

THE PINK TO GREEN TOOLKIT: BUILDING SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEWING SKILLS FOR APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS AND CONSTRUCTION EMPLOYMENT

CREATED BY WIDER OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN FOR THE GREENWAYS INITIATIVE

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TOOL 3.3 FACILITATOR GUIDE

Being a competitive candidate for the limited number of openings for a construction trade apprenticeship program may require more than meeting requirements, submitting a timely application, and scoring well on an aptitude test. Being a confident, perceptive interviewee can be critical to getting admitted to a program and maintaining employment.

This tool is a manual for instructors teaching a pre-apprenticeship curriculum module to occupational training participants. This module provides materials and strategies to build the preparation, skills, and self-confidence of participants in a training program, enabling them to ace an interview. The guide includes supplemental handouts, exercise sheets, and references. This module can be integrated into a general pre-apprenticeship training curriculum.

This tool is also part of the pre-apprenticeship Multi-Craft Core Curriculum of the Building and Construction Trades Department, AFL-CIO.

WHO SHOULD USE THIS TOOL

Occupational training instructors

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.jff.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 JFF'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.jff.org/initiatives/greenways

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OVERVIEW

Being a competitive candidate for an apprenticeship program's limited number of openings may require more than just meeting a set of basic requirements. These requirements generally include having attained a certain level of education and completed certain coursework, a driver's license, residency, passing a drug and a physical test, submitting an application on time, and/or earning high scores on an aptitude test.

Many apprenticeship programs rely on interviews with prospective applicants; some apprenticeship programs use the interview as 50% of the ranking criteria. Entry into an apprenticeship may, in other instances, depend on first being hired by a construction contractor. Later on down the line, apprentices may need to interview for ongoing work with other employers. In each case, being a confident and perceptive interviewee can be critical to getting into an apprenticeship program and maintaining ongoing employment.

This module provides materials and strategies for students to build the skills and self-confidence to face, and "ace" an interview.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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 nonverbal behavior.
- > Demonstrate effective interviewing skills.
- > Address interview questions that may not be legal.
- > Identify communication styles related to gender.

MODULE-AT-A-GLANCE

[7 Hours]

The lesson plan is divided into three parts: **preparing for an interview; mock interviewing;** and a **closing review/summary**. The sessions are designed to be presented on three different days over the course of the training. The module is flexible and can be modified or broken up as needed to tailor to class schedule, class size, time constraints, and student interests.

SESSION #	SESSION TITLE	TIME
1.	PREPARING FOR AN INTERVIEW	4 Hours
	1.1 Introduction and Overview	5 Minutes
	1.2 Effective Communication	30 Minutes
	1.3 Interviews and Expectations	10 Minutes
	1.4 What Interviewers Measure	30 Minutes
	1.5 Demonstrating Good Interviewing Skills	30 Minutes
	1.6 Preparing for an Interview	20 Minutes
	1.7 Gender Characteristics of Communication Styles	10 Minutes
	1.8 Attribute Self-Assessment	20 Minutes
	1.9 Preparing to be an Impressive Applicant	45 Minutes
	1.10 Dealing with Illegal Questions	15 Minutes
	1.11 Questions for the Interviewer	15 Minutes
	1.12 Review and Summary	10 Minutes
2.	MOCK INTERVIEWS	2 Hours
	2.1 Mock Interview Advance Preparation	–
	2.2 Student Preparation	5 Minutes
	2.3 Conducting Mock Interviews	1.5 Hours
	2.4 Interview Assessment	5 Minutes
	2.5 Review and Summary	
3.	ASSESSMENT	1 Hour
	3.1 Interview Assessment	40 Minutes
	3.2 What We Learned	20 Minutes

MATERIAL LIST

MODULE MATERIALS

- > Handouts
- > Exercise Sheets
- > PowerPoint Presentation

SUPPLIES/EQUIPMENT

- > Flipcharts
- > Markers
- > Blank Paper
- > Projector and Screen

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS

SESSION 1: PREPARING FOR AN INTERVIEW

[4 Hours]

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- > PowerPoint slides [related slide number indicated in brackets]
- > Projector and screen
- > Flipcharts and markers
- > Plain paper
- > Handouts:
 - » **Tool 3.4** Attributes Self-Assessment Worksheet
 - » **Tool 3.5** Attributes Interviewers Assess in Candidates
 - » **Tool 3.6** Illegal Interview Questions
 - » **Tool 3.7** Interview Questions Practice Sheet

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

[5 Minutes]

Introduce the topic and explain the importance of interviews to the application and hiring process by highlighting the following:

Being a competitive candidate for an apprenticeship program's limited number of openings may require more than just meeting a set of requirements, timeliness of application, or scores on an aptitude test. Many apprenticeship programs rely on interviews of prospective applicant; some programs use the interview as 50% of ranking criteria. Entry into an apprenticeship may, in other instances, rely on first getting hired by a construction contractor. Apprentices may need to interview for ongoing work with other employers throughout their career. In each case, being a confident, responsive and perceptive interviewee can be key to getting into an apprenticeship program and maintaining ongoing employment.

