Carnegie Mellon University
Career & Professional Development Center

Effective Interviewing Strategies
Preparation Before the Interview…

Know yourself
Know the employer
Know Yourself

Education: GPA, majors/minors/tracks, electives, certifications, etc.

Experience: fulltime, summer/co-op, volunteer, campus activities, etc.

‘Intangibles’
Know Yourself (cont.)

Look at each part of your background, identify one or more strengths/skills, and come up with at least one example or story that illustrates that strength or skill.
Know Yourself (cont.)

Education:
- Business Minor—good understanding of business fundamentals
  Group project story

Experience:
- Summer Internship—worked at a small start-up company
  Marketing story

‘Intangibles’:
- Adaptable—used to adjusting to changing situations and tasks
  Student organization fundraising story
Know the Employer

What they do…

How big (or small) are they…

What sets them apart…

What they’re looking for…
Know the Employer (cont.)

Advertising.com Research—

Overview (Hoovers.com):

“This aptly named business helps companies get their advertisements online. Advertising.com offers targeted ad placement across its network of more than 3,000 Web sites using its proprietary AdLearn targeting system. It also places ads through search-driven advertising systems operated by Google, Yahoo! SearchMarketing, and LookSmart, as well as rich-media and interactive advertising services. In addition to online ads, Advertising.com offers a wide range of direct e-mail advertising services as well as campaign reporting and analytical services. Founded as TeknoSurf.com in 1998, the company was acquired by America Online in 2004.”
Know the Employer (cont.)

Company Website:

Values:

“At Advertising.com, we value hard work, integrity and innovation. Our network, our technologies, our solutions – despite our many advantages, our primary focus is customer service. Each of our clients receives a dedicated account team focused on designing and executing a strategic online marketing plan that delivers continually increasing results for their unique objectives”.
Know the Employer (cont.)

Job Posting (from TartanTRAK):

Required Skills

• Strong **analytical, decision-making and problem solving skills** and abilities.
  • Ability to work in a fast-paced and dynamic environment.
  • Thorough knowledge of PC applications and the Internet.
  • Ability to establish and maintain effective working relationships with managers, employees, external clients, and/or customers.
  • Ability to maintain own work flow and meet deadlines.
  • Ability to possess strong leadership, communication (both verbal and written), and customer service skills.
  • Ability to exchange information with others clearly and concisely.
Dress For Success

Look professional

Neatness counts (down to your shoes)

A polished "dress for success" appearance creates a positive first impression

Conservative attire rather than a fashion statement is best. However, the style of dress should be reflective of the type of work or industry
Know the Stages of the Interview Process

Icebreaker
Assessing Candidate’s Qualifications and Interest in Position
Description of Organization and Position
Candidate Questions
Close & Follow-Up
Types of Interview Questions

Specific ('What were your major responsibilities during your summer internship?')

Open ('Tell me about yourself'.)

Behavioral-Based ('Can you recall a time when you were a member of a team and one of the members wasn’t doing their job? What happened and what was the result?')
Types of Interview Questions (cont.)

Find a way to mention at least one of your skills in each of your interview answers, and give an example of using a skill the first time that it’s mentioned.

Specific (‘What were your major responsibilities during your summer internship’?)

‘One of my main tasks was to do sales research and identify trends. It gave me an opportunity to develop strong analytical skills. Let me give you an example of one of my research projects’.
Open (‘Tell me about yourself’.)

‘I’m a Computer Science student due to graduate next May. Over the past couple of years, I’ve developed strong Java programming skills through research work and class projects. As my resume indicates, I’ve also had an opportunity to develop teamwork skills through involvement in a couple of student organizations. In going through your company’s job description on TartanTRAK, I was interested in your company’s development of custom products using a variety of software and languages, including Java. During my interview today, I’d like to discuss how my background and skills might fit your needs. Let me start by providing you with details about my internship experience this past summer’
Know How to Answer Behavior-Based Interview Questions

Think like an employer!
Use specific examples

S.T.A.R. Technique

Situation
Task
Action
Result
S.T.A.R. Example

Question: Tell me about a challenging situation you’ve encountered at Carnegie Mellon and describe how you handled it.

Situation: My service organization was in danger of losing its charter at the university. Membership was down and funds were very low.

Task: As fundraising chairperson, I was charged with the responsibility of increasing donations by thirty percent.

Action: In order to accomplish my goal, I initiated a door-to-door campaign off-campus. All members were involved in the fundraising effort.

Result: Thanks to our membership’s dedication and participation, we increased donations by thirty-seven percent.
Prepare Questions to Ask the Employer

Two Types of Questions:

**Work Environment**: ‘What’s a typical day like on this job’? ‘Can you describe a typical career path for someone in this position’? ‘What’s the next step in your hiring process’? ‘When should I expect to hear from you regarding the outcome of my interview today’?

‘**Check Back**’: ‘What skills and abilities do you think are critical for success in this position’?
Know Basic Interview Rules

Be relaxed
Be honest
Listen carefully & react
Be polite
Be confident
Be enthusiastic
Rules (cont.)

Follow the interviewer’s lead (but don’t be afraid to ‘bounce off’ of an interviewer’s question to illustrate a strength)

Be flexible
Be prepared to define statements
Be prepared for the unexpected
Be positive
Effectively Close the Interview

Thank the recruiter for the opportunity to interview

Briefly outline your strengths one last time

Express an interest in the position

‘Thank you for meeting with me today. Based on our discussion, I feel that my strong academic background, relevant experience, and leadership skills would make me a strong candidate for this position. I’m very interested in being considered for this job.’
After the Interview: Follow-up!

Evaluate your performance

Send a thank-you note (email is o.k.) to the interviewer within 24 hours

Keep records of important dates and details for follow-up
Final Thoughts

Be confident and positive

Be aware of your body language (posture’s important)

Have fun and enjoy the interviewing process

Look at the ‘Interviewing’ Career Success Guide on the Career Center’s website for more details

Practice…practice…practice
Questions?