

INTERVIEW & THANK YOU NOTE GUIDE



PREPARATION

Preparing for the interview will demonstrate your professionalism and will help you project confidence during the interview process. Preparation is an absolute must before the interview.

1. **Learn about the organization and job before going on the interview.** Use the sources below to help you learn what is important to the potential employer, what differentiates them from other hospitals, and to determine the questions you should ask.
 - Look up the hospital and unit on the internet.
 - Google the names of people you will meet.
 - Go to <http://hospitalcompare.hhs.gov>. Here you can compare hospitals on key patient satisfaction factors.
2. **Develop questions you want to ask in the interview.** The questions you ask will help employers determine what is important to you and your level of professionalism. Make sure you don't ask questions that can easily be answered on the websites above; show you did your homework. Some examples of the type of questions you may want to ask are listed below. Note: do not ask about salary or benefits until you are offered the job. Your major priority at this time is to understand the job expectations and market yourself. Most employers regularly conduct salary/benefit surveys and are very similar within geographic areas.
 - What are the qualifications of individuals who have excelled in this position?
 - What are the key challenges for someone in this job?
 - What is most important to you in filling this job?
 - How would you rate your department's patient satisfaction scores? What steps are you taking?
 - I noticed that you have been designated a Magnet Hospital (Pathways to Excellence for Community Hospitals)? What are the key factors that have led to your success? What are the key things you are working on now?
 - Can you tell me a little about the orientation? How long? Am I assigned one or several preceptors?
 - What are the strengths of your Department and what are the key challenges?
 - How will my success be measured in this position?
 - Outside of the primary job, what are other expectations or opportunities, such as serving on committees? Are all nurses' part of Shared Governance?
 - Are there continuing educational opportunities?
 - What is the career path for this position?
 - What do you like most about your organization? What are the organization's main challenges?
3. **Familiarize yourself with your resume.** What experiences most demonstrate your ability to do the job? Anticipate behavioral questions that may be asked. Managers will ask you questions about your past experience as a predictor of your future behavior. Review the list of questions below and think of a real experience that would demonstrate your skills. While your resume

highlights your credentials, the interview highlights your attitude and work ethic. Employers are looking for someone who is a team player (goes beyond their own job to help others), has good interpersonal and communication skills, has a proven track record of customer service skills, and someone that is competent and can react in stressful situations. They also want someone willing to learn how to do things their way and respond positively to feedback.

It is very important that you are at ease with the questions listed below before you interview. We strongly encourage you to do a mock interview.

- You mentioned you accomplished “X” on your last job. Can you walk me through how you did this? What difficulties did you run into? How did you handle these?
- What do you think is the most important thing to do when you enter a patient’s room?
- If I asked your patients/customers/co-workers/boss from your previous job, what words would they use to describe how it felt to work with you?
- Tell me about a time when you provided really good service. What specific things did you do that made your service so good?
- Tell me about a time when a patient (co-worker/boss) was not satisfied with your service. What specific things do you think you could have done better? What did you learn?
- Tell me about a time when you wanted to provide good service but something got in the way—such as a policy or computer failure or something else outside your control. What did you do? Did the customer end up having a bad experience?
- What was the most difficult customer service experience that you have ever had to handle—perhaps an angry or irate customer? Be specific and tell me what you did and the outcome.
- Think about a time you had a conflict with a co-worker. What did you do?
- When did you have to have a difficult conversation with a patient (or co-worker)?
- Tell me about a time you were asked to do something that was not part of your job. What actions did you take?
- Tell me about a time you were not able to do your job duties effectively? What did you learn from the experience?
- Describe a time when you anticipated potential problems and took action.
- How would you describe your workload at your last job? How did you handle the stress?
- What did you like best/least about your work team? What role did you play?
- What is the thing you have done in the past three years that you are most proud of besides getting your degree? Least proud of?
- Tell me about a time you had to follow a policy or procedure you didn’t agree with.
- When have you had to work with someone who was difficult to work with? Why was the person difficult? What did you do?
- What are your key main pet peeves? What really annoyed you on your last job?
- What did you like most/find most frustrating about your last job?
- Why did you decide to become a nurse? What do you enjoy most? What concerns you?
- What is important to you in a job? How did your past job measure up?

