering this question:

- ⇒ Focus the first 30 seconds on your academic experience (e.g. what you are studying)
- ⇒ Focus the next 30 seconds on your professional experience (e.g. leadership activities, previous work experience, internships)
- ⇒ Use the last 30 seconds to discuss why you are interested in the position given the background you just discussed.

Remember, this is a short answer; give highlights of your experiences and focus your answer. Spend some time writing down the experiences you wish to discuss and then practice your answer.



4. **List at least 5 questions you’d like to ask the interviewer about the job, the company, and the industry.** Asking questions as part of your interview gives you the opportunity to showcase that knowledge you gained while researching the organization. It also demonstrates your interest in the job. Take your questions with you in your portfolio, so you can refer to them as needed.

### Sample Questions to Ask

- \* How does one advance in the organization?
- \* What are the things you like least/most about working here?
- \* Describe a typical career path within this organization?
- \* What are you looking for in a candidate?
- \* What's the most important thing I can do to help within the first 90 days of my employment?
- \* What are the company's plans for future growth?
- \* What opportunities exist for on-the-job-training or further education.
- \* What are the hours of employment?
- \* Can you describe the duties of a typical work day?
- \* Is there any additional information about my qualification that I can provide?
- \* Can you tell me about the people with whom I would be working?
- \* What does this company value the most and how do think my work for you will further these values?
- \* Do you have any questions or concerns about my ability to perform this job?
- \* What can I be to the company to round out the team?

“Goals are the fuel in the  
furnace of achievement.”

- Brian Tracy, Eat that Frog

**5. Write at least five success stories to answer behavioral interview questions (“Tell me about a time when...” or “Give me an example of a time...”)** You will be able to adapt these stories to fit the specific question. Use the STAR technique below to help create your examples:

<b>Situation</b>	Describe the situation that you are in or the task you needed to accomplish. You must describe a specific event or situation, not a generalized description of what you have done in the past.
<b>Or Task</b>	
<b>Action</b>	What you did to address the situation. Keep the focus on you. Even if you are discussing a group project, describe what you actually did.
<b>Results</b>	what happened? How did the event end? What did you accomplish? What did you learn?



**6. Prepare a portfolio to take with you to your interview.** The purpose of a portfolio is to highlight your professional development through informative samples chosen to represent you. It provides a way of organizing the materials you need to have with you. You are able to “show off” your organizational skills and have handy the information you’ll want when your nerves threaten to take over. It’s perfectly okay to refer to pages in your portfolio during the interview. You might want to share some items with the interviewer.

Consider a nice, professional looking three ring binder for your portfolio. Some suggested items to include in your portfolio are:

- ✧ Copies of your resume
- ✧ Copies of your references
- ✧ Letter of recommendation
- ✧ College transcripts
- ✧ Copies of certificates, licenses, or other related documents
- ✧ Highlight honors, awards, and scholarships
- ✧ Sample of your work, e.g. CAD drawings, original artwork, photos\*
- ✧ A CD or DVD showcasing your work
- ✧ The questions you want to ask
- ✧ Paper and pen to take notes
- ✧ Appointment calendar



**PREPARATION AND PRACTICE ARE ESSENTIAL.**

**YOU CANNOT WING IT!**

\*May need to be presented in a way suitable to your field of study.

7. **Dress to impress!** First impressions DO matter. How you present yourself to the interviewer is your first opportunity to project a professional image. Plan to communicate an image of confidence and self-assurance. Keep your look simple and conservative. Plan ahead for your interview clothes. Don't wait until the morning of your interview to decide what you'll wear.

### The Basics

- ⇒ Apparel should be clean and neatly pressed.
- ⇒ Make sure your clothing fits properly while sitting and standing.
- ⇒ Wear clean and polished conservative shoes.
- ⇒ Present good personal hygiene, neatly trimmed nails, well-groomed hairstyle.
- ⇒ Keep jewelry to a minimum.
- ⇒ Visible tattoos should be covered to avoid distraction.
- ⇒ Remove facial jewelry.
- ⇒ Avoid wearing strong perfume or after shave.

### Specific guidelines for women

- ⇒ Suit or skirt/dress slacks and jacket (natural color).
- ⇒ The skirt should be long enough so you can sit down comfortably.
- ⇒ Coordinated blouse with modest neckline.
- ⇒ Shoes should have a modest heel, no spikes or sandals. DO NOT WEAR flip-flops!
- ⇒ Limited jewelry (no dangling earrings or arm full of bracelets). No jewelry is better than too much.
- ⇒ Professional hairstyle.
- ⇒ Light make-up. Strive for a natural look.

