



Interview Guide

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GUIDE TO SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEWING

Interview - n. 1. A conversation conducted with a person from whom information is sought.
2. A meeting with a person applying for a job.

PUTTING THE INTERVIEW INTO PERSPECTIVE

An interview is a conversation with a purpose. The most important thing to remember is that it is a two-way fact-finding mission. The prospective employer wants to learn as much about you as possible to determine whether you are the best candidate for the job. However, it is also your opportunity to learn as much as possible about the position and the firm, agency, or corporation—in order to determine whether the job is one you really want.

Preparation is the key to a successful interview. Think about what your responses would be to potentially difficult questions which may be asked of you. You must also be aware of your shortcomings and have prepared answers to those difficult questions, such as poor grades or minimal experience. Good answers to difficult questions require forethought and analysis. The truth must be told, and the strong candidate will be able to overcome any difficulty by emphasizing other strong personal characteristics and growth experiences. Consider questions you would like to ask of the employer and know those impressive parts of your background and experience which you will want to emphasize in the interview. Clearly, the well-written resume is a factor in this regard.

Remember that many attorneys are not trained interviewers. They may be anxious about conducting interviews, and they may not be good at it. If you feel that a particular interview did not go well, it is possible that your interviewer was not skilled at the process.

Do not forget this fact: you have something to offer and are seeking an employer who can best meet your needs just as much as the

employer is seeking the best employee to fill their needs.

Interviews are frequently conducted in phases. The first phase is the introductory or screening interview. This is generally a short, 20 or 30 minute interview used to confirm the candidate's basic qualifications for the position. Professional appearance, demeanor, required education, and appropriate work history are usually verified.

Do not compare yourself with others but believe in yourself and the potential you have to offer. In addition, be realistic about your own needs, and make decisions accordingly. Accepting a position that you know will not offer you the type of job satisfaction you are seeking will lead to unhappiness for both you and the employer.

In this sense, you are, truly an equal partner in the interview process.

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Law students will become familiar with two types of interview protocols. The first and most visible is the *Structured Interview Program* (fall oncampus interviews, job fairs, etc.) The second is the *Direct Contact Method*.

The Structured Interview Program

Employers may meet with 20-25 students in one day, and are left with the task of choosing candidates who will be invited back for more lengthy interviews. The evaluation process is somewhat subjective.

The second phase of the Structured Interview Program is referred to as the "call-back" interview. Students who have been viewed as strong candidates are invited to continue the interview process. This interview is used to observe an applicant's job knowledge, judgment, personality, fluency and poise. Usually the second interview is a lengthy session which may last from several hours to a full day. The callback interview usually takes place at the

employer's office. Candidates frequently meet with several individuals in both formal and informal settings. It is not uncommon to be given a tour of the offices, meet with several partners and/or associates and be taken to lunch.

The employer is evaluating the candidate in a variety of ways. It is important to remember that you, the candidate, are doing the same. Take this opportunity to determine whether the fit feels right for you. A good fit is one that will last over time.

The Direct Contact Method

This is the more traditional method of interviewing. In this scenario, the student directly contacts the employer through a mailing, a response to an advertisement, a cold phone call, a contact, or similar means.

Generally, a mutually agreed time is set for the student to visit the employer's office. The meeting may be brief or lengthy. Students may ask how much time to set aside. Since there is no formalized structure for this type of interview, it will depend largely on the personality and style of the interviewer.

Your Role in the Process

Whether the interview is brief or lengthy, introductory or in-depth, your role is largely the same. It is your job (a) to provide the employer with useful information which will strengthen your candidacy and (b) create a positive impression. The best way to do these things is to be well aware of your strengths and capable of illustrating them to the employer. Highlight your relevant experience, leadership ability, interpersonal skills, verbal and written abilities, maturity, poise, and interest in and knowledge of the employer.

Also, use the interview as your opportunity to gain information about the employer. Many statistics such as practice areas, firm size, number of attorneys, and salary can be found through your personal research. Use the interview to ascertain answers to questions that

cannot be found in the employer's literature or other resource material.

Interview Phases

Generally, introductory and call-back interviews are divided into three phases. The opening usually takes up about 25% of the interview, during which time the employer is attempting to establish a rapport with the candidate and may ask questions about leisure activities, local current events, or personal interests.

The **body** of the interview will be devoted to substantive, open-ended questions which allow the employer to ascertain whether the candidate can efficiently deliver an organized, meaningful response. The employer will also expect questions from the candidate at this stage of the interview.

The **closing** takes up the last 5-10% of the interview and usually consists of any last remarks the participants wish to make, including information given by the employer about the hiring process and any requests for transcripts, writing samples, or further information from the candidate.

Throughout the interview, the employer will be studying your non-verbal communication skills and listening carefully to your responses. A firm handshake and direct eye contact are two of the most important non-verbal messages you can send to the employer. They indicate that you are confident, energetic, and sincerely interested in the employer. They illustrate how you will present yourself as a lawyer.

PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

Research the organization thoroughly

Do your homework for each interview. Read as much literature as you can find on the firm/corporation/organization. You should speak with anyone who may know something about the employer. If the organization is interviewing on campus, the Career Services Office will have information on file. You can often obtain literature or information directly from the

perspective employer. Use Lexis, Westlaw, the PSLawNet public service database, and/or the Internet as well.

Try to learn about the person(s) who will interview you, particularly name and position or specialty. Employers that interview on campus are often able to provide the interviewers' names to the Career Services Office prior to the interview date. However, be aware that interviewers often change at the last minute.

Assess Your Own Interests and the Potential Fit

Employers, like most individuals, are somewhat self-centered in that they appreciate someone displaying a genuine interest in their organization. They are favorably impressed by the candidate who has taken the time to learn as much as possible about the employer's practice, client base, noteworthy cases, etc. Remember that both employer and candidate are looking for a good "fit." The employer assumes that the more you know about the organization, and they about you, the better chance there is for a successful "fit."

A partner of a large law firm suggested that candidates make the following decisions about work preferences before beginning the interview process:

- What geographic area(s) will you consider.
- Preference for a private firm, corporation, government or nonprofit organization.
- If you want to work for a private firm, then:
 - What size firm? Large, medium, small, perhaps a boutique specializing in a particular practice area?
 - What kind of practice? Mainstream corporate, general practice, firm with a dominant specialty, single-practice smaller firm?
 - What kind of character in the firm?
 - What are the professional values of its attorneys?
- Do you want to work for a firm that encourages pro bono work?
- In what area of law are you seeking to

practice? What are your skills and strengths that would help you succeed in this area?