Explain to students that during this module they will be provided materials, strategies, and practice opportunities

to build their skills and self-confidence to face, and ace an interview.

Review the learning objectives of the module as outlined on **[Slide 2]**

- Explain to students, as part of this module, they will learn about:
- > The role and importance of interviews
 - > The qualities/characteristics that interviewers are looking for
 - > How to be a confident interviewee
 - > How to overcome communication styles common to women that can make you less effective in an interview

Students will have an opportunity to:

- > Conduct a self-assessment of personal interview strengths and weaknesses.
- > Discuss best practices for interviewing.
- > Practice interviewing with industry partners.

1.2 EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

[30 Minutes]

Introduce the topic of effective communication by engaging students in a brief discussion about their experience with interviews.

Ask questions to focus students on the topic. Examples:

- > Show of hands, who here has participated in a job interview? (If yes, ask for a couple of examples of the company or job they interviewed for.)
- > Were you nervous during the interview? Why / why not?
- > What was difficult about the process?

Transition by drawing on student comments related to interview communication (e.g., I didn't know what to say, I didn't know how to respond, I talked too much). Highlight that the essence

of an interview is communicating effectively about your experience, skills, and interest in the work.

ACTIVITY:

Introduce the following exercise as an opportunity to practice effective communication skills.

- > Divide students into two rows facing each other; each student should be paired with another student. In the event of an odd number of students, rotate one student in / out at the end of each round.
- > One row of students is designated the “speakers” of information and the opposite row of students is designated the “receivers” of information.
- > Explain to the students that the “speakers” will speak for 90 seconds on a given topic. The “receivers” listen to what is said but offer no verbal or nonverbal response; their job is to listen without responding. Reinforce that this means no smiling, head shaking, verbal cues, etc.
- > Use a stopwatch to time the first round and ask the “speakers” row to answer the following question: *“Why do you want to work in the construction industry?”*
- > At the end of the 90 seconds, call time and have the “speakers” row move down one space so each student is now paired with a new partner. Switch the roles, the “receivers” are now the “speakers” and the “speakers” are now the “receivers.” Time round two and have the “speakers” speak for 90 seconds on *“Why do you want to work in the construction industry?”*
- > Call time and conduct a short debrief with the students:
 - » Feedback or reactions?
 - » What was difficult about this exercise? Why was it difficult?
 - » As the speaker, what was challenging?
 - » As the receiver, what was challenging?
- > Rotate the “speaker” row one space so each student is now paired with a new partner. Switch the roles; “speakers” are now “receivers.” Explain that for this next round, “receivers” can respond to the “speakers” with verbal and nonverbal communication. Time for 90 seconds and have “speakers” respond to the question, *“What are the strengths you have that will make you successful in the construction industry?”*

- > Shift the “speakers” row down one space so students are with a new partner. Switch the roles and repeat the exercise with the same question.
- > Call time and conduct a final debrief with the students:
 - » Feedback or reactions?
 - » How was it different for this second round?
 - » How was it different as the speaker when the receiver could react?
 - » How was it different for the receiver?
 - » How is this related to the interview process?

Transition by highlighting relevant student comments and reinforcing key points:

- > Effective communication is both verbal and nonverbal and goes both ways.
- > Remember this exercise when preparing for an interview.

1.3 INTERVIEWS AND EXPECTATIONS

[10 Minutes]

Briefly review [Slides 3-8] with students to provide a general background on the purpose of interviews in the construction industry. If necessary, include examples of your experiences to illustrate the importance of the interview process:

1.4 WHAT INTERVIEWERS MEASURE

[30 Minutes]

In advance, post flipchart paper around the room with the following six headings:

- > Communication Style
- > Attitude/Behavior
- > Nonverbal Signals
- > Information/Knowledge
- > Ways to fail an interview
- > Ways to ace an interview

Explain to students that we are going to discuss how interviewers assess and measure a potential candidate. Generally, interviewers assess candidates on four things during

an interview–communication style, attitude/behavior, nonverbal signals, and information. In the large group, ask students to give an example of each of these four things. For example: communication style–inflection, volume, etc.

