

# PREPARE FOR INTERVIEWS

The initial screening interview normally lasts 30 minutes (45 minutes to 1 hour for PhD candidates). Like any presentation, the better prepared you are, the more successful you will be.

Be aware of the importance of first impressions.

- Use a solid handshake.
- Make eye contact, and smile.
- Be friendly and relaxed, yet professional.
- Expect some small talk.
- Follow the recruiter's lead.
- Focus and show interest.
- Listen to questions carefully. Never respond simply "yes" or "no." Provide examples and explain "why."
- Display confidence, not arrogance.

One person—an engineer or a human resource manager—will usually interview you. It is less common, but sometimes two recruiters will interview you at the same time. This can be more stressful. Try to relax. Maintain eye contact with each recruiter as you answer their questions.

Remember that the interview is an opportunity for you to learn more about the employer as well as for the employer to evaluate you as a potential employee. Keep in mind that you are not an ideal match for every employer's needs, so it is important to understand early that a "match" between employer and candidate is imperative, not only for the employer, but also for you. Individuals on "both sides of the table" should evaluate each other, discuss needs and interests, and honestly determine the "fit."

Provide specific examples with all answers. Ask questions (see future pages for suggested questions) either during the interview or at the end. Be prepared to supply a 2- to 3-minute summary of your qualifications and interests. Prepare a confident closing statement reiterating your interest in the position and be ready to highlight any important information that was not discussed in the interview.

Ask if you can supply other materials (transcripts, list of references, project summaries). Also ask about the employer's timeline for making hiring decisions. Obtain a business card for your records so you may accurately address a thank you letter. Shake hands, continue making good eye contact, and thank the recruiter for her/his time, mentioning your strong interest and enthusiasm to work with the employer.

Interviews are business meetings. Prepare accordingly. Know what you want to talk about; know your résumé thoroughly; be able to cite examples of skills, lessons learned or goals met all across the résumé page. Dress like you care. Give the impression that this is an important meeting for you.

## QUICK TIPS

**A good recruiter has only one goal in mind during an interview—to obtain the most accurate and positive information possible on each candidate.**

## THE RECRUITER'S APPROACH TO YOUR INTERVIEW

Stop and take a step back to review the interview from the recruiter's viewpoint. Think about why each question is asked—analyze the question behind the question—and try to understand what skills or attributes are actually being evaluated in your response. If you can understand this process and prepare accordingly, you will not only survive, but succeed in interviews.

Recruiters will not try to embarrass you or cause you stress. They have a difficult task in conducting 10 to 15 interviews daily. Ultimately, recruiters must find from 1 to 5 candidates who "fit" their needs. The quality of candidates referred for second, on-site interviews is a direct reflection on the recruiter's ability to know and choose talent. His or her job is a difficult one.

## DO YOUR INTERVIEW HOMEWORK

This is where all your work ultimately pays off—skills assessment, résumé development, and communication with targeted employers.

Preparation and practice are key to successful interviewing. A lack of thorough employer research is often interpreted as poor preparation and a lack of interest in the employer.

- Know your résumé inside and out. Be able to thoroughly and comfortably discuss any item on the résumé by citing specific examples.
- Understand that your résumé emphasizes your skills and accomplishments; it will serve first as a deciding factor leading to an interview. Once an interview is scheduled, the recruiter will often direct the interview using the résumé as an outline.

