

**Wharton County Junior College**

# **Interview & Networking**

**A Quick Guide to Interviewing and Networking**

**Developed by the WCJC Title V Career & Transfer Center**

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# About this Guide

Interview Skills and Networking are vital tools that can be used to apply for jobs, internships and even scholarships. In this quick guide, you will find information on how to prepare for and making meaningful connections through interviewing and networking.

The Career and Transfer Center offers the following services in Interview Assistance:

- Hands On Interview Workshops
- Individualized Mock Interview Sessions
- Walk-In Assistance
- In-Person/ Virtual Appointments

## Quick Tips in Interviewing/ Networking

- ✓ Deepen current connections in your community including WCJC Faculty & Staff
  - ✓ Research & Practice common and industry specific interview questions
- ✓ Network with professionals and individuals through organizations, activities, and work

### [Career & Transfer Center](#)

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Walk-In Assistance, In-Person and Virtual Appointments Available

# Job Interviewing Tips

Adapted from *The Job Hunting Handbook* by Harry Dahlstrom and the Job Interview Skills Workshop by the Community Technology Empowerment Program- SPNN and Right Track

Whether in- person or virtual, interviews are great opportunities to show the employer why you are a great fit for their company and for the position you are applying for. It is also a chance for you to “interview” the company/ position to make sure that they are a good fit for you.

## How do I prepare for an interview?

- 1) Research the company and the job position. Know who they are, what they do, and why you would be a good fit to work there.
- 2) Make a list of potential questions you would like to ask the interviewer regarding the job position or company to not only show your enthusiasm and interest for the position but to also be sure that you have a clear understanding of the company and work-related expectations.
- 3) Look up the location for the interview. If possible, drive by the building to be sure you know how to get there.
- 4) Practice sample interview questions by yourself or with friends. Be sure to consider interview questions specific to the industry i.e. technical questions and procedural work-related questions. Examples include, what you would do if a specific challenge were to happen or how you use a specific software or skill to solve a problem.
- 5) Plan to arrive 10 minutes early for your interview.
- 6) Get a good night’s sleep before the interview

## What do I do in an interview?

- 7) Be well-groomed, hygienic and dressed in a style of clothing appropriate for the work environment/industry. If you are unsure what to wear, you can call the company and ask their human resources office. When in doubt or unable to find out, classic business attire (i.e. slacks, knee length skirt, button down shirt, dress, suit, black dress shoes) is always appropriate.
- 8) Arrive alone (do not bring friend/family) 10 minutes early for your interview. If you arrive earlier than 10 minutes find a safe place to wait that is out of the general office vicinity i.e. your car or open lobby area.
- 9) Be sure to bring any necessary documents that you may need i.e. driver’s license, Social Security Card, resume, portfolio.
- 10) Be extra courteous with everyone you meet, especially the administrative assistants who may be directing you to the meeting.
- 11) Be sure that your phone is on **silent** and placed in a concealed location i.e. your bag or pocket.
- 12) Offer a professional greeting when meeting the manager/ hiring committee.
- 13) Show enthusiasm and curiosity and be fully engaged during the interview.
- 14) When asked a question, use the **C.A.R. Method** describing a **Challenge** you experience, the **Action** you took and the **Result** of your action to tell the story of your experiences, when appropriate. For example:

Question: “What is your greatest strength?”

Answer: “My greatest strength is organization. While working at/ participating in X, my group was **given 20 tasks that we had to complete in an hour**. Using my organization skills, I **shared efficient ways we could combine tasks that were connected and divide the work based on group member’s strengths**. As a

result, we were able to **accomplish all of our tasks in the time we were given and provide quality results.**"

- 15) When prompted, be ready to ask any relevant questions that you may have about the job position or company. If you don't have any specific questions, you can always ask about what the next steps are after the interview.
- 16) At the end of the interview, verbally thank the hiring manager/ committee for the opportunity to speak with them. Be sure that they have your contact information and are welcome to reach out if they have any further questions.