The same firm gives the following advice:

Your questions and responses should express or reflect a number of things. Communicate frankly your values, priorities, work ethic, and feelings on the proper balance between professional and personal interests. Try to determine whether the firm seeks or fosters work-dominated or multidimensional lawyers. Unless the firm has a true picture of your feelings about this, there is unlikely to be a good "fit." Recognize that there are many different kinds of firms, looking for different kinds of people. Don't assume they all want workaholics, and don't fear to be honest about yourself and your priorities.

When you begin your research on the employer, it helps to keep the following questions in mind:

- What is the employer's philosophy of law practice management?
- What is the character of the firm?
- What is the work environment like?
- What are the individual backgrounds of members of the firm or organization?
- Who are the clients?
- What are their needs?
- How are clients obtained?
- What is the size of the organization
And what is the volume of work?

PRE-INTERVIEW RESEARCH

Research Sources to Consider

Following are several standard sources of information on legal employers which can be useful in preparing for an interview. Although their emphasis is on private law firms and corporations, you will find some information on government and nonprofit public interest employers as well.

- National Directory of Legal Employers:
The National Association for Law Placement (NALP) created a standard form which is now completed by most legal employers who

participate in on-campus interviewing programs. The form provides specific data about many important considerations, such as the number of associates and partners in a firm; how those numbers break down into gender and minority categories; how many associates made partner during a given year; the areas of practice; the nature of pro bono opportunities; availability of summer positions; average starting salary; and general hiring criteria. The Directory is a compilation of all these forms and is available in the Career Services Office, and at www.nalpdirectory.com.

- Lexis (www.lexis.com) on-line services accessing the National Directory of Legal Employers.
- Web Pages: Many law firms, organizations, corporations, and government agencies maintain their own web pages.
- Martindale-Hubbell Law Directory: 22 volumes organized alphabetically by state. Lists licensed attorneys, firms, demographic and professional characteristics of firm members, schools attended and areas of specialty. Also available at www.martindale.com.
- West Legal Directory: (www.wld.com) On-line services accessing information similar to Martindale-Hubbell Law Directory.

Some of the Resources Available at Career Services

The Career Services Office contains a variety of informational resources on legal employers, such as:

- NALP's Directory of Legal Employers
- Martindale-Hubbell
- Sullivan's Law Directory
- Directory of Corporate Counsel
- Almanac of the Federal Judiciary
- PS LawNet Worldwide (formerly Pro Bono Students America) public service database. You can access PSLawNet at www.pslawnet.org. You can find information on legal aid and public interest advocacy organizations, government entities that hire lawyers, and a few private law firms with a public interest perspective. You may also find

opportunities ranging from paid and unpaid internships to postgraduate jobs and fellowships.

- Firm, Corporate, and Organization Resumes: A collection of descriptive brochures and materials submitted by area law firms, corporate legal departments, government and public interest agencies. Career Services also has information available on a select group of out-of-state law firms and other legal employers.

Videotapes

The Career Services Office also has videotapes of legal career informational programs it has presented in recent months and years. Those tapes are available for viewing or overnight check-out at the Career Services Office.

PREPARING YOURSELF FOR THE INTERVIEW

Self-Assessment

There is no better promise of job satisfaction than that provided by effective career planning, including an honest career-oriented self-assessment. Students who take the time to evaluate their skills, values and Life style choices have the best chances of winding up in personally satisfying careers. Your decision to attend law school was not a career choice, rather it was a large step toward a career. The study of law is broad, and a vast number of careers are available as a result of your legal education. The most effective way to make career choices is to begin by identifying your strengths, abilities, interests and values. Consider what kinds of activities are enjoyable to you and which are tedious or difficult.

The following series of exercises may help you focus your skills, abilities, interests, and lifestyle preferences in your efforts to convert the information into interview questions and answers. If you are interested in learning more about self-assessment, you may wish to consult some of the additional sources we have suggested.

Identifying Skills, Values and Interests

From the list of personal traits and skills below, and the work values and lifestyle considerations on the next page, circle the ones which you think are most descriptive of you. As you do this, think of examples from your work or other activities which demonstrate these traits and skills in a strong and positive way.

PERSONAL TRAITS •

accurate
cooperative
conscientious
independent
confident
open
secure
quick
thoughtful
informal
practical
strong-minded
stable
ambitious
curious
formal
eager
relaxed
frank
motivated
polite
reliable
sensible
rational
understanding
poised
serious
unexcitable
conservative
progressive
businesslike
calm
discreet
trusting
positive
intellectual
precise

tactful
loyal
reflective
trustworthy
creative
persevering
outgoing
sincere
determined
mature
reflective
assertive
competitive
industrious
fair-minded
self-controlled
genuine
empathetic
good-natured
optimistic
sensitive
articulate
prudent
tenacious
logical
realistic
cautious
thorough
alert
daring
painstaking
sociable
forceful
modest
clever
introspective
analytical
adaptable
energetic
consistent
quiet
tolerant
spontaneous
friendly
easy-going
goal-oriented
meticulous
theoretical
individualistic
enthusiastic
inventive

aggressive
deliberate
efficient
considerate
flexible
purposeful
pleasant
moderate
responsible
honest
clear-thinking
cheerful
competent
academic
adventurous
courageous
supportive
light-hearted
unaffected
patient
self-confident
organized
active
foresighted
tough
firm
resourceful
planning
implementing
recordkeeping
confronting
organizing data
lecturing
debating
crisis control
versatile

WORK SKILLS •

leadership
coordinating
goal setting
interpreting policy
team-building
analyzing
developing ideas
developing programs
inventing
calculating
planning finances
managing finances

problem solving
public relations
memorizing
coaching
classifying data
delegating
data processing
arbitrating
public speaking
prioritizing
influencing
persuading
developing rapport
selling
inspiring trust
interviewing
handling stress
policy-making
chairing meetings
project designing
organizing people
proofreading
researching
synthesizing
informing others
training others
mathematical
decision-making
scheduling
trouble shooting
supervising
plan investment
editing
translating
scientific writing
speech writing
visualizing
negotiating
managing people
problem identifying
mediating
accounting
communication:
oral
visual
written
counseling
forecasting
entrepreneur
perceiving
defining

listening
teaching
theoretical
mentoring
managing conflict
juggling tasks
self-starting
self-sufficient
foreign language
technical:
reading
writing
interpreting
summarizing
innovating
investigating
follow through
advising
liaison skills
thinking quickly
explaining
directing
diagnosing
critiquing
facilitating
testing

WORK VALUES

pleasant surroundings
working with a group of people
creating something
flexible work hours
opportunity to supervise others
working on projects as a member of a team
little or no supervision
a sense of helping society
variety of things to do every day
work close to home
not necessary to bring work home
work involving writing
work involving meeting new people regularly
good vacations
opportunity for professional activities
flexibility to move from one organization to another easily
work where you can take on a project and follow it through
overtime
serve country
intellectual challenge

your own office
tangible product
regular travel
being your own boss
self-employed
good benefits package
high salary
work independently
working for a large organization
a regular work routine
no weekend work
job security
low pressure on job
opportunity for advancement
opportunity to change from one job to another in organization
make a commitment to one organization and stick with it
sense of authority or power
help society
make decisions
physical challenge