## QUICK TIPS

- **Preparation is the key to successful interviewing. Know the kinds of questions you will be expected to answer. Describe how you used skills/strengths to meet goals, successfully complete projects, work with others.**
- **Your résumé gets you the interview. But your interview gets you the job offer.**
- Verbally practice answering questions (Yes—out loud!) and talking about your skills and accomplishments. Recall how in “Assessment,” we emphasized the importance of spending time writing descriptions for skills, strengths and accomplishments. Now is the time to practice again!
- Review and organize facts found in employer research. Demonstrate your knowledge of the employer’s products or services. Take it a step further by clearly drawing the link—the match—between your skills and the employer’s needs. Do not leave this important step open for employer interpretation. Show them the match!
- Attend employer information sessions on campus. Introduce yourself to the recruiter(s) and mention that you are looking forward to your interview the next day. Ask intelligent questions and show enthusiasm.
- Prepare your portfolio, clothing, and transportation the night prior to the interview. Check the weather forecast for any contingencies you will need to make. Get plenty of rest. Set dozens of alarm clocks, if necessary. You will not be able to recover if you are late.
- Dress with respect for the importance of the interview. Show you care!
- Every answer requires a specific example to support your claim; never provide a simple one- or two-word answer.
- At the end of the interview, it is extremely important for you to ask questions. Lack of questions indicates lack of interest. Finally, summarize your interests and qualifications for the position.

## WHAT TO WEAR

Business attire is appropriate for interviews. Business casual is appropriate for career fairs, employer information sessions and for more informal segments of an on-site interview.

## WHAT TO BRING

### Résumé

Include several copies of your current résumé. Provide one to the recruiter as you are sitting down to interview. Your complete résumé will provide detailed information for the recruiter and indicate a sense of preparedness.

### Transcripts

Go to your MyUW account and print several unofficial copies of your transcripts. Or, go to the Registrar’s Office to obtain official copies if you need them. Employers will want your unofficial transcript, so do not scramble to print them at the last minute.

### References

Bring your reference list and any evaluations of work performance.

### Other

Not required but may be helpful: photos/illustrations of projects (Vehicle Teams, Concrete Canoe, Bridge Building, Engineering EXPO, Transcend or any of the other student competitions), articles, abstracts, publications.

## PRACTICE OUT LOUD

Now is your time to talk about yourself. After all this preparation, you should know what to say! If you are thoroughly prepared, you know skills employers are seeking, what strengths and accomplishments you have developed, and what this particular employer needs in new engineering hires! You know your résumé and do not need to refer to it throughout the interview. You have practiced talking about your skills and have reviewed lists of potential questions. You are ready and able to talk.

Before you go through an actual interview, you should first go through at least one mock interview. Practicing interview responses is key to understanding how to improve your interviewing skills.

The mock interview is more than an opportunity to work out interview jitters; it is an opportunity to practice and improve your interviewing technique and answers. It is also a chance to hear constructive feedback from someone with experience in the field. It is not enough to look at an interview question and say, “Yeah, I know the answer to that one.”

» **Connect with ECS about mock interview resources.**

## ATTITUDE

**The most important aspect of interviewing.** The key element to successful interviewing is not your experience, your grades, what classes you took, your co-curricular activities, or any of the other basic necessities. Those skills are what got you the interview. The key element to successful interviewing can be summed up in one word: attitude. If you want to rise above others with better experience, better grades, or better anything, you will need to work on developing a highly positive work attitude.

Your attitude determines whether you will make the cut or be discarded. Remember, there are plenty of competitors with the ability to do almost any given job—especially at the entry level. The way most employers differentiate at the entry level is by candidates’ attitudes toward the job. Your attitude is often what recruiters will remember when the dust has settled after reviewing 10, 20, or even 100 candidates—the one who was sincerely willing to put forth [his or her] very best effort. If you have the attitude of wanting to do your very best for the organization, of being focused on the organization’s needs, of putting yourself forth as the person who will be committed and dedicated to fulfilling their needs, you will likely be the one chosen.

You can show your winning attitude in the way you present yourself. Incorporate the actual words “positive attitude,” “excellence” and “striving to be my best” into your interview language. Then show by your stories and examples how these words positively affect your life. Show them when and where and how you have put forth extra effort above and beyond the call of duty. Show them how you beat a deadline, how you excelled in a project, or how you made a difference by going the extra mile.

## DISCUSSIONS OF SALARY

Do not be caught off guard if the employer brings up salary near the end of an interview. Conversely, do not be the one to bring up this subject. If questioned about salary expectations,

however be prepared to discuss the topic. Know the going rate for an entry-level engineer by reviewing ECS salary statistics as well as national statistics.