## **What do I do after the interview?**

- 17) Send a thank you note to the manager/ hiring manager within 24 hours of the interview. Before sending it, be aware of the company's policies regarding contact after the interview. Some larger organizations prefer that communication only goes through the human resources offices.
  - a. In the thank you, reiterate your appreciation for their time interviewing you and your continued interest in the position.
- 18) If appropriate, after one week, follow-up with the company to thank them again for meeting with you and to see if they need any further information from you in making their decision. Let them know that you are still available and still interested in working for them.

## **Sample Interview Questions**

- Tell me about yourself.
- Walk me through your resume.
- How did you hear about this position?
- What are your greatest strengths?
- What do you consider to be your weaknesses?
- What is your greatest professional achievement?
- Tell me about a challenge or conflict you've faced at work, and how you dealt with it.
- Tell me about a time you demonstrated leadership skills.
- What's a time you disagreed with a decision that was made at work?
- Tell me about a time you made a mistake.
- Tell me about a time you failed.
- Why are you leaving your current job?
- What do you like least about your job?
- What are you looking for in a new position?
- What type of work environment do you prefer?
- What's your work style?
- How would your boss and coworkers describe you?
- How do you deal with pressure or stressful situations?
- How do you stay organized?
- How do you prioritize your work?
- What are you passionate about?
- What motivates you?
- How do you like to be managed?
- In what ways do you consider yourself successful?
- Where do you see yourself in five years?
- How do you plan to achieve your career goals?
- What are your career aspirations?
- What makes you unique?
- Is there anything else you'd like us to know?
- Do you have any questions for us?

# Networking: Building References and Making Career Contacts

For some, the idea of networking can feel overwhelming in figuring out the “who,” “what,” and “how” of the process. In the television shows and movies, we see “business” people talking in different settings, leading to certain ideas of how networking works. But really, **networking** is just about **making a connection with a person**. This can look differently based on the person and the circumstances in which you meet them.

## Why Should You Network?

- Connect to job opportunities
- Learn more about job industry
- Build references
- Build an occupational support network

## Who Can You Network With?

- Family and Friends
- Class mates
- Faculty and staff at school i.e. college, elementary school, high school and etc.
- Community members
- Professionals in the field/company you are interested
- Professional in other industries

## Ways to Connect with Professionals

- Join an Organization
  - Student Organization
  - Professional Organization
  - Local/ Community Organization
- LinkedIn
- Participate in networking events and mixers
- Participate in volunteer activities
- Participate in hobbies
- Connect through a mutual acquaintance i.e. a mutual friend makes an introduction for you

## Networking through Informational Interviewing

Informational interviewing allows you to connect and network with professionals in a structured way. You will be able to learn more about a potential career field, company, and in some situations, it can lead to job opportunities. These interviews can be done in-person, virtually, via email or over the phone. You can interview professors, potential employers, family, friends and community members.

## Steps in setting up an informational interview

1. Determine what outcome you would like to receive from the interview. Is your goal to learn more about a particular company, career or industry? Are you wanting this to turn into a job opportunity?
2. Research the company/ career field. Note what aspects interest you or that you would like to learn more about.
3. Determine who would be the best person for your initial outreach to help you reach your outcome. You can use the company’s website or LinkedIn or even people in your current community/ network i.e. your family, friends, professors, and advising/ career staff. If your goal is to gain a job opportunity, you can also consider reaching out to a recruiter from that company.
4. Reach out to that person either through email, phone, or LinkedIn.

- a. Introduce yourself and express the reason you are contacting them, noting why you are interested in that particular company/ industry. Let them know that you value their time and would like to know if they would be interested in answering questions about their work.
  - b. Provide them with options on how to connect with you, including email, phone, virtual or in-person meetings. Only include the options that would also work for you. For phone, virtual, or in-person meetings, schedule a date and time that would work best. Be sure to allow plenty of time before and after the meeting in your own schedule so that you will be able to arrive on time and allow for flexibility if the interview goes over time.
5. Choose no more than 10 questions to ask, with your previously determined goal in mind. You can use the sample questions listed below as a reference for possible options. Tailor your questions to the person you are speaking and to the industry/ company they are involved in.
  6. Use a conversational tone and stay engaged, asking follow up questions, if applicable.
  7. At the end of the interaction, thank them for their time and send them a written thank you, either through the mail or email. Note: If you are able, consider sending a hand-written thank you note to really stand out as a potential future employee/ colleague.

