TOOL 3.11
BUILDING SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEWING SKILLS FOR APPRENTICESHIP AND CONSTRUCTION EMPLOYMENT

THE PINK TO GREEN TOOLKIT

This tool is part of The Pink to Green Toolkit: Adding a Gender Lens to Green Jobs Training Programs, created by Wider Opportunities for Women for the GreenWays Initiative. All tools are available online at: www.jft.org/pinktogreen

The GreenWays initiative provides high-quality workforce services to employers and to workers seeking to advance their careers in the green economy. The initiative invests in 20 workforce partnerships across six diverse industry sectors in eight metropolitan labor markets. It builds on JFT’s approach of organizing employers and workforce resources into sectoral workforce partnerships to promote career advancement for lower-skilled workers. GreenWays is supported by grants from the U.S. Department of Labor through Pathways Out of Poverty and the Green Jobs Innovation Fund.

www.jft.org/Initiatives/greenways
Students will be able to:

- Explain the importance of interviews in the application and hiring process.
- Explain the interview process and expectations.
- Prepare for an interview and respond to interview questions.
- Demonstrate positive body language and non-verbal behavior.
- Demonstrate effective interviewing skills.
- Address interview questions that may not be legal.
- Identify communication styles related to gender.
WHY ARE INTERVIEWS USED?

> To gain firsthand knowledge of a candidate.
> To give industry members an opportunity to assess a candidate’s behavior, attitude, and appearance.
> To determine if an interviewee is a promising candidate for apprenticeship or employment with a company.
WHEN ARE INTERVIEWS USED?

Interviews are conducted:

- As part of the apprenticeship selection process
- Conducted after an aptitude test
- Following written application by a candidate for a job or entry into an apprenticeship
- On a jobsite by a superintendent or crew leader to fill a position
 Interviews are generally conducted by a panel that includes representatives of the employer and the union.

 Interviewers are most likely volunteers conducting multiple interviews in the course of a day.

 Interviews may last 5-20 minutes—be mindful of the time allotted for your interview.

 Interviewers generally ask standard questions of all applicants.

 An interview is a subjective measure—there may be guidelines but interviewers rely on their own perceptions and judgment.
> That interviewers will try to make you comfortable
> That interviewers will try to make you uncomfortable or ask trick questions
> That you need to demonstrate in-depth technical skill or knowledge related to the trade
> That the committee members will demonstrate any responsiveness to your replies
> That you will get any immediate feedback
> That all interviewers will be well trained in conducting an interview
Candidates that are a good fit—meaning a candidate that:

- Appears to have the physical, emotional, and intellectual aptitude to succeed in the apprenticeship program
- Can demonstrate knowledge of the trade
- Can provide responsive, clear, and articulate answers to a variety of basic employment related questions
- Appears enthusiastic, energetic, and willing to learn
- Demonstrates determination, dedication, and full commitment to a career in the trades
- Has the ability to perform under pressure with high productivity and quality
- Presents themselves as cooperative, and as someone who can work with others successfully, and can take direction
WHAT ARE THEY LOOKING FOR—MOST IMPORTANTLY

➢ Are you willing to put in the effort to complete an apprenticeship and work as a journeyperson?
➢ Is it worth making an investment of the apprenticeship’s resources in you?
➢ Can you demonstrate a commitment to completing an apprenticeship and making a career in the trade?
➢ Will you stay long enough to contribute to the good of the industry/trade equal to the investment in your training?
They will rate—

> Your responses to questions
> Observation of your behavior and appearance
> Assessment/impression about your attitude and energy
> How much you know about the trade
> Perception of your level of interest and commitment to the trade

Remember: An interview is a subjective measure
WHAT THEY ARE LOOKING FOR: COMMUNICATION STYLE

> Engaged listening and comprehension of the question
> Answering questions asked with specific, to the point, related examples
> Avoiding yes or no answers
> Ability to think on your feet
> Full sentences
> Clear voice—loud enough but not too loud
> Intonation—don’t speak in a monotone
WHAT THEY ARE LOOKING FOR: ATTITUDE/BEHAVIOR

> Timeliness
> Preparation
> Enthusiasm
> Energy
> Respectful
> Appropriate
> Attentive to the task
> Positive
> Committed
> Sincerity, Honesty, Ethical
> Confidence not Arrogance
WHAT THEY ARE LOOKING FOR: NON-VERBAL SIGNALS