### Specific guidelines for men

- ⇒ Suit or dress slacks and sport coat (natural).
- ⇒ Long sleeve shirt (white or coordinated with the suit).
- ⇒ Belt.
- ⇒ Tie (conservative) please, no cartoon characters.
- ⇒ Dark socks, conservative leather shoes.
- ⇒ Little or no jewelry.
- ⇒ Neat and trimmed hair (avoid hair over your eyes).



A "Positive Attitude"  
Is Essential  
To your success

### **Before you go checklist**

- ✓ Look full length in mirror. Do you look professional?
- ✓ Check your portfolio. Is everything in order?
- ✓ Do you have the address and directions to the interview?
- ✓ Do you have the contact name and phone number of the person you are meeting in case something unforeseen happens and you will be late?

### **Upon arrival**

- ✓ Arrive early – enter the building 10 minutes before your appointment.
- ✓ Turn off your cell phone. Dispose of gum or candy. Do not take a drink of any kind into the interview.
- ✓ Go to the rest room and check your appearance one last time.
- ✓ Announce yourself to the receptionist in a professional manner. Don't underestimate the importance of being polite to the receptionist. That is the person who will form the first impression of you.
- ✓ Review and prepare stories and answers if time permits.

- ✓ Practice a calming technique if your jitters are threatening to get the best of you. Take deep breaths and exhale slowly, quietly through your mouth. This should help you relax before the interview.
- ✓ Stand and greet your interviewer with a hearty, not bone-crushing handshake.
- ✓ Smile and maintain eye contact.
- ✓ Sit down only when and where you are invited to sit.

### During the interview

- ✓ Let the interviewer lead.
- ✓ Try to focus on the points you have prepared without sounding too rehearsed or stiff.
- ✓ Relax and enjoy the conversation. Learn what you can about the company.
- ✓ Be yourself.
- ✓ Be positive, friendly, honest, and remember to SIMLE.
- ✓ Convince the employer that your education and skills match the job description.
- ✓ Never, never interrupt.
- ✓ Ask your questions when appropriate.
- ✓ Watch your grammar usage and tone of voice.
- ✓ Speak in complete, concise sentences.
- ✓ Demonstrate good listening skills and maintain good eye contact.
- ✓ Never criticize others, including employers or instructors.
- ✓ Don't discuss personal problems.
- ✓ Do not discuss salary currently unless the employer brings it up.

- ✓ At the conclusion, thank the interviewer, reaffirm your interest in the position, and determine the next steps in the hiring process.
- ✓ Ask for the interviewer's business card so you can send a follow-up letter.

### What to expect

Employers often ask questions to determine your skill level. There are three types of skills they will be assessing.

- ◆ Content skills – These are skills that are work specific: e.g., computer programming, welding, accounting, etc.
- ◆ Functional or Transferable – These skills are used when interacting with people, with information or things such as organizing, managing, developing, facilitating, creating, etc.
- ◆ Adaptive or Self-Management Skills – these are sometimes described as personal characteristics, but which are practiced and developed: e.g. dependable, team player, self-directed, punctual.

### Sample interview question

#### Skill Being Investigated

#### Question

Written Communication

What was the best assignment you had and Why was it the best?

Interpersonal Communication

Tell me about a time when you used effective listening skills to resolve a problem with another individual.

Leadership skills

Tell me about a time when you had an individual on your team who was not participating? What did you do and what were the results?

Decisiveness

Tell me about a time you had to make a quick decision and you did not have all the information you wanted.

Motivational fit	Tell me about a task or assignment you performed that resulted in disappointment for you.
Initiative	Have you ever suggestions for improving your work environment or work process? Describe what you did and how you achieved results.
Oral presentation	Describe and oral presentation that you prepared and resented to others.
Analytical skills	Tell me about a problem you identified and resolved using a systemic process.

