Interview Checklist

Handout available for download on the YRRP website at:
https://www.yellowribbon.mil/cms/event-handout/

Before the Interview

- ☐ Know which job the interview is for
- ☐ Know the job description
- ☐ Know information about the company relevant to the job
  - ☐ Internet research - do a news search, review company website and social media
  - ☐ Talk with current employees and/or review their LinkedIn profiles
  - ☐ Talk with the company's vendors and customers, if possible
- ☐ Rehearse route to interview a few days before the interview (same time of day)
- ☐ Prepare your own questions, but do not ask questions that can be answered by reviewing the company website
- ☐ Rehearse your answers to interview questions and practice the questions you have for the interviewer(s) in front of a mirror – check for nervous habits
- ☐ Ensure you are rested, fed, and hydrated
- ☐ Dress appropriately (better to be overdressed rather than underdressed)
- ☐ Ensure that you arrive 10-15 minutes early and turn off your phone upon arrival
- ☐ Bring a notepad and pen
- ☐ Bring multiple printed copies of your resume and professional references for interviewers (be familiar with every bullet point on your resume)
  - ☐ Have copies of these items available on your phone in case interviewers request an emailed copy
- ☐ If it is a web-based interview, download the software and make sure you have the computer capabilities needed a few days before the interview
  - ☐ Consider conducting a practice session to check lighting, background, use of the specific technology, etc.

At the Start of and During the Interview

- ☐ Smile
- ☐ Offer a whole-hand, firm handshake for all involved, if appropriate
  - ☐ If not appropriate, like during a pandemic, offer an acceptable alternative such as a nod and smile or head dip
- ☐ Make eye contact (do not stare; scan the room if multiple interviewers)
- ☐ Do not slouch
- ☐ Paraphrase the question or ask for clarification if you are unsure of what the interviewer is asking; it is ok to pause briefly to think about your response. Don't rush to answer
- ☐ Make sure you are positive in your answers; don't criticize or say anything negative about a previous supervisor or job

- ☐ Speak naturally (don't rush), and avoid military jargon and acronyms
- ☐ Toward the end of the interview, it is acceptable to ask how the rest of the hiring process will work

At the End of and After the Interview

- ☐ Offer a whole-hand, firm handshake for all involved, if appropriate
  - ☐ If not appropriate, like during a pandemic, offer an acceptable alternative such as a nod and smile or a head dip
- ☐ Make eye contact
- ☐ Make sure you get the contact information from all interviewers so you can send a follow-up thank you note
- ☐ Write down notes from the interview to use for follow-up meetings/thank you notes
- ☐ Send a thank you note (mail or email depending on office culture)
  - ☐ Include additional information as relevant
  - ☐ Indicate your interest in the position
  - ☐ Include professional references as relevant

Professional Introduction

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Elements of a Professional Introduction

- Create a **greeting**: include your first and last name
- List your **experience**: accumulated experience in your specific industry and jobs
- List your areas of **expertise**: major job functions and skill categories
- List your **strengths**: specific skills that you possess
- List your **accomplishments**: specific accomplishments that emphasize your strengths
- List your **job search strategy**: what you want to do with your experience

Template for a Professional Introduction

- **Greeting**: Hello, my name is _____.
- **Experience and expertise**: I have ___ years of experience in the _____ industry with expertise in _____ and _____.
- **Strengths**: My strengths are _____ and _____.
- **Accomplishments**: I have been recognized for _____.
- **Job search strategy**: I am interested in expanding my experience into _____.

Example of a Professional Introduction

Hello, my name is John Smith. I have 5 years of experience as a security guard with expertise in the fields of Security Assistance and Cooperation, Program Management and Training, and Strategic Planning. I am experienced with establishing a consensus among diverse groups of individuals. I understand the team concept as a leader and a follower, and I can problem-solve. I have led complex organizations successfully at all levels in a multi-national arena and received awards from the U.S. Army and the U.S. Department of State. I am interested in expanding my experience into the fields of national security and defense cooperation abroad.

Your Professional Introduction:

Commonly Asked Interview Questions and Answer Tips

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Tell me about yourself.

The key to answering this or any other interview question is to offer a response that supports your career objective. The challenge is to keep your answer short (about 1 minute) and focused. An interviewer often asks this question to find out if you are the kind of person who will fit in well with his or her company. You do not want to give the interviewer a long biography of your life that has nothing to do with your skills and achievements. The whole point of the interview is to show that you are the right person for the job. You may choose to tell a story that relates the origin of your interest in the career field. Another approach is to connect your personal characteristics, goals, and events that motivated you to pursue this opportunity. You may also want to mention what you are really passionate about and how this eagerness relates to your career and how you might bring this passion to the company when you are hired. You can use the 30-second commercial you prepared to answer this question.

