

# **PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW**

## **SPIRITUAL PREPARATION**

Knowing that you are being evaluated on everything you say and do is never an easy situation. So it is important to focus on the big picture to help you as you prepare for an interview. Remember who you are and whose you are. Nothing can change that (Romans 8:31-39) not even a poor performance during a job interview.

1. Read James 1 and pray for wisdom, grace, insight and control of your tongue.
2. Read Philippians 4: 6-7 and pray for the peace that surpasses all understanding.
3. Read Psalms 139 and be thankful for the way God created you.
4. Read Romans 8:28-29 and know that you are growing and learning to be more like His son through your job search.
5. Read 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 and remember that your personhood does not depend on the results of an interview.

## **RESEARCH TIPS**

1. Investigate the company/organization. Find as much information as you can about the company/organization as you can. Search the company/organization web site, find out if the library has any information on the company/organization, look for magazine articles, look in trade magazines, contact career services staff, and if possible talk to present or past employees. Find out the mission statement, about the products and/or services provided, read the job posting or a job description, and if possible go to the site to see the facility. Keep in mind the more you know about the entire job situation the better you can respond to the questions during the interview.
2. Be sure to find out names of the people that will be interviewing you. Also when you arrive at the interview site keep in mind that the evaluation of you could begin as soon as you are seen. Be very professional with anyone you come in contact with as you enter the facility. The Receptionist will be asked about your behavior when you talked to them and while you waited.
3. You may want to call the day prior to your interview date to confirm the time, location, and correct address.
4. Prepare information that would be required on a company/organization's application form. The type of information needed would include addresses, phone numbers, former supervisor's names, wages at previous jobs, any required license information, dates of employment, and social security number.

## **WHILE YOU ARE WAITING**

Plan to arrive for the interview at least 15 minutes before your scheduled time. While you wait you may want to review your questions for the interviewer, read any company/organization literature on tables around you, or review the job information you collected during your research. Be prepared to complete a formal application form for the company/organization when you arrive. Have a pen with you and find a table or hard surface so your writing is neat and clear.

## **STEPS OF AN INTERVIEW**

**Step 1 – Greeting:** During this step the interviewer will be getting you from the waiting area to take you to the room where the interview will take place. They will be having a casual conversation with you or asking you very easy questions about things like the weather, or the traffic, etc.

**Step 2 – Getting Information:** This step is when the interviewer will ask the questions to get information regarding your fit for the job. Most of the time spent during an interview should be during this step. For the type of questions that are typically asked during this step refer to the list of “Most Commonly Asked Questions during an Interview” on the following pages. The best advice for you during this portion is to be honest, be yourself, and just answer the question that has been asked. Do not ramble on about anything. This is a technique used by some interviewers to get you to tell about situations or events that you would offer voluntarily but wouldn’t be able to ask legally or ethically.

**Step 3 – Giving Information:** At this point during the interview the interviewer will ask you to ask questions. You should have a few questions to ask about the job, the company, the future of the company, the type of supervision you could expect, and any other job related issue that will help you determine if you want to the job. In a second interview you could bring up the salary and benefits. Typically a discussion about salary and benefits would not be appropriate during an initial interview unless it is an important issue or the interviewer brings up the information.

**Step 4 – Closing the Interview:** A closing will begin when the interviewer verbally indicates that they have enough information or they begin to thank you for meeting with them. They should give you a timeline for completing the process of selection and how you would be informed of the decision. It is appropriate to ask for the timeline and process of being informed if they do not offer it. Do not try to extend the interview when the signal to end is given. Just follow the interviewer’s lead and end the interview.

## **FINAL THOUGHTS AND TRAPS TO AVOID**

- ◆ Watch out for habitual nervous habits (fidgeting, leg swinging, etc.).
- ◆ Never be critical of your previous job or company/organization especially your previous supervisor.
- ◆ Do not argue with the interviewer.
- ◆ Do not be bothered by delays or interruptions at the beginning or during the interview.
- ◆ Do not apologize for your age, education or work history.
- ◆ Be prepared to discuss your weak areas or things you need to improve.
- ◆ Be prepared for a behavioral interview by having stories of a variety of circumstances from previous work or educational experience or be prepared to respond to a scenario that the interviewer may provide as part of the interview.
- ◆ Do not use the expressions such as “like” and “you know” as well as avoiding the “ums” and “ahs.”

- ◆ Do not rush into every question immediately. It is appropriate to take a few minutes to gather your thoughts, formulate how you want to answer and be precise in your response.
- ◆ Always be professional and polite to the Receptionist, administrative personnel and all others you may encounter during the time you are at the company/organization's site.