We recommend that you give a salary range or indicate that you are willing to consider any reasonable offer. For example:

Give a range: “I would hope that with my background and qualifications, a salary in the \$58,000 to \$63,000 (or low-\$60s) range would be offered.” The range you give should be realistic and based upon prior research of starting salaries in the industry and for the position being discussed.

If a verbal offer is extended at the interview, be appreciative and graciously ask for two things:

1. The offer in writing.
2. Time to consider the offer. Most employers will offer an acceptance date of between 2 and 8 weeks after the initial offer.

If asked to make a decision on the spot, show your appreciation for the offer but say that you need time to consider such an important decision.

## TYPICAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Don’t try to memorize (or fabricate) the “right” answers to interview questions. The only right answers are those that truthfully describe an event in your life, including what you learned from the event, what skills you developed, what skill you used, or what you would have done differently. Have confidence that your response is strong if it reflects active self-assessment, specific details and relates to the question being asked.

Also try to understand the question behind the question; understand why the question is being asked and what the employer is evaluating. Respond with specific, thoughtful descriptions of your real past and present experiences, the skills developed and lessons learned from them.

If you have thoroughly prepared for all aspects of the job search and followed us carefully to this point, you will know what to say and how to respond. Questions are not as important as answers. However, a list of potential interview questions can be helpful!

### REASONS FOR STUDYING ENGINEERING:

- What led you to choose your field of major study? Why did you select UW-Madison? Was it a good decision?
- What classes were the most challenging? The least challenging?
- Describe your most rewarding college experiences.
- Are your grades an accurate indication of your academic achievement?
- Do you have plans for graduate or professional school?
- Why weren't you more involved in college activities?
- What was the best part of your college experience?
- A college degree is nothing special; everyone I am interviewing has one. What else do you have to offer me?
- Provide an example of how you acquired a technical skill and converted it into a practical application.
- How frequently did you skip classes while in college?

### QUICK TIPS

- **It is not enough to look at an interview question on a long list of questions and say, "Yeah, I know the answer to that one."**
- **Take time to practice responses out loud.**
- **Listen to the "question behind the question." What is the interviewer trying to learn about me?**

### EMPLOYER KNOWLEDGE/INTEREST:

- How have you prepared for this interview?
- Why are you interested in opportunities with my company? What do you know about our company?
- Why should we hire you instead of other equally qualified candidates?
- Which trade publications do you read to keep informed about current trends?
- What technical skills would you bring to this position?
- What qualities do you think this position requires?
- What interests you least about this job?
- What do you see as the major trends in the field?
- Why do you want to leave your current employer?
- What salary would you anticipate?

### WORK AND ACADEMIC EXPERIENCES:

- Describe a situation in which your ideas or work conflicted with the ideas or work of a co-worker or supervisor.
- What type of people do you find difficult to work with?
- What have you learned from your past jobs?
- How did your co-op/intern position contribute to your career growth?
- Tell me of a situation where you worked under pressure.
- You seem to have limited work experience; why do you think you could do this job?
- What part of the position's responsibilities interests you most?
- If I contacted your references, what would they each say about you?
- Have you ever been fired?
- Do you make your opinion known when you disagree with a supervisor?
- How would you handle a situation in which you couldn't get along with your boss?
- What new idea or suggestion did you make to your immediate supervisor in the last couple of months?
- How would you describe the perfect supervisor?

## MOTIVATIONS AND GOALS:

- Tell me about the last time that you made a change in your life.
- What do you consider to be your greatest strengths? Weaknesses?
- Give me two examples of good decisions you have made in the last six months. Why were they good?
- What have you done that demonstrates your initiative?
- What would you change about yourself if you could?
- When have you been a leader?
- Would you rather write a report or give an oral report? Why?
- What was the latest book you've read or movie you seen?
- Are you a risk-taker?
- How do you handle pressure situations?
- How do you relieve stress?
- Tell me about yourself.
- How have you gone about determining that this field is right for you?
- What is the biggest risk you have ever taken?
- What is your strongest transferable skill? How has it been helpful to you?
- What accomplishment has given you the most satisfaction? Why?
- What are the most important rewards you expect in your career?
- What motivates you to put forth your greatest effort?
- How do you define success?
- What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction? Why?