ACTIVITY:

Divide students into six groups and assign each group to one of the flipcharts as listed above. Give the small groups two minutes to brainstorm and list whatever they think is relevant to their assigned topic.

Call time and rotate the small groups to the next flipchart and ask them to add anything else they think is relevant. Continue rotating until each group has an opportunity to review and add their comments to each flipchart.

REPORTS:

Bring all the flipcharts to the front of the room for report backs. Ask one person from each team to present the report back using all the information written on their original flip chart/category. Summarize student reports and highlight key points.

Review **[Slides 9-15]**, making connections to the small group reports where relevant, and engage the large group in a discussion on which items are most critical and why.

Summarize the section:

Interviewers are looking for candidates that appear to have the physical, emotional and intellectual aptitude to succeed in the apprenticeship programs and are worth investing a significant amount of time and money. Although you will only have a short time during your interview to demonstrate that you will be a good fit and a productive addition to the trade, you will be able to convey this with more than just your answers to questions. Interviewers will be observing your attitude and behavior, nonverbal communication, and your communication style, as well as information about your knowledge, skills and abilities. Interviewers will be looking at your body language and behavior to measure your confidence, your energy and enthusiasm. They will observe your grooming, hygiene, and mannerisms. They will take note of how well prepared you are and your ability to follow directions, and engage easily and appropriately in the interview.

1.5 DEMONSTRATING GOOD INTERVIEWING SKILLS

[30 Minutes]

Break students up into four small groups. Assign each group one of the following four components that were discussed in the previous exercise:

- > Communication Style
- > Attitude/Behavior
- > Nonverbal Signals
- > Information/Knowledge

ACTIVITY:

Explain to the students that each group will act out the assigned component to the whole class using a short skit. Each small group will first demonstrate how not to do the component during an interview; they will then demonstrate the best way to do the component to ensure a successful interview.

Give the groups 10 minutes to prepare their skits to demonstrate their assigned component. Provide guidance to the groups to keep them focused and on task.

REPORTS:

Have each group demonstrate their assigned component pausing after the “bad” demonstration to get feedback from the large group:

- > What’s wrong with this approach?
- > What could they do differently?

Have the group then demonstrate the “best” way and get feedback from the large group:

- > What was effective about this approach?
- > What might this say to the interviewer?
- > How else could they strengthen this approach?

Continue until all small groups have performed their skits and received feedback from the larger group.

Use the demonstrations and student comments to transition to the next section.

1.6 PREPARING FOR AN INTERVIEW

[20 Minutes]

Briefly review the ideas generated during the previous segment and lead in to the topic of preparing for an interview.

ACTIVITY:

Pair students up and have them work together to develop three “tips” for preparing for a successful interview using what they learned from the previous discussion and the demonstrations. Provide students plain paper and markers to write down their tips, one tip per page.

REPORTS:

Have the pairs stand and report out their three tips, taping their tip sheets to the wall at the end of their report. After each group has reported, summarize and highlight key points. Provide a general review using [Slides 16-18] and highlight key points.

Summarize the discussion and ask students for their feedback on what else they might do to prepare for a successful interview.

1.7 GENDER CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMUNICATION STYLES

[10 Minutes]

Introduce the topic by asking students to identify differences in the communication styles of men and women. Ask for specific examples. Explain that communication styles can have an impact on how we are perceived by others.

Review [Slide 19] and share an example to help students focus on style differences. After reviewing the slide, ask students to individually reflect on these examples of communication style and write down an example of where they have seen this style used (friends, family, coworkers, etc.). Conduct a discussion of the impact of communication style on perception.

Review the potential impact [as listed on Slide 19] for an interviewee. 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

Summarize and highlight that awareness is the first step to improving our own communication style.

1.8 ATTRIBUTE SELF-ASSESSMENT

[20 Minutes]

ACTIVITY:

Distribute the **Attributes Self-Assessment Worksheet** and the **Attributes Interviewers Assess in Candidates**. Direct students to review **Tool 3.5** and use it as a reference to individually complete the Self-Assessment Worksheet.

Conduct a short debrief asking students to share something from their self-assessment:

- > What are some of the traits they listed?
- > What do they think is their strength and why?
- > What ideas did they have for improving on a weakness?

Review the four categories, summarize the discussion, and highlight key points. Remind students to use the self-assessment as a roadmap for improving their interviewing skills.

1.9 PREPARING TO BE AN IMPRESSIVE APPLICANT

[45 Minutes]

Introduce the topic by stating that while knowing your strengths is key to being confident in an interview, it is also critical to be prepared for the interview questions so you can highlight your strongest attributes.