Example

Hello, my name is Joe. I have recently graduated with a bachelor's degree in Business Administration. While in college, I interned with an organization that focused on applying data-driven solutions to various business problems. In this internship, I was able to apply the skills that I was learning at school to the work that I was performing. It sounds like the role we are discussing would provide me with a great opportunity to leverage my strategic data analytic skills.

What are your strengths?

If you have sufficiently researched the organization, you should be able to imagine what skills the company values. List them, and then give real-world examples where you have demonstrated these skills.

Example

I am known for being an effective team member who can communicate well with executives, customers, and my peers. I have worked on many teams over the past years, and I have learned to understand and resolve issues effectively. For example, I was on a team that was charged with a very ambiguous assignment. I helped the team draft some clarification questions, which I then presented to our manager, so we could get a better understanding of our assignment.

What are your weaknesses?

Everyone has weaknesses, but the interviewer wants to know if you have any weaknesses that will prevent you from doing the particular job well. Discuss with the interviewer a weakness that you feel you have developed strategies to overcome. For example, if you do not like making cold calls, tell the interviewer about the phone scripts you wrote that helped you to overcome this fear. Always reassure the employer that you are confident that you can either work with or overcome the weakness.

Example

Sometimes, I have difficulty delegating work to others. Although, I have never missed a deadline, I understand that there will be times that I will not be able to accomplish all project goals by myself. Therefore, I have been actively working on getting more comfortable with delegation. For example, in my last role, I created an Excel spreadsheet on google drive that I shared with my team. This allowed me to organize and manage the tasks that I assigned and helped me feel comfortable about delegating work to the team.

What are your career goals?

The interviewer wants to know if your plans and the company's goals are compatible. Let him or her know that you are ambitious enough to plan ahead. Talk about your desire to learn more and improve your performance, and be as specific as possible about how you will meet the goals you have set for yourself. Make sure you address how the role you are applying for will help you achieve those goals. Talk about your career rather than the next few jobs you would like.

Example

My current short-term goal is to further develop and use my accounting skills in a job like this one. However, I would like to eventually grow into a position that allows me to continue to use my quantitative skills while also leading and managing a team. While I plan to continue to develop my technical skills, I intend to prepare for this goal by taking on more leadership roles in team projects and attending some leadership seminars.

Describe a difficult situation you have experienced, or what has been your biggest challenge?

The interviewer is interested in hearing you describe your coping skills. Think of a time you had difficulty either in a career-related or school experience, and describe it. Talk about the effective ways you handled the issue. Never speak negatively about a supervisor, colleague, or co-worker.

Example

***Situation**: I was assigned to work on a client project with a very short timeframe. Two days before the project was due, one of the team members left the organization and did*

not share with us the work he or she was responsible for or had completed. I understood that this client was an extremely important client for our organization.

***Task**: I decided that it was important that we complete the project within the time allotted, and I understood that I would have to make up the missing work.*

***Action**: I asked for an emergency meeting with my team. I set up a video conference, and we quickly brainstormed the information I would need to complete the work. I delegated some of the work to team members, and, then, I worked until late at night to make sure the work was finished.*

***Result**: In the end, we completed the work on time. The client was very happy with our work and ended up signing a new contract with the company.*

Do you have any questions for me?

Always ask two or three questions and have more prepared in advance. This is your opportunity to learn more about the employer and to demonstrate your interest in the position available. Consider asking questions about the company culture, evaluation processes, current issues the industry is facing, and/or other questions that relate to the job specifically or the organization as a whole. The interview is not the time to ask questions about salary, benefits, hours, or vacation. This information may be critical for you in making your decision but wait until you have been offered the job before asking about this information.

Examples

- *What are the characteristics that lead someone to be successful in this job?*
- *What are the characteristics that lead someone to be unsuccessful in this job?*
- *What do you most enjoy about your job?*
- *How would you describe the culture of the organization?*
- *How do you think recent industry changes will impact the organization?*
- *If I am chosen for this role, what would you want me to achieve within the first three months?*

Other Questions to Consider

Your qualifications

- What can you do for us that someone else cannot do?
- What qualifications do you have that relate to the position?
- What new skills or capabilities have you developed recently?
- Give me an example from a previous job where you have shown initiative.
- What is important to you in a job?
- What motivates you in your work?
- What qualities do you find important in a coworker/boss?

Your career goals

- What would you like to be doing five years from now?
- How will you judge yourself as being successful? How will you achieve success?
- How will this job fit into your career plans?
- What do you expect from this job?
- Can you travel?

Your experience

- What have you learned from your past jobs/experiences?
- What were your biggest responsibilities?
- How does your previous experience relate to this position?
- What did you like most/least about your last job?
- Whom may we contact for references?

Your education

- How do you think your education has prepared you for this position?
- What were your favorite classes/activities at school?
- Why did you choose your major?
- Do you plan to continue your education?

This handout was adapted from the following sources:
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Yate, M. J. (2014). *Knock em dead job interview: How to turn job interviews into job offers*. Jumpingdude Media.