## RESPONSE TO FAILURE OR CRITICISM:

- How do you react to criticism?
- Think about something at work or school that you consider a failure. Tell me about it.
- Tell me about a mistake you made, and how you handled it.
- What is the worst communication problem you have experienced?
- Tell me about a time when you put your foot in your mouth (misspoke).
- Describe the biggest problem you have faced within the last six months. How did you handle it?
- What is the most unethical situation you have encountered?
- Have you ever been convicted of a crime?
- When was the last time you lied?
- Who is currently angry with you?
- Tell me about a team you were on when all members did not carry their weight.

## INTERACTION WITH OTHERS:

- Describe an instance where you made effective use of facts to secure the agreement of others.
- Describe a creative idea that you produced which led to a significant contribution to the success of an activity or project.
- What is leadership? Describe your vision of a leader. When is it time to follow?
- What qualities are essential for success in business today?

## FUTURE GOALS:

- What are your short-range goals? How are you preparing for them?
- What do you see yourself doing five years from now?
- Which of your personal goals have you reached and not reached?
- What are your long-range career objectives?
- Tell me about a time you overcame obstacles to reach a goal?

## QUESTIONS FOR YOU TO ASK THE RECRUITER

- What attracted you to this organization?
- What do you think its strengths and weaknesses are?
- What are the most critical factors for success at your organization?
- How would you describe your management style?
- What are the greatest challenges for entry-level hires within your organization?
- Can you tell me about the people who will look to me for supervision?
- What is the organization's customer service philosophy?
- What is the makeup of the team as far as experience?
- What does the organization value most?
- What kinds of processes are in place to encourage collaboration?
- How do my skills compare to other candidates you have interviewed?
- What kinds of assignments might I expect during the first few months on the job?
- What characteristics help a person succeed in this field?
- How often are performance reviews provided?
- What do you consider ideal experiences for this job?
- Please tell me about the people with whom I would be working.
- What would be a typical career path for someone like me entering your organization?
- Please describe the management style or engineering environment at your organization.
- What are my opportunities for learning new skills?
- How much influence will I have over the type of work I will do?
- What do you like best about working at ABC Co.?
- Do you promote from within?
- What would be my primary responsibilities?
- What would I be expected to accomplish in the first six months on the job?
- What are some of the department's ongoing and anticipated special projects?
- How much contact does the department have with management?
- What do you like best about working for this department/organization?
- Can you describe a typical workday in the department?
- Do you feel free to express your ideas and concerns here?
- What are the possibilities for professional growth and promotion?
- How much interaction do you have with superiors, colleagues and customers?
- How long have you been with the company?
- Is there anything you would change about the company if you had the chance?
- What do employees seem to like best about the organization?
- How large is the department where the opening exists?
- What type of orientation or training do new employees receive?
- What is the next course of action? When should I expect to hear from you? What are the next steps in this process?
- I would like to leave you with some final thoughts regarding my qualifications and enthusiasm for working with your company.

### QUICK TIPS

#### DO NOT ASK THESE QUESTIONS:

- **What will my salary be?**
- **What does your organization do?**
- **Where are you located?**
- **Do I get paid for overtime?**
- **How much vacation will I receive?**

## DIFFERENT TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

### BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEWS

The basic premise behind behavioral interviews is that past behavior is the best predictor of future behavior. Most employers use this interview method.

“Tell me about a team experience in which one member did not meet expectations.”

This question demonstrates the type of question common in behavioral interviews. Based on the premise that the best way to predict future behavior is to evaluate past behavior, this form of questioning allows the recruiter to assess your abilities based on what you have already done.