Distribute the **Interview Questions Practice Sheet** and review [Slide 20]. Ask for volunteers to give responses to the sample questions. Get feedback from the group:

- > What was effective about the response?
- > How can we strengthen the response?

Emphasize the use of concrete examples to support a particular response.

ACTIVITY:

Give students 5 minutes to individually develop responses to the sample questions based on their own knowledge, skills, and experience. Remind students to keep in mind the use the tips developed earlier and key points from the discussion when developing their responses.

ACTIVITY:

When all students have developed responses to the sample interview questions, break them up into small groups. Working in groups of four, have students practice the sample interview questions using the responses they developed based on their skills and experience.

- > One student acts as the interviewer
- > One student acts as the interviewee
- > Two students act as observers

Rotate roles every 3 or 4 minutes to allow each student in the small group to practice interview. Observers offer feedback on what was effective and how the interviewee can improve using the attributes handout list as a guide. Ask observers to highlight things that would ace an interview and to be aware of communication styles related to gender.

Debrief in the large group:

- > What did they see/hear that was effective and why?
- > What was difficult?
- > What did they learn?

Summarize student comments and highlight key points.

1.10 DEALING WITH ILLEGAL QUESTIONS

[15 Minutes]

Distribute the Illegal Interview Questions and use [Slide 21] for this segment.

Introduce the topic by providing an overview and paraphrasing the information from **Tool 3.6**:

A number of civil rights and employment laws and regulations at the federal, state and local level govern employment relations during the interview process. These laws explicitly prohibit an interviewer from asking questions that relate to qualities that are considered immutable. It is critical to prepare

how to handle illegal questions with polite responses. Issues employers may ask about though should not, include:

- > Race, ethnicity, or skin color
- > Gender or sexual orientation
- > Age
- > Marital status
- > Religion
- > Veteran status
- > Sexual preference
- > National origin
- > Medical condition

Keep in mind that an interviewer may not be asking these questions with malicious intent. It may be that they are asked by an inexperienced interviewer. There are different options for answering questions you know are illegal. Still, it is important to keep in mind the ramifications of confronting an apprentice committee or an employer asking illegal questions directly. You can instead ask the interviewer to clarify how the question relates to the work you would do as an apprentice. You can also respond by saying that the question makes you uncomfortable.

Planning ahead with some tactful answers can be the best way to address an illegal or inappropriate question. You will need to assess how best to answer an illegal question without compromising your opportunity. This means that the more prepared you are the better.

ACTIVITY:

Using the **Tool 3.8** have students work in pairs to develop potential responses or approaches to the illegal questions listed:

- > Where were you born?
- > What are your childcare 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?

REPORTS:

Ask the pairs to share with the large group a potential response or approach they developed to addressing these questions.

When each pair has given at least one response, brainstorm with the large group other questions that might fall into this category and answers that tactfully address them.

Summarize the discussion and remind students that the more prepared they are, the more effective they will be in addressing any question during an interview.

1.11 QUESTIONS FOR THE INTERVIEWER

[15 Minutes]

Explain to students that the final step in preparing for an interview is developing questions to ask the interviewers. Conduct a brief discussion on why students should prepare questions to ask the interviewers:

- > Why is it important to have questions ready for the interviewers?
- > What does it say to the interviewers about the candidate?
- > What types of questions might you ask?
- > What shouldn't you ask about during an interview?

ACTIVITY:

Have students work in small groups to brainstorm questions to ask the interviewers and report back to the large group. Ask for feedback during the report backs and provide guidance on asking good questions:

- > Should an applicant ask about pay / benefits? Why / why not?
- > What might the (sample) question say about the applicant?
- > How can an applicant demonstrate interest in the trade through these questions?

Summarize the responses and highlight key points from the discussion.

1.12 REVIEW AND SUMMARY

[10 Minutes]

Provide a review of the key points raised during the session.

Advise students to review and revise the responses they developed to the questions listed on the **Interviewing Question Practice Sheet** in preparation for the Mock Interviewing session.

Assign students the task of practicing their answers, and using the interviewing tips, with a family member or friend. Ask students to write down the feedback they receive from their family member/friend. Instruct them to pay attention to the checklists of characteristics and gender communication strategies.

(REMINDER: Review the homework assignment with students prior to date of the mock interviews and encourage them to practice with multiple people.)