### Words to help

Personal attributes are those personality aspects that make you who you are. When thinking about answering interview questions, consider using some of the following:

Achiever	Diligent	Intelligent	Resourceful
Active	Diplomatic	Knowledgeable	Responsible
Adaptable	Disciplined	Logical	Self-directed
Aggressive	Dynamic	Loyal	Self-motivated
Ambitious	Eagar to learn	Leader	Self-reliant
Analytical	Effective	Mature	Sense of humor
Assertive	Efferent	Motivator	Sharp
Broad-mined	Energetic	Neat	Sincere
Challenging	Enthusiastic	Optimistic	Skilled
Charismatic	Experienced	Organized	Sociable
Committed	Fair	Patient	Strong
Conscientious	Flexible	Perceptive	Successful
Consistent	Friendly	Pleasant	Tactful
Creative	Forward thinking	Poised	Team player
Decisive	Hard working	Positive attitude	Thorough
Dedicated	Honest	Precise	Tolerant
Demonstrative	Imaginative	Problem solver	Trustworthy
Dependable	Independent	Productive	Understanding
Detail oriented	Industrious	Professional	Well-read
	Innovative	Reliable	Well-rounded

### Tips for successful phone interviews

Telephone interviews are increasingly popular and a time-efficient way of pre-screening job applicants. Your number one goal for this interview should be to get the next level, which is obtaining a face-to-face interview. Listed below are some tips to being prepared for your phone interview.

- ◆ Be prepared to interview. Have the following next to your phone:
  - ◇ Your resume
  - ◇ A short list of your accomplishments
  - ◇ Your 90-second reply "Tell me about yourself...."
  - ◇ Question you want to ask
  - ◇ Pen and paper for note taking
  - ◇ Your calendar
- ◆ Eliminate distractions. Evict kids and pets. Turn off music and the TV. Close the door.
- ◆ During your interview, consider the following:
  - ◇ Sit at a desk or table.
  - ◇ Don't smoke, chew gum, eat, or drink.
  - ◇ Be enthusiastic.
  - ◇ Speak slowly and clearly.
  - ◇ Don't interrupt the interviewer
  - ◇ Take your time.
  - ◇ Give short answers and avoid rambling.
  - ◇ SMILE. It will project a positive image and will change the tone of your voice.
  - ◇ At the end of the interview, ask what the next step is and what the process or timeline is.
- ◆ Remember, first impressions still count.



### Tips for Skype interviews

Skype interviews can really be the best of both worlds — you still get face-to-face time with an employer while cutting travel out of the equation. And while mastering the interview is a common practice, etiquette surrounding a Skype interview is different from both in-person and phone interviews. Here are 13 tips to help you rock a Skype interview.

**1. Look at the camera, not the screen.**

It is very tempting to watch yourself or your interviewer during a Skype session, but looking directly at the video camera is the only way to maintain direct eye contact with your interviewer.

**2. Dress the part.**

Treat your Skype interview like an in-person interview and dress professionally from head to toe. A professional dress code with video interviews is expected, no excuses.

**3. Prepare your surroundings.**

Pick a quiet place to interview without an elaborate backdrop so that you can be the focal point on the screen. Remove anything distracting behind you and keep it neutral.

**4. Practice makes perfect.**

Interviewing with a friend beforehand is helpful because your first few Skype calls are likely to feel awkward, especially if you have to retrain yourself to watch the camera and not the screen.

**5. Close other programs on your computer.**

Getting Facebook notifications during your interview is distracting and unprofessional. Before your interview, make sure all other windows on your computer are closed (especially if they make noise).

**6. Use notes.**

Don't be afraid to help yourself with post-it notes or a copy of your resume handy when you interview. A benefit of having a Skype interview is that you can have a cheat sheet in front of you so that you don't have to memorize everything you want to mention.

**7. But don't rely too much on your notes.**

Just make sure your notes are easy to view so that you use them as quick reminders, not a script. While having notes is certainly a plus, relying too heavily on them can cause awkward pauses during your interview. An interviewer won't be impressed if they only see the top of your head during the interview.

**8. Avoid interruptions.**

If you are interviewing in a house with multiple people or pets, be sure to let everyone in the house know ahead of time that you will be in an interview.

**9. Keep your profile professional.**

Unlike an in-person or phone interview, your first impression during a Skype interview doesn't actually involve you. The first thing your interviewer will see is your Skype username and picture, so double check that they are both interview appropriate (or create a professional Skype account — after all, they're free!)

**10. Watch your body language.**

Be sure to have good posture and relax your shoulders to avoid stiffness.