- Appearance
- Grooming
- Eye contact
- Calm and collected
- Posture
- Facial expressions
- Handshake
- Walk
- Arm and hand movement, and placement
- Nodding while listening
- Smiling
WHAT THEY ARE LOOKING FOR: KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND ABILITIES

- Ability to describe the duties and working conditions of the trade.
- Ability to describe the qualifications and characteristics of a model apprentice/employee.
- Basic technical understanding of the trade.
- Demonstrate understanding of the apprenticeship program.
- Provide information/documents requested.
WAYS TO ACE AN INTERVIEW

> Arrive on time
> Speak confidently and clearly
> Answer questions thoroughly without rambling
> Demonstrate knowledge of the trade and apprenticeship structure
> Make a good first impression with a firm handshake, confident stride, and upright posture
> Make the interviewers feel comfortable and connected to you
> Be memorable for the right reasons: your commitment, interest, enthusiasm, and energy
WAYS TO FAIL AN INTERVIEW

- Showing up late
- Hemming and hawing
- Avoiding or dismissing a question
- Inability to answer questions coherently
- Not exhibiting knowledge of the trade and apprenticeship structure
- Unkempt appearance, inappropriate dress, distracting body art and jewelry
- Bad posture
- Inappropriate language
- Disrespect
- Acting disinterested, nonchalant, aggressive or over-confident
- Being confrontational or dismissive
BASIC TIPS FOR MAKING YOUR INTERVIEW COUNT

> Be prepared and practiced
> Mention the training program and your accomplishments in it or other related training
> Be yourself—be authentic
> Do not give superficial or only yes/no answers
> Be relatable—do not be intimidated by superficial differences of race and gender
> Don’t ramble
BASIC TIPS FOR MAKING YOUR INTERVIEW COUNT

> Arrive at least 15 minutes ahead of time.

> Make time to get your appearance ready—good grooming, neat, and conservative clothing.

> Be likable—even if they forget what you say, they will remember if they liked you.
I’m dependable—I maintained perfect attendance in my pre-apprenticeship class

Say more than just “I’m a hard worker”

Use compliments you have received from co-workers/supervisors as examples

Highlight awards, promotions, or other recognition of your work
Interviewers may perceive a candidate exhibiting these traits:

As less enthusiastic
Less prepared for the interview
Less committed to pursuing a career in the trades
Less capable of succeeding in an apprenticeship
Lacking in intellectual sophistication.

Studies have shown that women may tend to use a communication style where they:

- Give their statements less loudly, and at less length
- Present their statements in a more hesitant, indirect, or “polite” manner
- Use “I” statements (“I guess...” “I was wondering if...”)
- Qualify their statements (“sort of” “I guess”)
- Add “tag” questions (“isn’t it?” “don’t you think?”)
- Ask questions rather than give statements
- Use intonations that turn a statement into a question
- Accompany their statements with smiles or averted eyes rather than more assertive gestures, such as pointing
- Apologize for their statements (“I may be wrong, but...”)

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN COMMUNICATION STYLES
SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

> Describe how you have handled situations in your life that are relevant to success in apprenticeships.

> Why does this trade appeal to you over some other trade?

> Construction work is done in all kinds of weather and is physically demanding. What makes you confident you can handle working in these conditions?

> Do you have any paid or unpaid work experience or hobbies that relate to this trade?

> What are the strengths you have that will make you successful in this trade?

> Why should we select you for this highly competitive opportunity?
EXEMPLARY EXAMPLES OF ILLEGAL QUESTIONS

- What year did you graduate from high school?
- Where were you born?
- What are your child care arrangements?
- What are your religious practices?
- How many days did you miss because of illness last year?
- Do you have any disabilities?
- Have you ever been arrested?
- Are you planning to have children anytime soon?
- Do you have parents or other family members dependent on you?
> Be prepared and practiced
> Arrive early
> Make a good first impression
> Speak confidently and clearly
> Answer questions thoroughly and specifically
> Exhibit your knowledge of the trade
> Make the interviewers feel comfortable
> Be memorable for the right reasons: show your commitment, interest, enthusiasm, and energy!