SESSION 2: MOCK INTERVIEWS

[2 Hours]

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- > **Tool 3.8** Sample Volunteer Invitation Letter
- > Handout:
 - » **Tool 3.9** Interview Rating Sheet

2.1 MOCK INTERVIEW ADVANCE PREPARATION

Invite volunteer interviewers. Ask industry and apprenticeship program staff to serve as volunteer interviewers in a two-hour mock interview session. Ideally, recruit enough volunteers to work in pairs so that each student has at least two panel interviews of five to seven minutes each.

Orient and prepare the volunteer interviewers by explaining the program, providing an overview of the mock interview process and explaining their role in the session. Provide extra copies of the information provided in the Volunteer Invitation Letter as a guide for the volunteers. Provide each interviewer with multiple copies of the Interview Rating Sheet and give a short overview of how best to complete the sheet.

2.2 STUDENT PREPARATION

[5 Minutes]

Prepare students for the mock interview process by reviewing the key points to remember for an effective interview. Have a coach and/or case manager available to support students while they are waiting for their turn and encourage them to practice.

- > Direct the students to prepare for at least two interview opportunities with the volunteers. Encourage them to use their waiting time to talk with a staff member or another student and practice their interviewing skills.

- > Let the students know that the volunteers will share at the end of the session their impressions of the students, highlights from the interviews, and general areas that could be improved.
- > Tell the students this will also be an opportunity for them to share any thoughts on the experience.

2.3 CONDUCTING MOCK INTERVIEWS

[1.5 Hours]

Each pair of interviewers should spend 5-7 minutes with each student conducting an interview that is as “authentic” as possible. Ask volunteers to complete a rating sheet for each student interviewed and offer immediate individual feedback to the student. Collect the ratings sheets from the volunteers at the conclusion of the mock interviews.

2.4 INTERVIEW ASSESSMENT

[20 Minutes]

Bring volunteers and students together for a closing discussion. Have volunteers share, in general terms, their impressions of the students, highlights, and areas that could be improved. Ask students to share any thoughts on the experience, what they found out about themselves, or what surprised them.

2.5 REVIEW AND SUMMARY

[5 Minutes]

Provide students a blank copy of the Interview Rating Sheet and assign homework for them to complete a self-assessment of the day's interview performance. Advise students that their self-assessment will be used in the next session.

SESSION 3: ASSESSMENT

[1 Hour]

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- > Handout:
 - » **Tool 3.10** Interview Tip Sheet

3.1 INTERVIEW ASSESSMENT

[40 Minutes]

Engage students in a review / assessment of what they have learned from the mock interviews:

- > What did they feel was effective / positive about their mock interviewing experience?
- > What did they do well in the mock interviews?
- > What would they change?

ACTIVITY:

Have students take out the self-assessment interview sheet that was assigned as homework. Distribute the interview rating sheets completed by the volunteer interviewers to the appropriate student. Give students a few minutes to compare their own interview self-assessment with the assessment from the interviewer.

Ask students:

- > Did the interviewer rating sheets match their self-assessment?
- > What did they learn about themselves?
- > What surprised them in terms of questions or behavior that mattered?
- > Any other comments?

3.2 CLOSING SUMMARY

Distribute the Interview Tip Sheet and do a short review of key points.

ACTIVITY:

Ask students to take a few minutes and reflect on what they have learned from this module; have them write down the one thing they think is most important to remember about interviewing.

Go around the room and ask each student to read aloud what they have written down as the most important thing to remember. In conclusion, summarize student responses and review any key points that were not raised [**Slide 22**]:

- > Be prepared
- > Arrive early
- > Make a good first impression
- > Speak confidently and clearly
- > Monitor your body language and other nonverbal communicators
- > Answer questions thoroughly and specifically without rambling, and use examples
- > Demonstrate your knowledge of the trade and the apprenticeship structure
- > Make the interviewers feel comfortable and connected to you—be authentic
- > Be memorable for the right reasons: show your commitment, interest, enthusiasm, and energy

APPENDIX A—MATERIALS GUIDE

The following is list of associated tools and handouts.

FACILITATOR GUIDE

- > **Tool 3.3** Interviewing Skills - Facilitator Guide

HANDOUTS

- > **Tool 3.4** Attributes Self Assessment Worksheet
- > **Tool 3.5** Attributes Interviewers Assess in Candidates
- > **Tool 3.6** Illegal Interview Questions
- > **Tool 3.7** Interview Questions Practice Sheet
- > **Tool 3.9** Interview Rating Sheet
- > **Tool 3.10** Interview Tip Sheet

RESOURCES

- > **Tool 3.8** Sample Volunteer Invitation Letter
- > **Tool 3.11** Interviewing Skills - PowerPoint Presentation