- What is the one of the best process you saw at one of your clinicals that you wish everyone did? Best customer service approach?
 - Tell me about a time you had to act without all the information. What did you do?
 - Have you ever worked with someone who wasn't carrying his/her weight? What did you do?
 - Have you researched a problem to find the best evidence-based practice? Walk me through what you did.
 - What are your goals for the next five years?
 - Which clinical did you like the most? The least? Why?
 - We have all had to deal with an angry, upset person. Tell me about one of your experiences.
 - What were the major problems you faced in your last job? What did you do?
 - What attracted to you to this position?
 - What are the two or three most important things to you in a job?
4. Set up a file for each position you are applying. Keep a copy of the resume used, the cover letter if sent, and your research and questions. If you are applying to a number of places, it can quickly get confusing and you need to keep very organized as to who you sent information, who you have spoken with, and dates and times of interviews.

THE INTERVIEW

You are prepared and the interview should be a positive exchange where you discuss how you meet the needs of the employer and determine if the job will meet your needs. Usually, the interviewer will ask you questions, and then turn the interview over to you to ask questions.

- Always take a folder with a couple extra copies of your resume and a list of references with phone numbers and email addressed. Write down the names of everyone you are scheduled to see.
- Be absolutely sure your cell phone is turned off. Organizations want you to be professional, and a phone call in the middle of an interview is anything but professional.
- Dress professionally. Wear nice, conservative clothing and appropriate shoes (no sandals). Your initial impression makes a difference. For women: a skirt and jacket or nice pants suit. For men: a suit and tie, or jacket and slacks. Note: many hospitals have policies prohibiting visible body piercing except in the ear. Remember the importance of a first impression. Most hospitals do not allow visible tattoos.
- Be there early. It is too difficult to recover with even reasonable excuses for being late. You are modeling exactly how you will behave on the job.
- Be friendly, respectful, and positive to everyone you meet from the receptionist to the final person you see. Each person will be taking notes of your attitude and communications skills. How you treat each staff member is an indicator of how you will respond to patients and their families.
- Consider all the positives about the job and organization before going into the interview. You want to appear enthusiastic; people hire candidates who they like. If you have questions about whether it is right for you, they will pick these up and have questions about you. After the interview, you can determine if the organization is right for you.
- They will ask you questions about your positive and negative experience working in a team, your work ethic, your ability to relate with patients, and your communications skills. A positive attitude is the number one priority on their list; be sure you avoid the points below.
- Don't speak negatively about anyone! It is very unprofessional to speak poorly about others. It gives that impression that you have difficulty working with others and indicates you may be a negative influence on the team.
- Don't go into details about your personal life issues, e.g., childcare, family relations, or personal finances.
- Don't exaggerate your abilities. Be honest. They will follow-up with detailed questions which will let them know the degree of your involvement.
- If you are enthusiastic about the job, express your interest.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

You will want to follow-up each interview. First, write down your impressions by making a positive/negative (+/-) chart after the interview. This is critical as after you go on two/three interviews, you will forget who said what. Also, you may have a second interview to further discuss your concerns. The +/- chart should be done for each hospital and will help you make your final decision.

You should send a thank you note following each interview. This demonstrates your professionalism, gives you a change to include any information that you wanted to include but forgot, and it gives you an opportunity to express your areas of interest about the job. A thank you note will set you apart from other applicants.

- Be sure and send the thank you note within 24-48 hours of the interview. Write it while the interview is fresh on your mind and you are enthusiastic about the job.
- The more effort you show, the greater the effect it has on the audience. If possible, actually write it out on stationery and mail it. The second alternative is to use email. Warning about emails – print it out before sending and read to ensure it is grammatically correct.
- Write a thank you note even if the job isn't right for you. The medical community is small and the manager may recommend you to others if he/she feels positively about you.

Sample thank you note:

Dear Ms. Black,

I appreciate the time you spent with me discussing the position in your department. I found the job aspects you described to have the potential to be both challenging and rewarding. You discussed the diverse population you serve. I have learned the importance of showing respect for each person's individual culture. In addition to the experience we discussed, I have been very active in my church and have gone on several mission trips to help build communities. While not fluent in Spanish, I was able to communicate to the people we served.

Following our discussion, I walked through several hallways and was impressed with the professionalism and warmth that I felt in every area of the hospital from the receptionist to the cafeteria. I cannot imagine a better place to establish my career. If there is additional information you need, please contact me.

Thank you again for your time,

Sally Jones

Address

Email

