Career & College Readiness Lesson Plans
In the Interview Hot Seat
21st Century Skills

Grade Level 12

Overview

Students will learn about commonly used interview questions and how to appropriately respond to them.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Understand and respond clearly to common job interview questions.
- Present their findings and/or research in a variety of ways (student choice or teacher may assign one format).

Language Objectives

At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Verbally describe common job interview questions and effective responses.
- Participate in class discussions.

Standards Alignment

- California Common Core State Standards: College & Career Readiness Anchor Standards:
  - RI. 3, 5; SL. 1, 3, 6
- California Career Technical Education Anchor Standards:
  - 3
- California Standards for Career Ready Practice:
  - 1, 2, 5
- National Career Development Guidelines:
  - PS 1, 2, CM 4
- International Society for Technology in Education Standards:
  - 2
- English Language Development Standards:
  - Part 1: 1, 4, 7, 9
  - Part 2: 3, 4, 5, 6
• American School Counselor Association Mindsets & Behaviors:
  o M 5; BSS 1

**Materials**

1. Computer with Internet access for students
2. Computer with Internet access and projection capability for instructor
3. Projector and screen
4. Student Handouts
   - Common Interview Questions (p. 5)
   - Common Interview Questions and How to Answer Them (p. 6)
   - Legal vs. Illegal Interview Questions (pp. 7–8)
5. Online Resources
   - In the Interview Hot Seat Start-Up Video
     https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xWGxw9pnON4
   - Preparing for Your Interview, California Career Center
     https://www.calcareercenter.org/Home/Content?contentID=135
   - The Interview, California Career Center
     https://www.calcareercenter.org/Home/Content?contentID=136
   - Illegal Interview Questions, California Career Center
     https://www.calcareercenter.org/Home/Content?contentID=137

**Academic Vocabulary**

- **Applicant**: is a person who makes a formal application for something, typically a job.
- **Effective listening skills**: are the ability to understand information provided by the speaker.
- **Interview**: is a meeting of people especially for consultation; a formal meeting in which one or more people question, consult, or evaluate another person.
- **Qualities**: distinctive attributes or characteristics possessed by someone or something.
**Activity**

Students will learn about commonly used job interview questions and how to most effectively respond to them in order to be ready to participate in future job interviews.

**Getting Ready**

- Preview the “In the Interview Hot Seat” start-up video (link in Materials section)
- Review the online resources and student handouts
- Read the question prompts and edit for your students’ needs

**Lesson Procedures**

1. Introduce the lesson by showing the “In the Interview Hot Seat” start-up video (link in Materials section) and confirm students understand what to expect. Or you can introduce the lesson without the video by describing the topic and activity or by posing the question: What do you know about interviews?

   Facilitate the discussion with these questions and write student responses on the board:
   - How many of you have had an interview? (Usually several hands are raised.)
   - Where was it? How was it? Did you get the job? Ask students to share their experiences.
   - If you’ve had multiple interviews, did you always get the job?
   - What could have made the difference in getting or not getting the job? More information, being prepared, knowing what they expect?

2. Take students to the California Career Center Web portal, select “Getting a Job” then scroll down to and select “Preparing for Your Interview” (link in Materials section). Review the suggestions for how to prepare for an interview.

3. Distribute the “Common Interview Questions” handout.
   - Have students get in two equal lines facing each other, if odd number, one person at the end of line can join the closest group.
   - Explain this is a speed interview. When you say “Go,” one side of line (which you have previously identified to start first) asks any interview question(s) to the person s/he is facing. That person has one minute to answer.
   - Ask if anyone had any great answer and have them share aloud.
• The front person on one side only moves to the end of the line, this causes the paring to be changed with each question.

• Now the other side now asks the question and so on.

At the end of this activity, students will journal their own answers to each of the common interview questions.

6. Distribute the handout, “Common Interview Questions and How to Answer Them”. Review and discuss the common questions and answers. How did student responses compare to the responses suggested in the handout?

7. Distribute the handout, “Illegal vs. Legal Interview Questions”. Review and discuss. Ask students “What, if anything, was a surprise to you? Why?

8. Instruct students they are to write a draft response to the common interview questions. Remind them their writings will be graded on content and following English writing conventions. Write-Pair-Share, then ask for sample responses. Have students submit their responses to you.

   • You can assign the questions in other ways, such as giving students just a few of the questions or letting students select a subset of questions.

9. Wrap Up. Remind students that while interviewing can feel like being in the hot seat, understanding common interview questions and preparing answers before the interview is sure to make a great impression.

10. Remind students to put their work products in their career portfolios whether they are using a paper folder or an online filing system.

**Estimated Time**

One class session

**Evaluation**

• Group discussions.

• Written responses to the common interview questions.

**Adaptations**

Students choose from three colors of paper strips (or other type of group division). Have them divide into groups of three, with one of each color. One color is then designated the interviewer, one color the interviewee, the other the recorder. Students will role play
interviewing, the recorder jotting down the questions and answers. Students have 5 minutes to do the activity, then 3 minutes to talk about the answers. You then call time and tell everyone to now get into a different group, again with the three colors. Go through process three times until all have had a chance to participate in all roles. For example:

- 1st time: Red interviewer, green interviewee, blue recorder
- 2nd time: Green interviewer, blue interview, red recorder
- 3rd time: Blue interviewer, red interviewee, green recorder
- Debrief as a large group after activity about best answers to questions.