#### Typical behavioral question structure:

- Tell me about an obstacle you have overcome.
- Tell me about the most unethical situation you’ve observed or experienced.
- Tell me about your last experience with success.
- Tell me about a goal you have met.

#### S.T.A.R. response style for behavioral questions:

In responding to behavioral questions, it is best to provide a specific example to support your response. Frame the response using an example from your resume including academic projects, classes, work experiences, and out-of-class activities.

Be very specific as you cover the four necessary steps (**S**ituation, **T**ask, **A**ction & **R**esult) for optimum success:

- **Situation:** Give an example of a situation you were involved in that resulted in a positive outcome.
- **Task:** Describe the task(s) required in the situation.
- **Action:** Talk about the various actions you initiated or completed.
- **Result:** Provide the results directly connected to your actions.

To maximize this method, you should add what you learned from the situation that you will bring to the job.

- Recall recent situations that show favorable behaviors or actions, especially involving course work, work experience, leadership, teamwork, initiative, planning, and customer service. Try to use your entire résumé.
- Prepare short descriptions of each situation; be ready to give details if asked.
- Be sure each story has a beginning, middle, and an end.

- Be sure the outcome or result reflects positively on you. If the result itself was not favorable, talk about what you learned or would do differently next time.
- Be honest. Don’t embellish or omit any part of the story.

### CASE INTERVIEWS

Simply put, a case interview is the analysis of a business plan or situation. Unlike most other interview questions, it is an interactive process. Your interviewer will present you with a business problem and ask you for your opinion. Your job is to ask the interviewer logical questions that will permit you to make a detailed recommendation. The majority of case interviewers don’t have a specific right answer that you, the candidate, are expected to give. What the interviewer is looking for is a thought process that is both analytical and creative (what consultants love to call “out-of-the-box” thinking). Specific knowledge of the industry covered by the case question is a bonus but not necessary. An understanding of the business models and processes as well as global business experience is helpful for success.

#### Question categories can be identified as:

- **Market-sizing** questions focus on determining the market size for a particular service or product.
- **Business operations** questions refer to running a business and getting a product out the door. The focus may include purchasing and transporting raw materials, manufacturing processes, scheduling of staff and facilities, product distribution ... the day-to-day of running the business.
- **Business strategy** questions deal more with the future direction of a firm. Good strategy questions may have a market-sizing piece, a logic puzzle, multiple operations issues, and a dose of creativity and action. These types of questions tend to be quite complex.
- **Résumé case** questions come directly from the candidate’s résumé. One example may be, “I see that you play rugby. Describe all the different positions on a rugby team, and the play strategy for each.”

## TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS

Telephone interviews are often used as a screening device prior to extending face-to-face interviews. An employer will evaluate you to determine the benefit of inviting you for an on-site visit. Because of the obvious focus on communication skills, the phone interview can be intimidating. In addition, students often make the mistake of not preparing as thoroughly for this type of interview as they would for an on-site or campus interview.

Using the telephone for social and informal purposes is easy for most of us. However, using it for business purposes is quite another matter. During the job search, remember that a telephone interview (much like business email) must be strictly professional. You must adopt a manner in using the phone that conveys your seriousness of purpose, ability to concisely communicate your strengths, and desire to work for the employer.

The clear advantages of the telephone interview are that you are in a comfortable, familiar place and that you can have all your papers at your fingertips.

The disadvantages are also quite obvious. Your voice is the sole means of communication. You cannot use eye contact, facial expressions, body language, or other visual means of communication, nor can you respond to the recruiter's nonverbal cues or attempt to interpret his/her interest. You are selling yourself using only words and the tone of your voice.

### Some general advice:

- Prepare as if this were a face-to-face interview. Know your résumé inside and out. Be able to provide specific examples to support your strengths, interests, and abilities. Show enthusiasm. Ask questions.
- Write down the names of the recruiters. Refer to them as Mr. or Ms., unless otherwise indicated. Take quick notes during the interview. At the close of the interview, thank the interviewer using his or her name.
- Speak slowly. Articulate clearly. Choose words carefully. Your diction, voice level, intonation and choice of words are your main forms of communicating.
- Don't chew gum. Don't use a speakerphone. Keep the mouthpiece close to your mouth. Enunciate.
- Smile. Believe it or not, smiling while you talk helps! You will sound more interested and friendly. A smile over the phone can be recognized.
- Allow for silences or pauses. If you need more time to consider a question, simply ask for it, since silences are more pronounced on the phone.