LIFESTYLE CONSIDERATIONS •

live in a rural setting
be able to walk to work
live in a moderate climate
live in a suburban setting
live close to cultural and entertainment opportunities
live in a warm climate
go out to eat often
live near relatives

CREATING A PERSONAL PROFILE

live in a constant climate
have time to pursue interests
live near a college
live near the water
live in a wooded setting
participate in family-oriented activities
do volunteer work
go to movies, plays, concerts often
go places on weekends
own your own home
be active in community
live in an apartment
live in a city
travel frequently

live where the children can walk to school
live where the weather changes from season to season
have friends nearby
have a second home

live close to stores
have time to yourself
work on projects around the house
be active in church/synagogue work

Within each of the foregoing categories, rank the items that you circled in their order of importance to you. From this ranking, select the top five in each and insert them below.

My five strongest personality traits are (List each one and briefly note a work-related or other relevant example to demonstrate it):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

My five strongest work skills are (list each one and an example, as above):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

My five most important work values are:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

The five most important lifestyle considerations for me are:

1. _____
2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

My five best performances in law school courses have been:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

FIELDING QUESTIONS

Now that you have identified and summarized your important characteristics on paper, the next step in interview preparation is to integrate these individual qualities and their accompanying examples into a format that will help you generate responses to interview questions.

Using the Self-Assessment Profile to Develop Strong Answers

Use your self-assessment profile as a starting point and imagine how you would describe to an interviewer some examples of how you have successfully demonstrated those skills, achievements or values. Write a brief, concrete description for each.

Examples:

Dedicated: I am dedicated to my work. Last summer, the legal aid clinic where I worked had an unusually high demand, but we were short-staffed. I frequently stayed at the clinic in the evenings and weekends, counseling clients and writing briefs. Even though I was only expected to work forty hours a week, I willingly worked many extra hours without pay because I was committed to meeting the needs of our clients.

Make Good Decisions Under Pressure: I think quickly and make good decisions in a crisis. When I learned that one of our biggest accounts was considering transferring to another vendor that afternoon, I took the initiative to research and put together a set of charts comparing the advantages of our services to those of the competitor. Then I called the client and asked for a fifteen minute appointment to listen to her concerns. During the appointment, I took notes on the important issues she raised, and briefly explained the charts I had brought for her to read. I asked her to delay making her decision until I could take the information about her concerns to my boss. My boss said that my impromptu presentation saved the account. Write a similar example for every strength you would like, ideally, to include in an interview. Put the examples onto note cards and rehearse them out loud to yourself, as though you were

talking to an employer in an interview. Experiment with conveying the same information in different words so that you are comfortable telling the story without having to read it. Tell the story as often as you have to until it comes naturally to you. Have a tickler in your mind of the four or five strengths that you want to be sure to convey at each interview. Say the words in your mind before walking into an interview so you are prepared to show yourself in your best light.

Practicing Your Answers

Some people prefer to memorize answers to standard questions, but others are more comfortable simply reviewing their notes before an interview. Whichever tactic you choose, your performance in the interview will be greatly enhanced if at some time during the preparation stage you have composed at least one carefully worded response to the more difficult questions you are likely to face. You will be less likely to stumble or search for words, or alternatively, say too much and ramble on about the topic because you are nervous. Do whatever you need to do to maintain control of your response. The hard work will payoff. Be careful, though, not to sound overly prepared or "canned." Remember that you are attempting to converse with the interviewer, not to recite a previously planned speech.

Turning Weaknesses Into Strengths

No one likes to talk about their weaknesses, but employers may persist in asking. The question may be direct, e.g., "What are your personal weaknesses?" or more subtle: "Your grades are a little low. What can you tell me about them?" The key to discussing weaknesses lies in the approach you take. What seems to work best is an approach which (1) identifies the issue and (2) presents the solution. For example:

1. *My natural tendency is to be somewhat disorganized. Law school has taught me that disorganization is my own worst enemy and I don't want to have to pay that price.*

2. *I've found that what works best for me is the use of my Franklin Planner. It forces me to create a detailed task list, so that I can rest assured that nothing falls through the cracks.*

Or

1. *No I am not on law review.*
2. *However, you will note from my resume that I worked throughout law school not only to defray the costs of my education but also, and more importantly, to gain experience in a business environment. I think that the exposure that I gained by working will greatly benefit me when I begin my legal career.*

Be aware that an employer may ask you to describe what you liked or did not like about your last job, fellow workers, or supervisor. These questions should be answered carefully so as not to identify yourself as a "problem employee." Even if you had an absolutely miserable experience at your last place of employment, say something positive and do not go into detail about any specific dissatisfaction or negative experience you may have had. Such a response is a flag for the employer and may prompt follow-up questions which change the focus of the interview entirely. Your goal is to be positive and upbeat throughout the interview. Don't allow yourself to be dragged into negative discussions. You can practice turning your weaknesses into strengths with the following exercise. Identify five personal weaknesses. Using the strategy outlined above, develop a strategy to minimize each weakness.

Handling Other Difficult Situations

To practice handling other difficult interview situations, skim through the list of frequently asked questions which follows this section. Are there any that would make you feel particularly uncomfortable? On a sheet of paper,

write five questions from this list, or any others that you might anticipate, and prepare a carefully worded response to each.

Frequently Asked Questions

Be prepared to talk about *anything* on your resume. If you have any papers or publications mentioned on your resume, be sure to re-read them before the interview. It is embarrassing to be asked about something you wrote and not remember major portions of it. The same is true of writing samples; many employers do read them and will want to discuss them in detail. The following list of often-asked questions can help you prepare for an interview. Be prepared to answer any of them before you enter the interview. Always be honest. If you don't know the answer to a question, say so. If you do not understand a question, ask that it be repeated or rephrased. Try to make the interview seem as much like a conversation as possible, rather than a question-and-answer period. Think of the most difficult questions that could be asked of you and be prepared to answer them. Always turn any perceived weakness into a "positive," e.g.: "My legal research has been limited, but I master tasks quickly and look forward to the opportunity to develop my research skills further."

- Why did you decide to go to law school?
- Why did you choose GSU? What prompted your decision? Did you see yourself in any particular role as a lawyer at the time of the decision?
- In what type(s) of work environment(s) are you most comfortable?
- What was your reaction to law school?
- What classes do you enjoy most? Is there a parallel between your performance and your interest in particular courses?

