



Interviewing Strategies 101

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For many Emerging Scholar and Professional Organization (ESPO) members of The Gerontological Society of America, interview season is upon us: postdoctoral fellowship interviews, clinical internship interviews, faculty and job interviews. Developing strong interviewing skills can lead to increased confidence for entering an interview and may be crucial in landing you a job, fellowship, or career opportunity. Learning how to interview effectively is an important skill in the transition from student to colleague. Here are several tips that may improve your interviewing skills.

Tip 1: Do your research.

Prior to entering the interview, make sure you've adequately prepared. With whom are you interviewing? What is that person's role, and how is it relevant to the position for which you are applying? What is the mission of the company? Be able to clearly articulate your understanding of the position and know where you need further information to make a well-informed decision, should you be presented with an offer.

Tip 2: Look the part.

Standard practices emphasize business suits for interviews, particularly in academia or business environments. However, feeling comfortable in what you're wearing is important—it's readily visible when you're not. Make sure that you feel confident and comfortable in what you're wearing and, if a suit is a must, consider adding your own style twist to represent your individuality.

Tip 3: Communicate your value to the interviewer.

Have several selling points in mind and be prepared to talk comfortably about your strengths. Confidence is key and highlighting the areas in which you shine can communicate your skills effectively. Consider having a few small examples or vignettes to highlight these selling points. Know how your skill set will add to the workplace or department, and how you may fill current gaps—you want to make sure you can discuss how you are adding, rather than matching, what is currently available. Be prepared to talk about why you want the job and the abilities you have that would match well.

Tip 4: Prepare responses to common interview questions.

Depending on your field or position, you're likely aware of common questions given to applicants or interviewees. Make sure you have responses that are well thought out and highlight your strengths, rather than your weaknesses.

Tip 5: Prepare questions to ask the interviewer.

Understand that you are interviewing them at the same time they are interviewing you. What are things you need to know in order to make a well-informed decision? How will the experience further your career trajectory? Are there any areas that you're finding concerning? Feel comfortable getting your questions answered, and make sure you have the information you need prior to leaving the interview.



Tip 6: Define your goals and be able to articulate how the position aligns.

It is important to communicate that you've considered how the position will be a stepping stone to your overall career goal. How does fellowship fit with your trajectory? What will this opportunity do for you? Don't forget to ask about things that influence job satisfaction (i.e., institutional culture and time allocated for professional development, training, parenthood, etc.).

Tip 7: Display energy and assertiveness.

Various studies indicate that interviewers formulate their opinion on a candidate within the first 5 minutes of the interview. Make sure you arrive with positive energy and express your appreciation for the opportunity to interview. You also want to ensure that the interviewer walks away with a strong understanding of your skill set and the strengths you would bring to the position.

Tip 8: Practice, practice, practice!

Job talks, interviews, vignettes, lectures—these should be practiced beforehand. You want to appear comfortable and able to present the material fluently. Practicing beforehand can increase flexibility and fluidity in your responses so that you don't appear too robotic or have difficulty going off-script.

Tip 9: Follow up with a thank you.

Be sure to send a thank you note and follow up with interviewers. Ideally, thank you notes should be sent within 48 hours of the interview. Convey your gratitude for the opportunity and take a quick moment to remind them of the skill set that you bring to the position. Finally, reference something from the meeting to show you remember your time together—and to remind them of you specifically as a candidate!