## QUICK TIPS

- **Did you know that you can reserve a room in the ECS offices for phone interviews? Contact ECS staff with a specific time and date for your interview. A phone is available for you in a quiet, closed-door office.**
- **Be sure to schedule your interviews between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m., Monday through Friday.**

- Listen. With no other communication clues except a voice, it is critical for you to focus and listen carefully. Ask for clarification if you don't understand a question.
- Dress nicely. It will help you maintain a serious, professional manner.
- Don't interrupt, although some "over-talk" is bound to happen on the phone. Confirm that what you said has been "heard."

### In addition, always have materials ready for interviews:

- Résumé, references page, transcripts, and other portfolio items, such as list of publications, presentations, patents, as well as sample projects and papers.
- Any correspondence with the employer, employer website information, and other literature.
- Pen, paper, personal calendar, and class schedule for scheduling employer visits. A "do not disturb" sign on your door.
- Turn off the TV and music. Turn off any alarms scheduled on your phone or calendar. Mute the sound on your computer.
- Have a glass of water nearby.

Occasionally, an employer will call you unexpectedly asking you of your interest in job opportunities and/or wanting to ask you a few questions regarding your qualifications. If the employer has caught you at a bad time, it is perfectly acceptable to request that you talk at another time, provided that you express your appreciation and interest in the opportunity.

Another tactic is to ask if they (or you) can call back in five minutes—or later in the day—for an interview. Of course, it is also acceptable to politely decline an interview if you are truly not interested.



## INTERVIEW FOLLOW-UP

*The interview is not the end of the job search process; follow-up is required.*

It is important not only to reflect on your interview performance, but also to continue a dialogue with the recruiter. What does this mean? It means that it is in your best interest to follow-up the interview with a thank you email or letter and maintain a regular follow-up schedule. Employers are interested in hiring people who are interested in the position!

Indicate your interest by continuing to communicate with the recruiter until a decision has been made. Use discretion regarding frequency—do not become a pest.

Within one to two days, send an email message thanking the recruiter for the interview, clarifying topics discussed in the interview, and re-emphasizing interest in the employer's opportunity. A well-written, well-timed thank you message will not get you a job, but it can tip the scales if all other factors are equal.

By sending a thank you message, you will:

- Show courtesy and appreciation
- Stand out from the crowd
- Reiterate interest in the opportunity
- Make points you forgot during the interview
- Demonstrate your writing skills

Regularly contact the recruiter after the thank you letter; do so approximately every 2 weeks until a decision is made. Offer to provide other materials, such as transcripts or samples of your work.

Develop a spreadsheet with employer names, recruiter contacts, interview dates, and follow-up dates. Since you are actively searching, a spreadsheet will help you track the interactions with many, many employers and recruiters.

## ON-SITE, SECOND INTERVIEW PREPARATION

After a successful campus or phone interview, you will often be asked to participate in a second interview at the employer's site. The employer visit is generally a full day of interviewing and related activities. The on-site/employer visit is often the last step before an offer is made.

The employer visit is given many names: plant trip, second interview, site visit, or office visit. Just as the employer visit has many names, it has a variety of faces. It is difficult to describe every aspect of what to expect in an employer visit because employers vary greatly in how they execute them. The length of the trip, number of people involved, levels of people interviewing, types of tests conducted, and degree of formality can differ from one employer to the next.

The second interview provides an excellent opportunity for you to get a firsthand account of what it's like to work for the employer and for the employer to determine how you would work in that environment. In other words, the interview is a mutual one.

