

SCA Interview Guideline Suggestions

5 Ways to Derail Your Interview

An interview is one of the hardest things to obtain as a job seeker -- and unfortunately, it's also one of the easiest ways you can lose the job opportunity. Interview mishaps happen to everyone, but the key to avoiding them as presented by many Life and Business Coaches is to relax and be you!

"The interview is as much about getting to know the company and work environment as it is about them interviewing you. This strategy relaxes the entire interview." "You can essentially direct the interview to the areas you are most comfortable talking about. Listening to the interviewer answer the questions, you can clue in on his/her terminology, terms and what they feel is important. Then you can highlight those same terms and skill set in your comments back to him."

Being well-prepared for the meeting can also help you impress a potential employer. "It's difficult



to overstress how important it is to do some research on a company you're interviewing with. Have a list of good questions to ask the person interviewing you. You want to seem like you are asking questions that require thought rather than questions seeking information that may be available on the website," says Debra Yergen, [author](#) of "Creating Job Security Resource Guide."

"Start with questions about the importance the organization places on industry hot buttons and what the hiring manager sees as differences between their company and their competitors. Another great question might be something like, 'Are there any employee groups here that work together to plan team-building

activities or extracurricular events that bring co-workers together either to boost morale or support the community?' These kinds of questions send a potential employer a message that you're looking for more than a job," she says.

While asking the right kinds of question is vital, you must also be prepared to answer the tough questions, says Henry Motyka, business solutions [manager](#) at Norwood Consulting.

"Of particular importance are behavioral interview questions like, 'Tell me about a situation when ...' It is best to define those situations beforehand and memorize them," he says. Doing your research, asking the right questions and answering tough questions are ways to avoid making an interview mistake. But, unfortunately, there are many ways to derail an interview. Here are five gaffes to steer clear of in your interview:

1. Inappropriate attire: "If you are not professionally attired, you won't get the job, even if you are the most qualified," says image consultant Sandy Dumont. "Always dress better than required for an interview. Never dress down, because it is insulting to the other person. It says, 'I don't have to impress you; I dress for my own comfort.' When you dress to impress, they get it, and you will stand out from all the other candidates."

2. Trying to lead the interview: "Many of my clients have children. [They have a] tendency to talk over their interviewers. That's how they manage to be heard at home and that's what they often do in their interviews," says Rory Cohen, a [career counselor](#). "When you don't listen, you don't get invited back for a second interview. Interviewers, in general, want and expect to be in the driver's seat."

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3. Showing up too late or too early: "If you're more than 15 minutes early to your interview, go to the restroom and freshen up, then casually walk in about 5-10 minutes before your scheduled appointment".

4. Bringing your own food or drink: "Never bring any food or drinks, chew gum or a breath mint into the office of the interviewer. Many find chewing, eating or drinking a big distraction and some people are sensitive to smells," It is always best to just wait until after the interview is over. Eat before to avoid your stomach growling and get rid of your gum and or breath mint before the interview starts.

5. Forgetting important information: "On a sheet of paper write down the following information: company, address, phone number, hiring manager, person who scheduled the interview, position you are interviewing for and job duties," Study this and bring with you the day of your interview.

Don't give these answers during your interview

After receiving a call from an employer inviting you in for an interview, it's common to feel simultaneously ecstatic, relieved and nervous. One of the best ways to calm those nerves is to be prepared for the interview. To do so, try and anticipate what questions the employer might ask. While at times questions can get tricky, for the most part employers ask straightforward questions that help them get to know your personality as well as your ability to think on your feet.

"Do you drug test?" and other questions you should never ask in an interview

Yet even if a job seeker is prepared, nerves can still cause stumbles. To help, here are four of the most common interview questions and tips on how you should -- and shouldn't -- answer them.

1. "So, tell me a little about yourself."

When answering this question, don't go off on a tangent. Prepare your two to three minute career summary and rehearse it out loud. "Make sure that whatever you share is relevant and makes sense given the job you're interviewing for" Too much information will be lost in translation and your interviewer will tune you out.

2. "Why do you want to leave your current job?"

This question can be a double-edged sword. On one hand, if you say you're looking for a new opportunity, the interviewer may take that to mean you were bored at your current job and wanted out. Instead, you could be more specific: There were changes in management; the company's direction didn't align with your personal goals; or recent changes made you concerned about the stability of the company and your role. "It's better to have more reasons for making a move than just one. It suggests that the decision is multilayered and, hopefully, some of what you say will resonate with the interviewer."

3. "What are your biggest strengths and weaknesses?"

Stop saying, "I'm a perfectionist." It's trite and overdone. Name a strength that makes you stand out for the position to which you are applying. When naming a weakness, pick something that's realistic, and acknowledge that you're constantly working on improving in that area. Ensure that your weakness isn't directly associated with one of the prospective job responsibilities, but do be honest.

4. "Let's talk about salary. What are your expectations?"

If possible, avoid addressing compensation until toward the end of the hiring process. When it

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comes time to discuss, provide a range with which you're comfortable. Going into the conversation, decide what the lowest acceptable salary is that will allow you to enjoy the lifestyle with which you're most comfortable. From there, incrementally increase that salary by 5, 10 or 15 percent. Once you get to the negotiation process, you'll be in a better position to give and take on salary and other benefits.

References are often the last step in the screening process before an employer extends an offer. While every company has a different policy on references, most still ask for them. What a reference says, or doesn't say, can sometimes make the difference between getting an offer or not.

How to Choose the Best Job References

When employers contact references, they're looking to determine if the candidate is the person who presented himself in the interview. "Often what's not said is more important than what is said. And hesitations and dancing in a reference's answers are very telling."

