Acing the Interview

Purpose of Interview- To get a second interview? To get the Job!
An interview is more than a resume. At the interview you’ll get to demonstrate value, persuade an employer, share your personality, and shine! In short, it is your chance to articulate why you are the best candidate for the job and seal the deal. The best way to do this is to prepare through information gathering and practice. Then you will be ready to perform!

Gathering information: Looking out and looking in
Making the best first impression requires effort and preparation on your part and a good understanding of the organization (products, services, projects, positions, etc.). At this point, it is crucial that you develop a strong understanding of the organization’s history, culture, and context in the field. This knowledge will enable you to determine how you can contribute to their goals.

Below are ideas of what to look out for and tools to use in your research:

- Find out why they exist, their goals, and strengths
- Are there new projects or issues for them or within the industry
- Who are there competitors and what are their projects
- Identify questions you have about the organization, structure, position, industry, etc. to ask during the interview
- Research tools- Google, word of mouth, networking, competitors, news, company website, job description, mission

Your resume got you the interview, but now you must transform the words on your resume from a 2-D description of your abilities, experiences, and education into a 3-D picture of why you are the best fit for the job. It is no accident that this section follows “looking out”—you must remain focused on why you are a great fit for that particular organization, based on what you found by “looking out”. To construct this picture you will need to have a solid self-awareness (interests, values, abilities, experiences, etc.)

- Underline the important keywords from job description
- Write a sentence for each keyword explaining how you meet or have the potential to meet that need
- Expand the sentence to tell a memorable story

Practice:
Once you have a good understanding of what you have to offer and what the company is all about you are ready to move to the next preparatory step: practice answering questions. Key to this step is to anticipate questions and come up with great answers, followed by communicating those great answers succinctly and effectively. Here are some ways to do this:

- Read job description and brainstorm questions
- E.g., outdoor position might have questions about your experience with camping, whereas a project management position might ask for examples of leading a team project
- Remember school projects count too!
- Look at typical interview questions
- Ask friends that have held the job before
- Write out answers and rehearse them out loud and in front of a mirror
➢ Do a mock interview with a friend or the career coordinator

Good Impressions:

Now that you are prepared with your responses, you must prepare to make a positive impression. Timeliness, professional dress, and basic courtesy will aid in this task. Be sure to arrive a few minutes early, so that you can do one last check of your outfit and appearance. Whenever you meet employees at the company be sure to smile and be friendly. When you enter the interview room, introduce yourself and offer a firm handshake (with your right hand).

Making a Good Impression During the Interview

Greetings & Pleasantries

➢ Engaging smile, eye contact, repeat interviewers name, wait to sit until asked
➢ Warm greeting-hello & thank you for the opportunity to interview
➢ Connect by making a comment about shared experience, e.g., weather

Throughout Interview

➢ Be confident (not arrogant)
➢ Provide clear examples of how you met their needs
➢ Listen carefully and take notes of their needs
➢ Express interest in the job and respond thoughtfully
➢ At the end of the interview ask some of the question you formulated during your preparation

Making a Good Impression After the Interview

This is yet one more opportunity to make a good impression-

➢ Send a thoughtful and genuine thank you note within 24 hours (email is fine)
➢ Reflect on the experience
➢ Follow-up, if you have not heard within the time frame they identified

Keep job search moving:

Ideally, you will get a job offer, but while you wait it is important to keep your job search moving. Continue applying and accepting interviews until you have an offer in hand. Once you have accepted a position be sure to withdraw from other job applications.