## PURPOSE

- **Allows the employer an opportunity to make an in-depth assessment of you prior to extending a job offer.** The employer visit is time-consuming and expensive for employers, so they screen a large number of applicants down to a few who are invited to visit. At this point, the employer is confident you have the technical skills and intelligence to do the job. This visit is the employer's opportunity to confirm there is a good match between your goals, the career opportunity, and the work group.
- **Allows you an opportunity to see the employer and its people firsthand to make a more informed decision if an offer is made.** The employer visit provides you with an opportunity to learn more about the position, the long-term career opportunities, the company's employees, the company itself, and the local community. The employer will usually be doing as much selling as evaluating because this is the information you will use in deciding whether to accept or decline an offer. You, like the employer, are trying to determine whether or not a good fit exists.

## PREPARATION

This is the final contact before an offer is made; do not take preparation lightly. Prior to the visit, review all resources available about the employer.

Be knowledgeable about the employer, its products or services, and career opportunities. The more prepared you are, the more probable it is the employer will recognize enthusiasm, motivation, maturity, and thoroughness as assets you possess.

Develop insightful questions to ask about the position, work environment, and employer's needs. Your questions demonstrate the amount of preparation you have invested in the visit, as well as your seriousness of purpose.

Appropriate questions will probe topics such as typical entry-level projects. Asking about salary or benefits is still inappropriate, but be prepared to answer any questions regarding expected salary.

» **Research entry level salary ranges on the ECS website.**

Finally, good preparation includes paying proper attention to appearance, dress and attitude. Dress in either business or business casual clothing. Remember, it is better to err on the side of being too conservative than too casual. Be sure all pieces of your wardrobe are clean and pressed. Practice impeccable grooming habits, including clean and freshly trimmed hair and nails.

## FINALIZING LOGISTICS

An invitation to an employer visit will usually come from a specific contact person. This person becomes your source of information about all aspects of the trip. Address any questions prior to the trip to the contact person.

The majority of employer visits are one full day in length, but be prepared to spend 2 to 3 days, including travel and an overnight stay. Travel will be either by flying or driving, depending upon your preference, the employer's discretion, and the distance. Usually, trips of more than 200 miles will justify air travel.

Some employers will make all the arrangements for your visit. They will reserve and pre-pay the hotel room and flights. They will send you an itinerary with flight numbers and hotel reservation numbers. Be sure to request this information and to carry the details with you while traveling. If the employer is not pre-paying the flight or hotel, talk to your contact person to clarify reimbursement procedures. Call or email your contact person, confirming all plans to avoid any last-minute mix-ups or confusion.

**Key information to have with you at all times:**

- Trip itinerary with times and names of people you will be meeting.
- Contact person's name, phone number and email.
- Travel and accommodation arrangements (including air, hotel and car rental confirmation numbers).
- Maps and driving instructions.

**Spouse or significant other:**

- You may request that your spouse or significant other accompany you on the initial visit, but it is more common for your spouse to accompany you on a subsequent trip after an offer has been extended, but before you make a decision.
- During this later visit, you might want to meet with real-estate agents or rental agencies to evaluate housing.

## ARRIVAL

If you have a morning interview, arrive in the area the night before. Avoid very late flights or the last flight into the area. An employer representative may arrange to pick you up at the airport, so don't dress too casually for flying. Otherwise, take a courtesy van or taxi to your hotel. Keep all receipts for ground transportation expenditures for reimbursement.

When checking into the hotel, ask for any messages (the employer may have left information for you) and provide any pre-payment documentation. Regardless of payment arrangements, most hotels will ask for your credit card to pay for charges not covered by the employer, such as personal phone calls and room service.

Schedule a morning wake-up call with the front desk, allowing plenty of time to get ready. When checking out, review the bill to ensure its accuracy; keep the receipt for your records.

## THE EVENING BEFORE

Some employers arrange for an employee to have dinner with you the evening you arrive, or breakfast the morning of your interview. This is an opportunity for you to meet a recent hire while getting an informal flavor for the day's schedule, the employer, the area and any other pertinent topics. The degree of informality and nature of conversation at meals can vary, but keep in mind that anyone at the table can serve as an evaluator, so reflect maturity and professionalism.