- Do you have a particular career objective at interviewing? Do you have any pending job at this time? Have you decided on a specialty?
- What do you see yourself doing five years from now?
- What things are most important to you in a job?
- Have you made a decision as to the city in which you ultimately wish to practice?
- Why have you selected this city at this time?
- Why did you decide to seek a position with us?
- What are your short-term and long-range goals?
- How would you describe yourself?
- What qualities do you have that make you think you will be a successful lawyer?
- What would you consider to be your greatest strengths? Greatest weaknesses?
- If I called up your most recent employers, what three things would they most likely say about you?
- What two or three accomplishments in your life have given you the most satisfaction? Why?
- What is the greatest obstacle you have ever overcome in your life/career?
- What are your grades? Do you think they are a good indication of your achievement?
- Can you explain your school's grading system to me?
- What have you learned from participation on a journal/moot court/an externship/a pro bono experience/a clinical program?
- What do you know about our firm/agency/company?
- In what type(s) of work environment(s) are you most comfortable? What two or three things are most important to you in a job?
- What skills have you developed as a result of your other jobs?
- How would you describe the ideal position for you?
- Tell me about your participation on the journal (in your clinical program, your thesis or about you? research project, publication, or your courses).
- Describe your recent work experiences.
- What did you like or dislike about your recent work experiences? Why did you leave?
- Did you get an offer from your summer employer? (Why not?)
- How is your work experience relevant to our practice?
- Do you have a geographical preference? Why?
- What ties do you have to this area?
- Where else are you interviewing? Why?
- How long have you been looking?
- Have you been offered a job by any other firms? Call-backs?
- How did you learn about us?

- What do you think it takes to be successful in a firm like ours?
- Why should we hire you?
- What have you learned from the attorneys you have spoken with here?
- What would you like to know about us?
- How has your volunteer/pro bono work prepared you for our practice?
- What school activities have you been involved in and why?
- Isn't your resume too "public interest/corporate" for us?
- Once you join a department/group, is there mobility?
- How are assignments distributed? Does this vary by department?
- How many associates have made partner, by class, over the last five years?
- What is the "normal" partnership track? Is this standard for all practice areas in the firm?
- What does "becoming a partner" mean? One tier or two-tier system? What are the differences between the two? How long to make first tier or second tier? Is there attrition between the two? If so, on what basis? What happens to those who don't make the second tier? Do they stay or leave?

Your Own Questions

One of the ways that an employer may evaluate the depth of your interest is by the nature of the questions you ask. Assume for a moment that you find yourself in the absolutely best case scenario: you have offers from more firms than you can handle. Ask yourself what factors will help you to determine which employer you will choose. View this as an opportunity to determine your further interest in the employer, based on the nature of the answers to some of the following questions. Please note that some of these questions can be answered with simple research e.g., NALP form, firm resume, website. Try to take your questions to greater depth, as mentioned earlier, employers appreciate interviewees who have done their research.

- How is the organization departmentalized? Size of department?
- Do associates/summer associates rotate? Length of rotation period?
- Do attorneys both litigate and do transactional work?
- Are offers extended by a particular department?
- How are important decisions made within the firm? What are the major firm committees, their jurisdictions and ultimate authority within their jurisdictions?
- How does the firm handle associate evaluation? How many people determine an associate's progress/compensation?
- Is there a mentor or "buddy" system? Is there an organized system for associates to discuss individual or collective questions?
- How many billable hours are annually expected of an associate?
- What constitutes a billable hour – only chargeable client work? Recruiting work? Business promotion? Pro Bono work? Outside activities with marketing potential?

- Is pro bono work allowed? encouraged? required?
- How are associates trained?
- What types of logistical support are available to associates?
- Describe the breadth of the client base. Does one client represent more than 10% of the firm's business?
- In what areas does the firm need attorneys?
- Are attorneys asked to specialize? How soon?
- What are future growth areas of the firm?
- What makes the firm unique? What are some of its special qualities or traditions?
- How would you characterize the firm's strengths and weaknesses?
- What is the organization looking for in the ideal associate?
- How would you describe the general character of the firm?
- How much emphasis is placed on bringing in new business?
- What types of clients does the firm represent?
- Where do most members of the firm live?
- Do members of the firm socialize outside the office?
- What opportunities exist for becoming involved in community activities?
- What cultural and recreational activities do members of the firm pursue?
- Why did you choose this firm?
- What are you working on now? (ask associates)
- How do you work with associates (i.e.,: delegation, feedback, etc.)? (ask partners)

Remember that an introductory interview is just that, it is intended to determine whether there is a desire on the part of both parties to proceed with further interviews. For that reason, keep your questions more general, and appropriate to an entry-level lawyer's interests, in a screening interview, saving the more in-depth and long-term questions for the call-back interview.

Tough Topics

Grades. Grades inevitably are a topic of discussion at interviews. If your grades do not appear on your resume, an employer is likely to assume they are not high and ask about them. *Do not be defensive and do not offer alibis or apologies.* Family obligations, employment, or other commitments which took time from studying can be briefly explained. An illness during a semester or an examination period may account for a somewhat lower rank, but a large number of illnesses throughout law school will appear questionable. Be careful of the "I don't do well in high-pressure situations, but really know a lot" type of answer. It sounds like an excuse and since the majority of legal positions require the ability to work well under pressure at least some of the time, you may find yourself convincing the employer not to consider you for the job. Remember that 90% of all attorneys were not in the top 10% of their class.

Salary. Never discuss salary during your interviews unless the interviewer does so first. In some cases salaries are not negotiable (e.g., many large law firms, government, many Legal Services and other public interest employers, many larger private employers). In other cases,

offers depend upon how you are viewed as a candidate. You can obtain information about pay ranges by asking people who are working in the field. You should not initiate a discussion about salary until an employment offer has been made. However, once the subject has been brought up, if you are asked what salary you expect, try to avoid giving a direct answer initially by asking what salary range has been budgeted for the position. Candidates new to a field tend to either overestimate or underestimate their worth. After you have been given a range, it is better to answer with a figure that is at least at the midpoint of their salary range if you feel your qualifications and experience merit it. Remember, the tighter the job market, the lower the salary offer. Be realistic and consider future salary potential in your deliberations. You should request a written confirmation of any salary offer and fringe benefits.

Handling Inappropriate or Discriminatory Questions

Interviews are very difficult situations even without the added problem of discriminatory questions. The applicant is under stress, wants to make a good impression, and is probably both shocked and angered by the discriminatory question. Or, as sometimes happens, the applicant may not realize until after the interview is over that the question was probably illegal. Handling this kind of situation is very complex and difficult, aggravated by the fact that the interview situation demands an immediate response. What an individual does in such a situation depends on many things, including whether s/he still wants to be considered for the job, whether s/he immediately recognizes the question as inappropriate, and many other factors. Some will try to handle the situation so that prospects for being hired aren't harmed; others will walk out of the interview; others will challenge the interviewer. The range of responses is enormous and the decision is yours.

