

Interview & Communication Skills

Adapted from the Nueva School Internship Materials & Menlo's College Counseling Office

WHEN DOES THE INTERVIEW BEGIN?

- Even before the interview, communication with employers is part of the interview.
- Use professional language. No emojis or slang.
- Address the recipient with the appropriate honorific until they suggest otherwise. If they have an MD or a PhD in their signature line, make sure to address them as Dr.
- It's best practice to respond to any employer email within 24 hours. However, please allow 7 days for an employer to respond before sending any follow-up.

HOW TO PREPARE

- The interview is your chance to be your own advocate.
- Mock interviews are available upon request (email internship@menloschool.org to request one). You can also practice with a friend or family member.
- Do your research about the organization and person you'll be interviewing with (if known).
- Wear appropriate, professional attire. You don't need to wear a suit, but choose something a step above your normal school clothing (your underwear should not be showing). If interviewing in person, you might want to wear layers to prepare for all types of temperatures.
- Hygiene: Shower, comb your hair (if you know you will play with your hair, pull your hair back), have clean hands and nails, and use cologne/perfume sparingly.
- Arrive early so you have time to park, find the exact room/location, use the restroom etc.
- Be polite to everyone you meet.
- Non-verbal communication (aka body language) is just as important as verbal communication.
- When shaking hands, make eye contact. Thank them for their time.
- Use your manners to show respect and politely ask where you should sit. Be sure not to slouch - sit like you are interested and actively paying attention.
- Act naturally and use eye contact; try not to fidget.
- Turn your cell phone off or on airplane mode (you don't want to be distracted).
- Avoid eating, drinking or gum chewing during the interview (if you have a bottle of water, that's fine).

CONVERSATION BASICS

- Fully answer the question; don't use one word answers.
- Respond conversationally, don't memorize a speech, use appropriate language and avoid slang.
- Tell the truth.
- Speak confidently in a relaxed tone. Slow down if you are a fast talker.
- Avoid jargon and Menlo-isms that employers won't be familiar with.
- Before the conversation is over, make sure you discuss any logistics (where, when, and what is expected). If there are dates or times that you are not available to work, please make that very clear in your interview.
- Be sure to ask questions; write down your questions beforehand if needed.

- Don't answer with a negative - if someone asks the classic "what's your weakest quality?" turn it a bit positive.
- Practice your answers to these common questions:
 - What excited you about this opportunity?
 - Tell me about yourself.
 - What work environments do you work best in?
 - What strengths would you bring to this position?
 - What is an example of a time you were a leader?
 - What is something difficult you faced this year?
 - How do you communicate effectively with others?
 - How do you feel you've grown/changed since you entered high school?
 - If you could do one thing in high school differently, what would it be?
 - How would your friends describe you? Your family? Your teachers/coaches?
 - What do you like to do for fun in your free time?
 - Who in your life has most influenced you?
 - What books and/or articles outside of classroom work have you read in the last year?
 - What exactly do you hope to gain from your internship experience?
 - Demonstrate interest by asking questions. You can do some research ahead of time so you have some questions to bring with you.
 - It's important to show you are thoughtful and interested. Make sure to ask questions regarding some information you learned during the interview
 - Ask questions of the person interviewing you: What do you like about your position? How did you become interested in this field?

VIDEO/ZOOM INTERVIEW

- Set up in a quiet space at least 5 minutes before it is scheduled to begin.
- It's crucial that you have working equipment (mic, camera, etc). For a phone call, make sure you have good service. For a video call, your camera must be ON and you should carefully consider the lighting, angle, and background.
- Maintain good posture and eye contact. Close all other windows, turn off chats/email, and avoid looking at anything else on your screen or phone. It is obvious when you aren't fully engaged.
- Your account photo should be of you and one you would share with a family member or teacher.

FOLLOW-UP

- Some employers do not consider students who do not follow-up from an interview. You never know who will care, but why risk not sending a 30-second email? Aim to do this within 24 hours of an interview (but not within 15 minutes - you want to show that you've reflected on the conversation). This can be in an email and should be professionally written. In the thank you letter you want to comment on some of the topics that came up in the conversation to show that you listened and reflected on what they said.