**11. Avoid a "Can you hear me now?" situation**

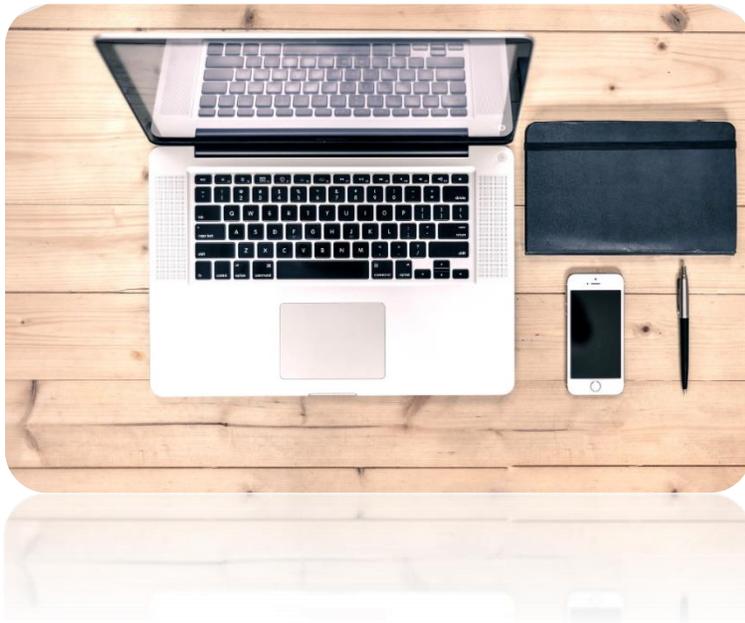
Nothing is more frustrating than only catching every other word a person is saying, so be sure to tweak the Skype audio ahead of time to make sure you can both hear and be heard without difficulty.

**12. Make sure the interviewer is engaged.**

Stop occasionally, and make sure your interviewer is engaged in what you are saying. Being aware of the interest level of your interviewer is crucial in a Skype interview since they may have interesting e-mails pop up that direct attention away from you.

**13. Follow up!**

A thank-you letter is just as important after a Skype interview as it is in an in-person interview. Avoid following up on Skype, though, unless the interviewer requests it!



### Be prepared for a panel interview

In a panel interview, you will be interviewed by a panel of two or more people. Companies like panel interviews for several reasons. Its time efficient, a way of fostering teamwork, and gives more than one person a say in hiring decisions. Each person on the panel will have a different role to play. For instance, the human resources person will be checking to see if you are a good fit for the company. The hiring manager will be interested in your technical skills. You'll need to address both during your interview.



### Ace your panel interview

- ✓ Greet each interviewer individually. Make eye contact, say hello, and if possible, shake hands.
- ✓ Don't show surprises or make comments about being nervous or scared by the panel.
- ✓ When answering questions, look first at the person asking the question and then look at the others during your answer.
- ✓ Make an effort to speak with/to each person on the panel.
- ✓ Stay calm and answer the questions just as if you were speaking with just one person.
- ✓ Ask your questions
- ✓ At the end of the interview, ask for each person's business card.
- ✓ Shake hand with each person and thank them for their time.
- ✓ Follow-up with a thank you letter to each panel member.

The following Pre-Employment Inquiry Guide was developed by the Michigan Department of Civil Rights. Its purpose is to assist employers in establishing sound selection procedures and avoiding unlawful discrimination. This guide is a helpful source for understanding lawful vs. unlawful questions that may be asked during an interview. For more detailed information go to: [www.michigan.gov/documents/pre-employment\\_inquiry\\_guide\\_13019\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/pre-employment_inquiry_guide_13019_7.pdf)

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Lawful Inquiries</u>	<u>Unlawful Inquiries</u>
<b>Address</b>	Applicants current & prior address	
<b>Age</b>	Are you 18 or older?	Applicants age or date of birth
<b>Arrests</b>	have you ever convicted of a crime? Have you ever been arrested for a felony?	Misdemeanor arrests which did not result in a conviction <b>unless</b> applicant is seeking a position with a law enforcement agency
<b>Birthplace</b>		Birthplace of applicant & applicants relatives; birth certificate, naturalization & baptismal records, unless require by federal law
<b>Citizenship</b>	Are you legally authorized to work in the united states?	These questions are unlawful <b>unless</b> asked as part of the federal I-9 process <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Of what country are you a citizen?</li> <li>2. Are you a naturalized or a native-born citizen?</li> <li>3. Are your parents or spouse naturalized or a native-born citizen?</li> </ol>
<b>Disability</b>	Ability to perform the essential functions of the job with or without reason able accommodation	Physical or mental conditions which are not directly related to the requirements of a specific job.
<b>Education</b>	Applicants academic, vocational or professional education, & school attended	
<b>Genetic Testing</b>		Applicants genetic information; requiring applicant to undergo genetic testing