What will you do if you get a discriminatory question? Many of you will want to respond so that you will not hurt your chances for a positive decision from the interviewer. The questions and

answers that follow are provided to help you deal effectively and diplomatically with the reality of discrimination should you want to do so. ***If you are troubled by an interview experience, or you experience overt discrimination, please report it immediately to the Career Services Office while the experience, feelings, and dialogue are still fresh in your mind.*** Make notes of the conversation as soon as you can after the interview.

One of the skills most lawyers develop is the ability to turn a negative into a positive. You will need to develop that ability too. So, if you think someone is less impressed with you because of your sex or skin color, etc., and if they demonstrate that verbally, you may want to try to turn them around by showing them just how good you are. Be positive using the responses below to guide you. Then come to Career Services.

Typical Inappropriate Questions

Gender

- (Asked of women) Do you have plans for having children/family?
Possible response: "I don't know at present. I plan on a career and believe it will be successful with or without a family."
- (Asked of women) What are your marriage plans?
Possible response: "If you are concerned with my ability to travel or my commitment to my employer, I can assure that I am quite aware of the job's responsibilities and personal commitments."
- (Asked of women) What does your husband do?
Possible response: "I am interested in working because...My husband's work will not affect my performance with your organization."
- (Asked of women) What happens if you or your husband gets transferred?
Possible response: "My husband's career will not interfere with my career" or "My husband and I would discuss any moves at the time they logically come up. At present, our

jobs (schools, etc.) are where we wish to live."

- (Asked of women) Who will take care of your children while you are at work?

Possible response: "I have made arrangement so that my family life will interfere as little as possible with my work."

- (Asked of men) How would you feel working for a woman?

Possible response: "There would be no problem. I have effectively worked with men and women while in school."

Age

- How old are you?

Possible response: "I hope you will evaluate me on my skills and experience. You will find that my age is irrelevant. I have worked well with people of all ages."

- What is your date of birth?

Possible response: "I feel my age is an advantage at work in terms of the broad-based experience it has afforded me."

- How would you feel working for a person younger than you?

Possible response: "Age does not interfere with my ability to get along with others. I am adaptable and respect supervisors/colleagues who are knowledgeable and competent."

National Origin

- Where were you born?
- Where were your parents born?
- Of what country are you a citizen?

Possible responses: "I am a permanent resident of the U.S. and have legal permission to work here." "Actually, I am American to the core, and America consists of people from many national origins. Since it has been my home for so long, I feel like a native."

"I am proud that my background is __. My heritage helps me to deal effectively with people of various ethnic backgrounds."

Handicaps

- Do you have a handicap?
- As a handicapped person, what help are you going to need in order to do your work?
- How severe is your handicap?

Possible responses: "Any disabilities I may possess would in no way interfere with my ability to perform all aspects of this position."

"Actually, I don't need help doing my work because I have been adequately trained. What I need might be minor adaptations of the work station and a supervisor who hires me for what I can do rather than for what I cannot do."

Religion

- What is your religion?
- What church do you attend?
- Do you hold any religious beliefs that would prevent you from working certain days of the week?

Possible responses: "My religious preference should have no relationship to my job performance."

"I have always excelled with any job or academic requirements I have had. I feel certain that this will be the case here as well."

Race/Color

- Do you feel that your race/color will be a problem in your performing the job?
- Are you of race/heritage?

Possible responses: "I've had extensive experience working with people with a variety of backgrounds. A person's race, whatever it may be, should not interfere in the work environment."

"I do not feel I should be judged on the basis of race or color."

Remember, sometimes the questions are not meant with malice. If you began the interview explaining that you are interested in their suburban office because it was a good place to raise children, when the interviewer asks about your children, they are simply building on a subject matter you had previously raised. Interviewees who have experienced this type of unpleasant interaction report a range of resultant feelings: anger, hurt, confusion, harassment and indifference. Whatever your feelings are, your response should be as unemotional as possible. Attempt to remain clear-headed and professional despite the level of professionalism displayed by the interviewer.

THE CALL-BACK INTERVIEW

The call-back interview is the best time to really investigate the employer and the job. You should ask more specific questions about aspects of the organization and your potential responsibilities. Find out in advance how long the interview will be. Some call-back interviews last only an hour, but some last from morning to mid afternoon, particularly with firms that do their preliminary interviews on campus. The government/nonprofit/small firm sectors sometimes require applicants to submit to a group interview with boards or hiring committees.

Acknowledge the Call-Back Invitation

If you receive a letter or phone call from the firm inviting you to come to visit its offices, you should acknowledge the invitation as soon as possible by phone.

When to Arrange the Interview

It is to your advantage to visit the organization or firm as early as possible, since some hiring decisions are made on a rolling basis. Schedule only one call-back interview per day. They require a lot of time, energy and alertness.

What to Expect When You Get There

For large firms, expect that you will meet both partners and associates. If you are interested in a particular area of practice, ask the person coordinating the interviews to schedule you to meet members who specialize in that area. Treat everyone with respect; do not assume that the impressions of secretaries and office staff will go unheard!

A meal is often included as part of the call-back interview, especially at law firms, and often it will be the younger associates and staff attorneys who dine with you. While this is an excellent opportunity to ask relevant questions about their experiences, use your best judgment and refrain from assuming that these attorneys--even your own school alumni--are your good friends.

Generally, your lunch partners are also asked to fill out an evaluation form. You should exercise discretion in all conversation.

The hosts of your lunch or dinner will be learning the following things about you:

- Whether you fit into their firm
- The caliber of your interpersonal and social skills
- Whether you are pleasant to be with
- Whether you can establish a rapport easily
- Whether you convey a professional image
- Whether you seem mature and self-confident.

INTERVIEW ETIQUETTE

What to bring to the Interview

Bring at least three copies of your resume, along with copies of your writing sample, transcript, and list of references. Do this even if you submitted the material in advance. You may meet new people who would be interested in seeing a copy or the interviewer may have forgotten to bring his/her copy.

List your education and work history (including specific dates, addresses, telephone numbers, and supervisors' names) on a card or in a pocket notebook so you will have them handy if they are needed to complete an application form. A small notebook will be useful to you if you are called upon to make a note of something during the interview. Write notes to yourself immediately following the interview when everything is fresh in your mind, notes that you may refer to for subsequent interviews and thank you notes.

Attire

Dress professionally and conservatively. Present a professional image by not carrying a backpack or oversized purse. Present yourself in the "uniform" that is appropriate for the organization. Even if everyday dress can be casual in the employer's workplace, present yourself as you would appear when representing the organization in a courtroom or other formal situation.