## Questions to ask in an Information Interview

Information adapted from the online article, [The Best Questions To Ask in an Information Interview](#) by [Indeed](#) Editorial Team.

1. What led you to this career field?
2. Why did you choose to work in this career area?
3. What led to you earning your current position?
4. What important steps a person needs to take to prepare for a role like yours?
5. Did you have any experiences unrelated to this industry that allowed you to excel in your current position?
6. What skills have you developed in this role?
7. Are there any degrees or certifications that are necessary in this industry or would help a job candidate stand out?
8. What is it like to work for (or run) your company?
9. Can you tell me more about the type of decisions you make in your role?
10. How would you describe your company's culture?
11. What do you enjoy about your job?
12. What do you least enjoy about your job?
13. What type of projects do you work on?
14. What are your typical work hours, and how many average hours do you work in a day/week?
15. What does a typical work day entail?
16. In your industry, are you able to prioritize a work/life balance?
17. What are the most difficult or most frequent challenges you face in your work?
18. I've done some research on entry-level salaries in this industry. Are these figures accurate?
19. In your career, what are the greatest accomplishments you have experienced?
20. What was the most surprising to you about your current position/ industry?
21. In your career, what do you wish you could have done differently?
22. When you first started, what do you wish you had known or what would have been helpful to you?
23. What are your goals for the next 5/10 years?
24. What other questions should I be asking you?
25. Do have any recommendations of professional publications or associations that would be helpful in my professional development?
26. Could you refer me to anyone else who has intimate knowledge about this industry?
27. Can we stay in touch?

# Job Search Tips

1. Define what your goals are for the job search.
2. Research the company and the job descriptions carefully.
3. Determine your non-negotiables; the things that you must have to be successful in your work situation i.e. type of work, type of management/manager style, company values, pay, insurance, work hours, paid leave, etc.
4. Dedicate specific time to search for job opportunities. Adding it to your schedule helps you to prioritize your time and limit any feelings of job search burn out.
5. Use online applications **AND** other resources during your job search including speaking to recruiters and connecting with professionals through informational interviews.
6. Modify your resume, cover letter and LinkedIn profile for the types of roles you are currently registering for. It is recommended that resumes and cover letters be tailored specifically for the job position you are applying for.
7. Use LinkedIn as a resources to connect with recruiters and network with professionals. Optimize your profile to communicate who you are as a professional and tell the story of your work.
8. Be sure to show your appreciation and gratitude at every step of the process, particularly after you have interviewed for a position. A personalized thank you note after an interview can set you apart from other candidates. If you are able to send a handwritten thank you note, it will go even further.

## Online Resources

- [Focus2Career](http://www.focus2career.com/Portal/Register.cfm?SID=1828) (www.focus2career.com/Portal/Register.cfm?SID=1828) – Career Exploration & Planning [ACCESS CODE: pioneers]
- [Handshake](http://app.joinhandshake.com) (app.joinhandshake.com) – Job Search and Resume Builder
- [Parker Dewey](http://info.parkerdewey.com/wcjc) (info.parkerdewey.com/wcjc) – Micro-internship Opportunities
- [Indeed](http://www.indeed.com) (www.indeed.com) – Job Search and Resume Builder, Career Guide
- [LinkedIn](http://www.linkedin.com) (www.linkedin.com) – Job Search, Resume Builder, & Networking Tool
- [Jobscan](http://www.jobscan.co) (www.jobscan.co) – Can scan resume for ATS Tracking Software
- [Glassdoor](http://www.glassdoor.com) (www.glassdoor.com) – Job Search
- [FlexJobs](http://www.flexjobs.com) (www.flexjobs.com) – Job Search for Remote Work (note: subscription required)
- [Workable](https://resources.workable.com/interview-questions/) (https://resources.workable.com/interview-questions/) – Practice Interview Questions