The questions employers are asking **Employment verification:** The standard questions a hiring



manager will ask are ones related to your employment. The employer will want to verify that you did indeed work with this reference, the dates of your employment and the reference's relationship to you (boss, peer, etc.). Sean Milius, president of the Healthcare Initiative, an affiliate of global recruiting firm MRINetwork, says employers also want to know why you left. "It is very important that their story matches that of the candidate," Milius says. "If the candidate says it was a 'mutual parting,' but the reference says they were let go or laid off, there will be a problem. The candidate should always be truthful when asked why they left, as the potential employer will check out their story."

Workplace performance: After a hiring manager asks the basic questions, they might dig a little deeper into your work performance. Common performance-related questions will cover strengths, areas for improvement, ability to work in a team and biggest accomplishments. The following questions on both hard and soft skills are also often asked:

- What would you say is his strongest attributes?
- How would you describe her interpersonal skills?
- What would you say motivated him most?
- Would you rehire or recommend her for rehire?

Personality and well-roundedness: While work-performance questions provide important insight, they don't always give a complete picture of the candidate. If you want to know what the person is like, you have to ask questions that get at that information in a different way. For instance, an employer may ask, "Would you trust the reference to watch your children if you were away on vacation?" Or, "Would you take the candidate to dinner at a nice restaurant with your parents/spouse/significant other?" "The more personal/non work-related questions are often useful, not for what the reference says, but [for] what the reference doesn't say and/or the manner in which the reference provides an answer or doesn't answer"

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Who the references are matters, too: Sure, a reference's answers hold a lot of weight, but who the reference is can be just as telling to a hiring manager. If the only references you can provide are your mom, your sister and your best friend, it might raise a red flag with the potential employer.

"Most employers would prefer that a job seeker choose a former manager or supervisor as a reference." This is because managers are usually able to deliver a relatively unbiased opinion and are much less likely to be swayed into giving a positive referral if one isn't truly deserved. A manager is also a good pick for a reference because a positive referral from him will hold more weight than one from a co-worker who is similarly ranked. Job seekers should also select references who worked with them for at least a year, have a good understanding of their abilities and can attest to their positive attributes.

Setting your references up for success: While you may not know the exact questions a Hiring Manager plans to ask your references; you can still prepare them for the call. The first thing you should do is tell your references that they are one. While that may seem obvious, it's not always done, and the last thing you want to do is have your references be blindsided by the hiring manager's call. Even if you've used certain references in the past, don't just assume they'll be available or willing to serve as one again. The best approach? Ask your contacts first before giving their information to the employer.

If you've done a good job of selecting your references, they'll know you and your work style well enough that they won't need any coaching on the answers. He does suggest that you share the basic job description with your references and refresh them on the position you had and contributions you made while working together. "This is especially helpful if a lot of time has passed since you last worked with them. You don't want your references to be caught off-guard and failing to recall what it is you even did on their team."

Szymanski shares this metaphor to summarize the use of references during the hiring process. "Reference checking is one spoke in the wheel of talent acquisition. If you can get as many spokes in the wheel as you can, your hiring will get better. Reference checking is not perfect, but if used in conjunction with other spokes, reference checking can be useful in verifying/confirming what you already know or breaking ties between two or more closely matched candidates."

What Questions do Employers Want to Hear in an Interview?

Once you've received the call from an employer inviting you in for an interview, the real preparation begins. Prior to an interview, candidates should research the company so they can not only answer questions, but have questions ready to ask the hiring manager as well.

The interview is where the job candidate and employer get to know each other. Think of it like dating. While a job interview is in a professional setting and the outcomes are different, the intentions are the same. You've exchanged information because you think there might be a connection, and now you're ready for your "first date." As much as you want to make a good first impression, the employer needs to make a good impression, too.

Just like a first date, you don't want one person to dominate the conversation and ask all the questions. It should be a balanced dialogue, and you should ask questions that get to the heart of the matter: Who is this employer, and why should I work for this company?

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The right questions to ask: Alan Guinn, managing director and CEO of The Guinn Consultancy Group, works with employers every day. He recommends that recruiters listen for these 10 questions from job applicants to see if they've done their homework and truly want the position:

1. I've been told that I work very well as a team member. What are some of the ways your company encourages teamwork?
2. We all know how important job satisfaction is to everyone. I want to be happy in any role. Is the company committed to promotion from within, whenever possible?
3. I love your published mission and values. How are these reflected in day-to-day life at the company? Can you share some examples with me?
4. If your son, daughter or a friend was looking for a job, would you recommend working for this company? Why?
5. What do you think distinguishes this company from its competitors, both from a public and employee perspective?
6. How often do you speak with your C-level officers? When you do, what do they normally ask you? Do they ask for your opinion?
7. How does the company demonstrate a sense of pride in its employees? Can you help me understand what it looks for in return?
8. Are there paid, ongoing learning opportunities offered at my level of job responsibility? What obligations do I have if I elect to take advantage of them?
9. What does the company expect in the way of personal and professional growth for a person hired into this position?
10. Does the company value a difference in work and personal time, or does it blur the responsibilities between the two?

Think about your goals first: Don't feel obligated to walk into the interview with a set number of questions, but these give you an idea of the right questions to ask. Also think of the questions in terms of your career and personal goals. If you're moving into a role with more responsibility, how will that affect what questions you ask? If you're starting a family soon, what do you want to know about the company's commitment to work/life balance?

Thoughtful planning and preparation for an interview will not only help you feel more confident but will also leave a great impression on the person interviewing you.