This lesson and all other lessons and materials are posted on the California Career Resource Network Web site at www.californiacareers.info.
Common Interview Questions

1. Tell us about yourself.

2. What do/did you like best about school?

3. Why are you leaving your current job?

4. Why do you want to work for us?

5. Have you ever been asked to leave a position?

6. Why should we hire you?

7. What are your strengths?

8. Tell me about your weaknesses.

9. Tell us about a problem you had and how you solved it.
Common Interview Questions and How to Answer Them

1. Tell us about yourself.
   - Tell them how long you have lived in the area (if it has been several years or why you have recently moved here).
   - Quickly summarize your job skills or volunteer experiences.

2. What did/do you like best about school?
   - Tell them you especially liked working on team projects, any time you were in charge of a project, or organized any activity.
   - If you are/were in a CTE class share some of the skills and abilities you obtained through that opportunity.

3. Why are you leaving your current job?
   - I am looking to increase my responsibilities.
   - With this economy I needed more hours than they were able to supply.
   - Business is closing.

4. Why do you want to work for us?
   - I believe my skills and abilities are a good match. (Be prepared to explain why)
   - I have enjoyed my past experience with this company as a customer, client etc.
   - It would fit with my long-range career goals.

5. Have you ever been asked to leave a position?
   - My position changed and my available hours no longer matched those of the position.
   - If other reasons- try and keep it positive

6. Why should we hire you?
   - I am reliable and will work hard. If you hire me, you will get someone who is not afraid to learn and is willing to go the extra mile.

7. Tell me about your weaknesses.
   - Probably my greatest weakness is my inexperience, but I am a quick learner, I want to work and you can teach me how you would like the job done.

8. What are your strengths?
   - If you have any strengths that fit the job, share those, if not…
   - Tell them you want to work, to learn and do the best possible job you can.

9. Tell us about a problem you had and how you solved it
   - Think of a situation at school, on a team, on the job and how you handled it. Talk about communication, getting help from someone else, etc.

Questions to Ask the Interviewer

- Describe your ideal employee.
- How does an employee succeed on your team?
- What are some of the objectives you would like to see accomplished in this job?
## Legal vs. Illegal Interview Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INQUIRY AREA</th>
<th>LEGAL QUESTIONS</th>
<th>ILLEGAL QUESTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>National Origin/Citizenship</strong></td>
<td>Are you authorized to work in the United States?</td>
<td>Are you a US citizen?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What language do you read/speak/write fluently? (This question is okay only if this ability is relevant to the performance of the job.)</td>
<td>Where were you/your parents born?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What is your “native tongue”?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td>Are you over the age of 18?</td>
<td>How old are you?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>When did you graduate?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What's your birth date?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marital/Family Status</strong></td>
<td>Would you be willing to relocate if necessary?</td>
<td>What's your marital status?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Would you be able and willing to travel as needed for the job?</td>
<td>With whom do you live?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Would you be able and willing to work overtime as necessary?</td>
<td>Do you plan to have a family?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(These questions are okay assuming they are asked of all job applicants.)</td>
<td>When?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>How many children do you have?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What are your child-care arrangements?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Affiliations</strong></td>
<td>List any professional or trade groups or other organizations that you belong to that you consider relevant to your ability to perform this job.</td>
<td>What clubs or social organizations do you belong to?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal</strong></td>
<td>Are you able to lift a 50-pound weight and carry it 100 yards, as this is part of the job?</td>
<td>How tall are you? How much do you weigh? (Questions about height and weight are not acceptable unless minimum standards are essential for safe performance of the job.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Legal vs. Illegal Interview Questions, p. 2

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disabilities</strong></td>
<td>Are you able to perform all the essential functions of the job? (This question is okay if the interviewer has thoroughly described the job.)&lt;br&gt;Can you demonstrate how you would perform the following job-related functions?&lt;br&gt;As part of the hiring process, after a job offer has been made, you will be required to undergo a medical exam. (Exam results must be kept strictly confidential, except medical/safety personnel may be informed if emergency medical treatment is required, and supervisors may be informed about necessary job accommodations, based on exam results.)</td>
<td>Do you have any disabilities?&lt;br&gt;Please complete the following medical history.&lt;br&gt;Have you had any recent or past illnesses or operations? If yes, list them and give dates when these occurred.&lt;br&gt;What was the date of your last physical exam?&lt;br&gt;How's your family's health?&lt;br&gt;When did you lose your eyesight? How?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Arrest Record</strong></td>
<td>Have you ever been convicted of _______? (The crime named should be reasonably related to the performance of the job.)</td>
<td>Have you ever been arrested?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Military</strong></td>
<td>In what branch of the armed services did you serve?&lt;br&gt;What type of training or education did you receive in the military?</td>
<td>If you've been in the military, were you honorably discharged?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1Source: Understanding Illegal vs. Legal Interview Questions [PDF], Career Services Center, University of Delaware. The URL is http://www.udel.edu/CSC/pdf/illegalQs.pdf.