Logistics

Confirm where the interview will be held. Some organizations have more than one location. Be generous in estimating the time you will need to arrive punctually. You should arrive at the location about ten minutes early. Never be late! Before you enter the offices, stop in a rest room to make one last inspection of your appearance. Be courteous to everyone, whether they are on the road, in the parking lot, on the street outside the building, or in the building itself. You never know whom you will meet on your way to an interview, and anyone of those people could be involved in making hiring decisions for the employer.

Impressions and Body Language

- Greet the interviewer with a firm handshake.
- Convey confidence, energy, interest and enthusiasm. Interviewers are quick to note those applicants who do not seem eager to work at the firm, company, or organization. It is okay to be excited about the prospect of working for the employer.
- Smile appropriately during the interview. An overly-serious face is not appealing to an interviewer, even if he is not a big smiler.
- Do not fidget.
- Maintain regular eye contact.
- Maintain good posture.
- Speak clearly and distinctly.
- Demonstrate a sense of humor by showing appreciation for the interviewer's joke. Generally, you should avoid telling your own jokes.
- Be alert. Listen closely to the questions being asked. Use your listening skills not only to hear the words that are spoken, but to concentrate on what the question actually means.

- Be responsive to the questions being asked. Don't answer simply "yes" or "no." Use stories and specific examples to elaborate or demonstrate your point.

WHAT TO DO AFTER THE INTERVIEW

Send a Thank-You Note

Immediately after the interview, write to the person who was responsible for organizing the interview process (sometimes a secretary or recruiting coordinator). Or write to the one person who seemed most in charge and in that letter thank the others; either is correct. Include references to details of your visit in the letter so that it does not sound like a form letter that you send after every callback-interview. If you choose to write to each of your callback interviewers make sure that the letters you send to people in the same firm are not exactly the same. Send the letter as soon as possible after the call-back interview.

Monitor Status Tactfully

Job offers are not usually made during the interview. If you do not hear from an employer within a reasonable time after the date specified for a decision (usually two to four weeks following the interview, depending on the situation), you may call to ask about the status of their deliberations. Do not be over-anxious, and be careful not to call repeatedly or place undue pressure on the employer. When you receive an offer, inquire when they need a decision and suggest when you will get back to them.

JOB OFFER ETIQUETTE

Acknowledge Immediately

If you receive a job offer, immediately affirm your interest, and ask the date by which you are expected to respond. Most organizations have a timetable and expect you to respond, either with an acceptance or a rejection, by that date. Keep in mind that many employers expect quick responses, especially smaller offices eager to fill

vacancies. The National Association of Law Placement sets standards for the timing of offers and acceptances. See the NALP Part V guidelines for specific deadlines by going to www.nalp.org. Not all employers work within NALP's guidelines but many will attempt to follow the spirit of the NALP timing guidelines. If you need more time to respond than the employer has allowed, ask for additional time. You should call and speak with the person who extended the offer, even if you will not be accepting it. This is the best way to ensure the interview process has ended on a positive note. Who knows--you may encounter another opportunity to do business with the same organization and people later! It is wise not to burn bridges behind you.

Respond Appropriately

Timing and tact are critical when you have received an offer and the employer wants a decision, but you may be waiting to hear about another job you would prefer. What can you do? You can ask the first employer for an extension of the time by which they want your decision. Be careful how you present that request. You may be working there, so do not give them the impression that they are a poor second choice. You can also explain to the undecided employer that you have another job offer but would prefer working with them and request that they let you know their decision as soon as possible. Here, too, be careful of your presentation. Their individual time constraints may still result in your having to make a decision in the first position without knowing about the second.

When you are in the fortunate position of having more than one job offer and must reject all but one employer's offer, use the same tact and finesse that you would want from them. Carefully prepare what you will say, and be gracious. You never know what the future will bring. Some day you may have the opportunity (and desire) to work for them. See a career counselor if you have further questions about job offers, and remember to consult NALP Part V rules on offers and acceptances.

DO'S AND DON'TS OF THE INTERVIEW

The following list is a means of summarizing in checklist form the concrete aspects of good interviews. A good point to remember as you read the list is that no single "do" will get you the job, but anyone of the "don'ts" could disqualify you from being considered for that position. Plus, it's worth your time to adhere to these suggestions.

Don'ts

- Don't be late. In fact, be 10-15 minutes early for any scheduled interview.
- Don't wear your hat, coat, gloves, or rain gear into an interview. It gives the impression that you are anxious to leave. Carry them if not offered a place to put them.
- Don't have anything in your mouth--no gum, no candies, no breath mints, no cigarettes.
- Don't lean on or put your elbows on the interviewer's desk. Sit erect. Don't wear sunglasses into an interview, and if you don't wear your eyeglasses all the time, don't park them on top of your head.
- Don't show your nervousness by drumming your fingers, swinging your foot, or cracking your knuckles. You should have no loose change in your pocket--most tend to jingle it when nervous.
- Don't keep adjusting your clothes; nor should you "pick" imaginary lint off your clothing.
- Don't fiddle with your hair.
- Don't call the recruiter "sir" or "ma'am" too much. Respect is mandatory, but don't go overboard.
- Don't overuse the interviewer's name.
- Don't call the interviewer, secretary, or recruitment coordinator by his/her first name unless invited to do so.

- Don't be a jokester. Wisecracks and laughter can come later. Be pleasant, but remember that the interviewing process is formal and serious.

- Don't give one and two word answers. The recruiter is trying to get to know you. If you go into a shell, you probably won't be hired.
- Don't slip into speech-making or preaching tone of voice.

- Don't hog the conversation. Answer the questions thoroughly, but don't drone on forever. Your answer should be between 20 and 120 seconds long.

- Don't use profanity, even if the recruiter does.

- Don't use a lot of slang.

- Don't chatter while the interviewer is reviewing your resume.

- Don't try to overpower the recruiter with bragging or overstatement.

- Don't lie about anything. Sometimes candidates lie about their salary. Recruiters often ask for proof, such as a W-2 form.

- Don't criticize your present employer.

- Don't get angry or even irritated during the interview. You can be firm--not angry—if the questioning becomes improper or begins to slip into irrelevant areas.

- Don't answer questions that you don't want to answer because you consider them to be too personal--and explain your reasoning.

- Don't ask "Will I get the job?" or "Can I have the job?" Those questions tend to box the recruiter in and s/he won't like that. Rather say, "I hope you consider me as a candidate for this job" or "I'm really interested in this job."

- Don't talk about salary or benefits until later in the hiring process or until the recruiter mentions the subject.