Dress appropriately (ask for advice on appropriate dress). Eat moderately, AVOID alcoholic beverages, and participate in the discussion of employment opportunities, community and hiring needs. Be yourself, but be your best professional self.

Before retiring for the evening, confirm your morning wake-up call at the front desk and set your alarm. Get enough sleep and give yourself extra time to get ready in the morning. It is extremely difficult to recover from tardiness, so plan ahead. In most cases, you will need to check out of the hotel

upon leaving for the employer site. Provide extra time to do so. Take your luggage if you'll be leaving for the airport immediately from the employer site. If you'll return to the hotel, check your baggage at the front desk for later pick-up.

## INTERVIEW DAY

An itinerary is critical to help you plan for the day. It should include times and locations of interviews, names of employees, and a map. You may have 3 to 5 interviews with various levels of management in a one-on-one or group setting, or panel interview. In any case, understand that the employer does not wish to intimidate you; hiring staff simply want a variety of input regarding your "fit" with the company. In some cases, you may be part of a group visit, where a number of candidates participate in group interviews and activities. While the group visit is more difficult for the employer to arrange, the visit allows staff the opportunity to see each candidate among their peers. Conversely, it permits you to see those who might be a part of your training group.

Most employers are well prepared for your on-site visit. They conduct formal interview training for their managers and usually provide very good interview sessions. Interviewers have scanned your résumé and are familiar with your background. The interviewers will attempt to assess your motivation and drive—to see what makes you strive for success. Each interviewer will probe for strengths and weaknesses. You may be asked the same questions by many people throughout the day yet must give as fresh and thorough an answer to the fourth as to the first.

If you are interviewing at a plant-trip location it is probable that an employment manager or plant manager will conduct a tour of the plant. You should be aware that you are being interviewed and evaluated even during a tour. Pay attention and ask questions. Anyone you meet, from receptionist to CEO, is a potential evaluator. Considering this, remain sharp and professional at all times.

## DEPARTURE

The last meeting of the day often will be with the contact person or human resources manager. They will address your final questions, explain follow-up procedures, discuss reimbursement and take care of other details. Be sure that all your questions have been answered prior to leaving.

## AFTER THE VISIT

Following your visit, send a letter or email of thanks to all the people who interviewed you, including the main contact person. The message should reaffirm interest in the position and highlight qualifications. This letter provides you one last opportunity to position yourself for potential hiring.

Most employers will contact you within two weeks of the actual visit with an offer or a rejection. Some, however, may make an offer at the interview, while others will take as long as a month. It is acceptable to ask when employment decisions will be made, as well as to check on delays if the estimated decision date passes with no contact.

## TESTING

After the second interview, many employers will make an offer contingent on a negative test for drugs and controlled substances. This test takes the form of a urine specimen analyzed for presence of a substance. Be aware this test may occur and be advised that failure to submit to a drug test may end further employment consideration.

## REIMBURSEMENTS

Clarify proper reimbursement procedures with your contact person. Know what expenses are pre-paid and what will be reimbursed. A note of caution: Don't take advantage of the employer. You should ask to be reimbursed only for legitimate expenses, not souvenirs and expensive extras.

Reimbursement of expenses will vary among employers, but many will pay for travel, lodging and food. Keep receipts and clarify what expenses will be reimbursed prior to spending your own money. Incidental expenses reimbursed may include parking, cab fares and tips.

Expenses generally not reimbursed include room service snacks, gifts, and any other sightseeing activities you may choose to do. Meals should be reasonable and items such as alcohol should be avoided. The in-house hotel restaurant is usually a good measure of how much to spend on a meal. Enjoy the visit but don't be extravagant.

If cash or credit is a problem, the College of Engineering offers a Koresh Loan. This \$500 loan is available to any engineering student, is interest free for three months, and is immediately available. Forms are available in Room 2620 Engineering Hall.