

## Before the Job Interview, Do Your Homework

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By Eilene Zimmerman

**Q.** *You've just graduated from college and are entering a tough job market. What kind of interview preparation will help you stand out?*

**A.** Research the company and the industry, says Adrien Fraise, founder of [Modern Guild](#), which provides online career coaching to college students and high school seniors. "Know the major industry trends and news," he says, and be able to talk about how they could affect the company.

Find out who runs the company and how they got there. "Look at their profiles on LinkedIn and see if you find a common bond," says [David Lewis](#), the chief executive of [OperationsInc.](#), a human resources outsourcing and consulting firm in Norwalk, Conn. "If you are able to say, 'I went to the same college as you' or 'I also majored in psychology,' that demonstrates you really did your homework."

Familiarize yourself with the company's products or services and look for ways, even small ones, to possibly expand or add value. Note the positives, then talk about opportunities you see, says [Moses Lee](#), C.E.O. of [Seelio](#), a platform that lets students and recent college graduates post samples of their work and search for jobs.

"Let's say you are talking about a recent marketing campaign," he says. "You could say, 'I enjoyed that campaign and if I had the opportunity to work on it, I might frame it so it resonated with millennials, too.'"

**Q.** *What questions can you expect, and how can you prepare to answer them?*

**A.** You may be asked to walk the interviewer through your résumé, so prepare concise, articulate anecdotes to illustrate what you did or learned in each experience you've listed, Mr. Fraise says. Highlight what you achieved and the skills you used — and how you want to keep using them. "Rehearse in front of the mirror and then in front of others," he says. "Be so comfortable with it, it doesn't sound scripted."

Interviewers often ask questions like “Can you give me an example of when you had to work as part of a team or learned something new quickly?” Mr. Lewis says your examples might come from experiences in a club, fraternity or sorority. “Did you organize a membership push? Plan events? Do recruiting?” he says.

If you’re asked a question like “Why did you choose your college major?” be complete in your answer. “Don’t just say ‘because I really like psychology,’” Mr. Lewis advises. Instead, note from a business perspective why you liked the subject. “Maybe you found the classes to be informative about human behavior, which is a key to success in anyone’s business,” he says.

Take along samples of your work — whether from an internship, a class or an extracurricular activity — in a folder or on a laptop computer or tablet.

And always prepare questions to ask at the end of the interview, says Alexa Hamill, American campus recruiting leader for [PricewaterhouseCoopers](#) in Philadelphia.

Questions on the interviewer’s own career progress are a way to conclude, she says: “What opportunities have been presented to them? How were they trained and developed? This shows you are looking at the job as something potentially long term.”

**Q.** *You want to exude confidence and maturity. What are some ways to bolster your confidence before an interview?*

**A.** Develop a personal elevator pitch — a 30-second to one-minute summary of your academic career, your interests and what you did outside school — and correlate that to the job you want, Ms. Hamill says. PricewaterhouseCoopers offers [a free tool](#) on its site to help think through those questions, she says.

**Q.** *What are some basic interview etiquette rules, in terms of dress and behavior?*

**A.** Turn off your cellphone before walking into the company’s offices, and don’t take it out during your interview. “Don’t remind me you’re a 22-year-old,” Mr. Lewis says. “Have a firm handshake, maintain eye contact and don’t fidget.”

Remember not to talk about inappropriate topics like a recent fraternity party or something you saw on Facebook, Ms. Hamill says. When speaking to interviewers, “face them with your knees pointing toward them, sit up straight and stay engaged,” she says. After the interview, send a thank-you e-mail and include a link to your online portfolio or Web site if you have one.

Unless the company recommends dressing casually or informally for the interview, men should wear a suit and tie and women should wear a suit or skirt and blouse, Mr. Lewis says. You may be the only one in the office dressed that way, he says, but it’s usually better not “to walk into an interview dressed as if you are already part of the team.”

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