- Don't schedule anything after the interview. It will be very embarrassing to leave in the middle of an interview or before you have met all the key players.

- Don't be irritated if there are a number of interruptions during an interview. Maintain your composure and be prepared to remind the interviewer where you were in the conversation if they ask.

Do's...

- Do pay attention to your scent. Women with powerful perfumes and men with intense colognes can destroy interviews. Moderation is recommended. You may not be personally aware of how strong your scent is.

- Do go to the bathroom before your interview. It is embarrassing to interrupt an interview to "go," and you want to be as comfortable as possible during this "pressure cooker" happening.

- Do get a good night's sleep before each day that you search for employment. If you are noticed to be yawning during the interview, it will cost you.

- Do look the interviewer in the eye. Recruiters place a lot of emphasis on eye contact.

- Do make sure you get the interviewer's name right.

- Do have some money with you. You never know what might happen.

- Do take notes if you wish. After all, the interviewer takes them. You might consider writing down some questions before you go into the interview.

- Do let the interviewer decide when the interview is over.

- Do ask the interviewer when you will hear from the company again.

- Do your very best at every interview, even if you are not sure that a particular job, firm, or agency is right for you. You can't turn down an offer until you receive one.

- Do ask for business cards of each person that you meet during the interview process. You may want to send a thank you letter following the interview.

- Do be positive in all your responses. If questions arise regarding experiences that were negative in some way, focus on the best aspects of those experiences, not the worst. If a prior work or academic experience was less than stellar, prepare in advance by sorting out anything useful you learned from the situation.

UNDERSTANDING THE LINK BETWEEN IMAGE AND CREDIBILITY

Studies have shown that credibility is most affected, either positively or negatively, by the two variables of character and competence. It will be to your advantage to control the impressions you convey to the employer by dressing appropriately and by giving the type of strong, positive responses you have been preparing thus far, adapting them as necessary to meet each employer's preference. Being able to anticipate how you should adapt to the employer in the interview is another reason why thorough research is important.

Character

If the organization is conservative and formal, do you look conservative and formal? If the organization is more relaxed or informal, do you fit the part while still wearing "courtroom" dress? Do you demonstrate good interpersonal skills, sound judgment, maturity, integrity, and confidence? Do you exhibit good listening skills in the interview? Is your eye contact direct and sustained? Did you give a firm handshake in the greeting/closing?

Competence

Have you come prepared to the interview? Does your resume look professional? Do you make an

effort to answer questions in a specific and assertive manner? Do your answers make reference to your abilities and skills? Are you prepared to give extra copies of your resume, writing sample, transcript and list of references if the employer asks for them?

COPING WITH "STAGE FRIGHT" AND PROJECTING CONFIDENCE

If you experience some degree of "stage fright" or nervousness that actually affects your performance in an interview in some way, then congratulations, you are a normal human being! As you participate in more interviews, you will experience less anxiety, but If you are a novice, it may be helpful to know some ways to manage your fears.

Why Stage Fright Occurs and How to Respond

Even very gregarious, extroverted, confident individuals experience some degree of nervousness from time to time in interviews. This is because nervousness can be caused by several factors which are not necessarily remedied by "the gift of gab." Fear of failure, self-evaluation resulting in failure, fear of the unknown, and a highly critical self-image are the most common reasons that individuals "freeze-up," draw blanks, perspire, stammer, talk too quickly, or say things they didn't originally intend to say. The physical responses to psychological stimuli are usually involuntary, so the best way to tackle stage fright is to follow two important strategies: 1) reduce the likelihood of succumbing to one of the common psychological stimuli and 2) learn how to control the physical responses to stage fright if it occurs during an interview.

Pre-empting the Psychological Stimuli that Cause Anxiety.

List your fears on paper, taking care to be as specific as possible. Realize that for each specific fear, there is a way of coping or managing. Next to each fear, list a positive counter statement. You will find that some fears are simply irrational ones -- you should at least recognize them as such and replace them with positive beliefs.

Reconceptualize the role of the interviewer. One very successful technique of controlling negative self images is to reconceptualize the role of the interviewer as an information-gatherer rather than as a critic. While it is true that interviewers must work within the hiring criteria of their firm, they are also acting as recruiting agents and are instructed to look for individuals who have strengths in particular areas needed by departments within the firm. If you are aware of the employer's needs and are conscious that you have strengths in those areas, you should think of the interview as an opportunity to provide information about your strengths to the interviewer. At all costs, do NOT think of the interviewer as someone who has x-rayvision and is able to see all your weaknesses at once. You are in control of the information you supply, and the way in which you supply that information.

Build your confidence through preparation and practice. This is the number one way to ensure that you are able to realistically approach the interview. Takeaway some of the fear of the unknown and fear of failure by rehearsing answers to your questions with a friend or arrange to have a mock interview through Career Resources. Do your research on the employer. Career Resources hires a consultant every year who comes to the campus to conduct mock interviews with students on an appointment basis. We highly recommend that you take advantage of this service to get specific, individualized feedback on your particular interview style. You will gain valuable experience and confidence.

Practice positive visualization. If you ever participated as an athlete in either team sports or as an individual competitor, then you know that visualizing success and developing a positive psyche can often be instrumental in maximizing your physical performance. The concept is the same for interviewing. When preparing for the interview, do not let yourself think about or imagine failure. When you begin to have negative thoughts, replace them with a positive scenario such as the ones you have written above. Rehearse these positive scenarios in your mind several times a day, especially on the day

of your interview. Imagine the interview scenario. Picture, instead of a scowling or bored interviewer, someone who is genuinely interested in learning about you and picture yourself giving the kinds of answers you want to deliver. Build into your scenarios contingency plans. Picture what you will do or how you will handle the situation if you do draw a blank or if you encounter a period of silence. Imagine how you will respond if the interviewer seems bored or even brusque or rude.

Non-Verbal Communication and "Stage Fright"

Eye Contact. Direct, sustained eye contact is very important. It conveys confidence, sincerity, truthfulness, and interest in the employer. Some job candidates manifest their anxiety by looking down at the ground or at their resume, around the room, at the interviewer's hands or paper, and generally avoid looking the interviewer in the eye. If you have difficulty maintaining eye contact, a videotaped mock interview and a deliberate effort to practice eye contact during informal situations will help.

Posture and Gestures. Rest your hands lightly on the chair or on your resume folder, where the interviewer can see them. It does not really matter if you tremble or shake slightly -- this will go away after the first rush of adrenalin subsides. However, you should make a deliberate effort to avoid playing with hair or jewelry -- these are signs of nervousness that can actually be distracting to the interviewer and may also make you seem insecure. Additionally, avoid tapping your feet or shifting around in your chair too much. Videotaping yourself in a mock interview, where the actual interview conditions are simulated, is the best way to become aware of any inadvertent messages you may be sending to the interviewer.