## Interview Attire for Men

- Single-breasted navy or charcoal gray two piece suit. A subtle stripe or pattern is acceptable.
- White, long-sleeved oxford cloth shirt.
- Maroon or red silk tie with small conservative pattern.
- Dark socks that, when you are seated, will remain above the pants cuff.
- Belt or shoes of matching color, typically black or cordovan. Well polished shoes.
- Professional briefcase or portfolio instead of backpack.
- Minimal cologne.
- Neat hair style.
- No more than 1 ring on each hand.
- Professional watch, especially one without an alarm that may sound during the interview.
- Do not wear theme clothing, such as a cartoon tie.
- Trimmed and clean finger nails.
- Remove body piercing, including earrings, and cover tattoos.



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## Interview Attire for Women

- Skirted suit with skirt length appropriately at or just above the knees. Suit jacket can be single or double-breasted.
- Navy or charcoal gray are the preferred suit colors, but black, hunter green, or deep purple are acceptable within certain industries.
- White, off white or light blue cotton or silk blouse with conservative necklines and hidden or conservative buttons.
- Low to medium leather heel with closed toe.
- Neutral hosiery.
- Matching scarf is acceptable, but should be understated.
- Moderate amount of jewelry or accessories. A general rule is to wear no more than 13 accessories, including scarf, belt, jewelry, buttons, etc. No more than 1 ring on each hand.
- Professional briefcase or portfolio instead of backpack or purse.
- Minimal makeup and perfume.
- Trimmed fingernail with conservative color, if any.
- Neat hair style with hair pulled back from face.
- Remove body piercing, except for one conservative earring in each ear. Cover tattoos.



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## What is Business Casual?

There are numerous opinions regarding what type of clothing falls within the category of business casual. Some companies consider khaki pants and short-sleeved polo shirts as business casual. Other organizations require slacks or skirts and long-sleeved shirts when they refer to business casual. Although there is a wide range of definitions for business casual, there are also some general rules that apply:

- Jeans, tennis shoes, tight or short skirts, t-shirts and sweatshirts are never considered business casual.
- Business casual does not apply to grooming standards. Your appearance should remain neat and respectable. This includes nicely pressed clothing, polished shoes, and conservative accessories.

Business casual is defined by the geographic region, industry, and individual companies. The best way to determine a company's standard is to conduct research or ask a company's representative. As always, when in doubt, dress conservatively and lean more toward the business side rather the casual side.

### Men

- Not expected to wear ties
- Business or sports jacket is appropriate
- Stylish, solid colored pants
- Long-sleeved solid or striped dark shirt
- Dark socks
- Matching belt and shoes

### Women

- Business skirt or pants
- Conservative blouse or sweater
- Blazer or vest is appropriate
- Flat or low heels
- Neutral hosiery
- Belt, scarf, and accessories should remain understated



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## QUESTIONS COMMONLY ASKED BY INTERVIEWERS

The following questions are commonly asked by employment interviewers. It would be wise for you to formulate your responses to these questions as part of your interview preparation.

- What goals have you set for yourself? How are you planning to achieve them?
- Who or what has had the greatest influence on the development of your career interests?
- What factors did you consider in choosing your major?
- Why are you interested in our organization?
- Tell me about yourself.
- What two or three things are most important to you in a position?
- What kind of work do you want to do?
- Tell me about a project you initiated.
- What are your expectations of your future employer?
- What is your GPA? How do you feel about it? Does it reflect your ability?
- How do you solve conflicts?
- Tell me about what you perceive your strengths to be. Your weaknesses. How do you evaluate yourself?
- What work experience has been the most valuable to you and why?
- What was the most useful criticism you ever received, and who was it from?
- Give an example of a problem you have solved and the process you used.
- Describe the project or situation that best demonstrated your analytical skills.
- What has been your greatest challenge?
- Describe a situation where you had a conflict with another individual, and how you dealt with it.
- What were the biggest problems you have encountered in college? How have you handled them?
- What are your team-player qualities?
- Describe your leadership style.
- What interests or concerns do you have about the position or company?
- What was your greatest challenge in a particular leadership role you had?
- What idea have you developed and implemented that was particularly creative or innovative?
- What characteristics do you think are important for this position?
- How have your educational and work experiences prepared you for this position?
- Take me through a project where you demonstrated \_\_\_\_\_ skills.
- How do you think you have changed personally since you started college?
- Tell me about a team project of which you are particularly proud and your contribution to it.
- How do you motivate people?
- Why did you choose the extracurricular activities you did? What did you gain? What did you contribute?
- What types of situations put you under pressure, and how do you deal with pressure?
- Tell me about a difficult decision you have made.
- Give an example of a situation in which you failed, and how you handled it.