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Lawful Inquiries</u>	<u>Unlawful Inquiries</u>
Height or weight		Applicants height or weight
Marital Status		Marital status or children; titles such as Mr., Mrs., or Ms.
Name	Applicants name; other names used by applicant	Applicants maiden name
National Origin	Languages spoken& written by applicant	Applicants lineage, ancestry, national origin, or nationality
Notice in Case of Emergency	Name, address, & telephone number pf person to be notified in case of accident or emergency	Name, address, & telephone number of <b>relative</b> to be notified in case of accident or emergency
Organizations	The organizations & clubs to which applicant belongs except as noted in the column to the right	Names of organizations to which an applicant belongs <b>IF</b> information would reveal the race, color, national origin, or ancestry of the members of the organization
Photograph		Applicants photograph <b>prior to hire</b>
Race or Color		Applicants race, national origin, color
Religion		Religious denomination or affiliation; religious holidays observed
Sex		Applicant gender; ability or desire to have children; child care arrangement

### The Bottom Line

When preparing and answering interview questions keep in mind the following questions hiring managers ask themselves during the interview process. Structure your answers to help them see you in the most positive light.

- ◆ Does the person have the ability and skills to do the job?
- ◆ Does the job the applicant's need's, interests, and values?
- ◆ Is the applicant motivated to do the job?
- ◆ How will this candidate fit into the group, the organizational structure and culture?

“Every job is a self-portrait of the person who  
did it.

Autograph your work with excellence.”

-Edward Simmons

### The follow-up

After your interview there are still things to do to increase your chances of landing the position. First and foremost is to send a thank you letter within 24 hours of your interview. Sending a letter via email is acceptable, however a typed or hand-written one sent in the mail is even more memorable. Whichever you decide to send, include the following information:

- ⇒ Address your letter to the specific interviewer
- ⇒ Thank the interviewer for their time/hospitality/kindness/interest shown to you during the interview
- ⇒ Point out the highlights of interest
- ⇒ Include a key area that you discussed or reinforce a strong point you made
- ⇒ Reaffirm interest in the position and highlight your strengths
- ⇒ Close the letter and again thank the interviewer
- ⇒ Keep the lines of communication open
- ⇒ \*\* see sample thank you letter page 20

### Evaluate your interview

Now's the time to reflect upon how the interview went. Consider the following:

- ⇒ What did you do well? (Think about your non-verbal and verbal behaviors.)
- ⇒ What could you have done better?
- ⇒ How well did you answer the interview questions?
- ⇒ How did the interviewer react to your answers?
- ⇒ Were you able to ask questions related to the position?
- ⇒ Does the position interest you and do you feel it would be a good fit for you?
- ⇒ Do you want to work for the company?

**\*\*Sample Thank You Letter**

August 9, 2010

Ms. Rhoda Cool Office Manager  
Capital & Associates  
5101 Wealth Rd.  
Dearborn, MI 48128

Dear Ms. Cool:

Thank you for the opportunity to interview with you earlier today for the Accounting Assistant position with Capital & Associates. I very much appreciated the time you spent with me talking about the position and answering my questions.

Spending time with you today furthers my belief that my accounting skills would be a great asset to your company. Since I am very detailed oriented with excellent time management skills, I believe I would be a great fit for the position. My experience and my coursework make me confident that I have the qualifications you are looking for in an Accounting Assistant.

Thank you again for your consideration. Please feel free to contact me if you need further information.

Sincerely,

*Kyle Candidate*

Kyle Candidate

### Last but not least

Remember to check on your status following the timeline you were told about in the interview. Call or email the person you interviewed with to determine where they are in the process of making a hiring decision. This gives you another opportunity to express your interest in the position and very briefly highlight your skills.



Remember,  
Whether or not you get the job.....  
**YOU WERE PREPARED!**  
**YOU DID YOUR BEST!**  
**YOU ARE A STAR!**