INDIVIDUAL MOCK INTERVIEWS

What Are They?

Mock interviews are individual, professional interviews conducted with a trained, sensitive expert in legal career planning. The mock

interview is a practice interview. You are the interviewee--interviewing for a position with a law firm, government agency or any employer of your choice. The interview will be videotaped so that immediately following, a critique of your skills is offered which is confidential and personalized to meet your needs.

How Do They Work?

Sign up for an interview appointment in the Office of Career Resources. Dress and prepare for a professional interview. Come to the interview prepared. The interviews are conducted in a room in the Career Services Office. Leave after 30 minutes with plenty of new insight, an action plan for improving your skills, and the confidence that you know what you want to present to potential employers.

Whom Do They Help?

1L's: Hone your skills before you begin searching for your first summer legal job.

2L's: Continue to hone your skills as you search for your second summer job. Don't use the fall recruiting season or the On Campus Interviewing (OCI) program as a place to practice. Those are real interviews. Get the help you need now to maximize your skills and land a summer offer.

3L's: Become comfortable with the interview process before you start your postgraduate job search. Don't wait until after graduation, the bar exam, or receipt of your bar exam results to begin the job search.

All students: Learn to identify your skills and how to comfortably discuss your assets. Ask the "stupid" questions and voice concerns which you've hesitated to bring up with the Career Resources staff. Learn to respond to difficult questions, for example, why are you not in the top 10% of your class?

Do I Really Need This?

Nearly everyone thinks that they can handle themselves well in an interview. Some do and some don't. Find out now, with a personal guide, what concerns you may need to address and how to best market your skills.

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING

What Is It?

The informational interview is one piece of the 'Job search strategy puzzle.' The informational interview is part of a research process, one in which information and contacts are gathered from people who are already working in target positions or organizations. It is an excellent method of conducting market research. The structure of the informational interview is one in which you ask the majority of the questions and direct the course of the discussion, as opposed to a job interview in which you are answering the questions.

Why Do Informational Interviewing?

You can do informational interviewing:

- to research job market information.
- to find out about career paths that you did not know existed.
- to gain interviewing experience. The more comfortable you become with the process, the less stress you will experience.
- to become a more impressive job candidate by learning what is important to employers
- to get first-hand information and impressions from people who know the ins and outs of the profession.
- to get additional leads to jobs and/or other informational interviews.
- to build confidence in your ability to discuss your career interests, strengths and goals.
- to discover whether your strengths and

personality would be well suited to a specific career based on information received.

- to learn about professional organizations and publications which may be helpful to you in your career.
- to help clarify, define and re-define your interests and goals, gaining self awareness through the process.
- to begin a process which will serve you throughout your professional life.
- to expand your professional network and become known by "players" in the field.

Where to Begin

Begin by looking at your personal network. Think about all of the people you know (friends, family, classmates, former employers/co-workers, community figures, church/synagogue acquaintances, past or current faculty, etc.). Let these people in your network know about your interests. Ask them who they might suggest you talk with to learn more about the field you are interested in. Remember that networking is **not** "using" people. Contacts are often very willing to provide information and share their expertise with others for the asking. You will find people enjoy discussing themselves and their work, especially with novices in the field.

Research

Beyond your own personal network, there are many resources which will help you to expand your network. Utilize professional organizations, journals, faculty members, Lexis/Westlaw, bar associations alumni/ae etc. to help identify others who may be helpful to you in exploring and expanding the depth of your interests. Explore the multitude of career planning resource guides which offer reference directories.

Organization

Create a listing all of your contacts. Include

the contact's name, title, address and telephone number. Keep notes on how the contact can be helpful to you and the dates of your communication. Additional information to include: the referral source, notes about your discussion, and the names of referrals you receive from the contact.

What to Say to Get the Informational Interview

The most efficient use of your time will involve phone calls to introduce yourself and request a meeting. Let the person know how you were referred to them and that you are not requesting a major time commitment from them. This can be done by saying "Mr. Jones, my name is and I was given your name by. I understand that you practice in the area of _____ and I am very interested in learning more about that field. I'm looking for some general information and wonder if you might be able to find 10 or 15 minutes for me to drop by your office. I believe that you may have useful suggestions for me, and I'd like to brainstorm with you, and hear your advice and ideas." Be prepared. Some people will want to proceed with a short phone conversation then and there.

Conducting the Informational Interview

Your goal is to gather information which means that you will be doing the interviewing and directing the discussion. Your discussions will vary with each specific interview. Your goals are to acquire basic information and impressions about work responsibilities, lifestyles, working conditions, educational and experience requirements, etc. Remember that the informational interview should be a low stress, enjoyable conversation.

Introduce yourself and establish a climate of relaxation through "ice-breaker" types of conversation (mutual contacts, the weather, the office environment). Express your appreciation that the contact is taking time to talk with you. Recognize their time is valuable and that you don't want to take up too much of their time. Continue to develop rapport by asking the

contact to tell you about their position, personal career development and their likes and dislikes about the field.

Design your questions by first considering what you want to know. Your first informational interviews may be fairly general. As the search continues, you will ask more sophisticated questions about how to find a job in a particular market. Any of the questions which follow will provide a start. If you have more specific questions, that's even better.

Here are examples:

- Can you describe a typical day?
- What prerequisites are crucial to finding success in your field?
- What kinds of coursework, additional training and practical experiences will make me most marketable in your field?
- How did you become interested in this area of the law?
- Which part of your job provides the most challenges?
- What changes have you seen over the years?
- What do you believe the future holds?
- Are there any personal attributes which you feel are crucial to success in this field?
- What do you think of my experiences to date? Am I an attractive candidate? If not, what would make me more so?
- What motivates you to continue, despite the difficulties of this field?
- Are there any lifestyle considerations I should be aware of?
- If you could start all over again, would you choose the same path?

- Would you make any changes that would be useful to the novice?

- Which of my skills do you consider appealing to those hiring in this field?

Don't take too long. Stick with what you asked for when you sought out the informational interview.

When nearing the end of the discussion, you should always ask, "You've been very helpful. Who would you suggest I speak with who can tell me more about May I say that you suggested that I call?" Ask for permission to stay in touch to ask about new developments and future leads.

End the interview with expressions of thanks for the contact's time and candor. Remember to send a written thank you letter right away. Provide some positive reinforcement for taking their valuable (and billable) time with you. If the contact has given you additional names, explain how much you appreciate the referrals and let them know that you'll update them on your conversations.

Evaluation

An important final step is the evaluation of the information which you have gathered. What positive and negative impressions do you now have? How did this interview help you to clarify your own objectives? What are your next steps? With whom will you speak next? What more do you know about the legal market in your field of interest?