- Tell me about a situation when you had to persuade another person to your point of view.
- What frustrates you the most?
- Knowing what you know now about your college experience, would you make the same decisions?
- What can you contribute to the company?
- How would you react to having your credibility questioned?
- What characteristics are most important in a good manager? How have you displayed any of these characteristics?
- What challenges are you looking for in a position?
- Are you willing to relocate or travel as part of your career?
- What two or three of your accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction?
- Describe a leadership role of yours and tell why you committed your time to it.
- How are you conducting your job search, and how will you make your decision?
- What is the most important lesson you have learned in or out of school?
- Describe a situation where you had to work with someone who was difficult.
- How was the person difficult, and how did you handle it?
- We are looking at a lot of good candidates; why are you the best person for this position?
- How would your friends describe you?
- What else should I know about you?
- Tell me about a specific occasion when you conformed to a policy even though you did not agree with it.
- Give me an example of an important goal you had to set and tell me about your progress in reaching that goal.
- Describe the most creative work-related project you have completed.
- Describe your most recent group effort.
- Describe a situation in which you were able to positively influence the actions of others in a desired direction.
- What do you find most attractive about the job for which you are interviewing? What do you find least attractive?
- What motivates you? What rewards you?
- Describe for me your best boss. What makes him or her your favorite?
- What do you think it takes to be successful?

These questions reflect open-ended, situational queries. Common themes include applications of analytical, problem-solving and decision-making skills, leadership development, creativity, teamwork, and personal development.

# INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TEACHER CANDIDATES

**The following are questions often used by school administrators in the interview process. Read them and consider how you might respond. It will help you prepare for those interviews you will be getting.**

- Tell us about yourself?
- Why do you want to be a teacher?
- Describe your student teaching experience.
- What was the best/worst experience in your college education?
- Describe the role of the teacher in the learning process.
- What do you want to accomplish as a teacher?
- What are your reasons for wanting to teach in this particular school system?
- What is your philosophy of education?
- What role does discipline play in education today?
- Express your thoughts on a current problem, development, or issue in education or your field of specialization.
- Comment on the following components of teaching: motivation, classroom control, and planning.
- Do you grade on ability or effort?
- How would you individualize instruction in your classroom?
- What plans do you have to increase your effectiveness as a teacher in the years ahead?
- Are you willing to work with students in some extracurricular activities? Why or why not?
- How would you handle a student who shows little motivation and little desire to learn?
- Some teachers are able to develop a great deal of student interest and excitement about their classes, while others find this to be real difficult. What do you think really makes the difference?
- How do you plan to assess the attitude and feelings your students have concerning you and your classroom?
- Describe some of the things you will do as a teacher which will allow you to establish harmonious relationships with students.
- Do you want your students to like you?
- An experienced teacher offers you the following advice: "When you are teaching, be sure to command respect of your students immediately and all will go well." How do you feel about this?
- Explain how your own personal values will be reflected in your teaching.
- What special strength or abilities do you feel you bring to the teaching position?
- How organized are you as a teacher?
- What do you expect from your building principal?
- How do you feel about observation by supervisors or principals? Why?
- How important is success in learning? In what ways could you help the poor student experience success?
- As a person, what about teaching is most rewarding to you?

- What would you do to build "critical thinking" skills in your students?
- What three words would you use to describe you as a teacher?
- Some of your students always finish their assignments early. How would you deal with the free time that they have?
- What grade level do you prefer? Why?
- How would you use teacher aides and parent volunteers?
- Are parent/teacher conferences important? Why or why not?
- Describe an ideal classroom.
- A student is consistently late to your class. How do you handle the situation?
- What would you do or how would you treat a student who refused to do the work you assigned?
- How would you handle a student that continually "acted up" in your class?
- How and when do you discipline a student?
- You know that a staff member has been talking behind your back about what he or she sees as your ineffective teaching methods. What would you do?
- What do you expect from your supervisor?
- **What grade levels or subjects do you prefer to teach?**
- Have you taught or are you interested in teaching combination classes?
- Do you have experience with special education students?
- Why do you want to teach in our school district?
- Do you have (multicultural, urban, learning problems) teaching experience?
- What do you remember most about your own education?
- How do you stimulate active participating in the classroom?
- How would you use parents in the classroom?
- What types of rewards and consequences would you use in your classroom?
- What kinds of planning do you see a teacher doing?
- How do you plan for a year? A week? A day?
- How do you know what you will cover?
- What is your primary goal with student discipline?
- How much responsibility for their learning do you feel students should have to take?
- Describe your most difficult student discipline situation and how you handled it.
- What do you see yourself doing over the course of the next several years to improve your abilities as a professional?
- What professional development topics most interest you?
- As a teacher to a new school, what would you see yourself doing to contribute to healthy staff relationships and become part of the staff?
- What additional talents and skills do you have?