

REACHING NEW HEIGHTS

Advisor's Guide to personal growth and leadership development

Lesson Number: **RNH.4.I**

Developing Interview Skills

Purpose:

The purpose of this lesson is to introduce students to interview skills and help prepare them to apply these skills in a positive fashion.

Directions:

An interview is an opportunity to show others the best of what we are. Interviews may be used for a variety of purposes such as for employment, scholarship, or award selection; qualification for promotion; or candidacy for a leadership position. An interview may be the only opportunity we have to make a favorable impression and “sell” ourselves to a potential employer or selection committee. We need to be able to highlight our strengths, especially as they relate to the selection criteria. We might be evaluated by our physical appearance or by our ability to communicate, think critically, solve problems, and relate to others.

Note: This lesson assumes students have already prepared a résumé. If they have not, the teacher is encouraged to teach a lesson on résumé development first.

1. To begin the lesson, ask your students if any of them have ever been interviewed for a job or a position (a chapter officer interview, for example) or if they have ever interviewed anyone.
 - a. If one or more indicates they have, ask them to describe the experience briefly.
 - b. You might even relate a personal experience on this topic.
 - c. Indicate that they will study how to interview today and will have a chance to practice in nonthreatening situations. First, however, they will learn how to prepare for an interview, be it for an officer position or a job.

Quick Reference:

Time Required:

90 minutes

Objectives:

After completing this lesson, students should be able to:

1. Discuss what an interview is and why it is important.
2. Determine the important points to make in a particular interview.
3. Prepare themselves for an interview.
4. Complete an interview and make a good impression.

Materials:

- ✓ Several copies of local newspapers with “help wanted” ads; you may choose to have students research agricultural positions available (they do not have to be local) via the library or the Internet
- ✓ Video camera
- ✓ RNH.4.I.A – one per student





2. Ask students why people interview others. Is it the interviewer's wish to make the interviewee uncomfortable and jump through lots of hoops or are there other reasons?
 - a. Touch on the following points. Interviews:
 - i. Provide a way of getting to know more about the candidate.
 - ii. Enable others to verify information presented in a résumé or on a job application.
 - iii. Enable the interviewee to find out more about the position offered and the company or organization.
3. Give students a hypothetical job announcement and ask them what type of questions they think would be asked during an interview.
 - a. For example, they see an ad in the paper from a local agronomic company that needs someone to assist in scouting fields.
 - b. What type of questions do they think the interviewer might ask? If it was a local grocery store advertising for bagging help, do they think the questions would change?
 - c. If so, how? Explain that it is important to think about the questions you might be asked ahead of time and map out some answers so that you don't get caught empty-handed.

Preparing for an Interview – *To perform well during an interview, we must adequately prepare. Think about the questions that might be asked ahead of time and map out some answers.*

4. Ask students how they would try to find background information on the company/organization offering the position to determine their interest level in the position and to prepare for a possible interview. As they volunteer answers, make sure to touch on the following points:
 - a. Call the company and ask if they have any brochures, catalogs, annual reports, or other types of descriptive materials you could borrow.
 - b. If it is a retail store or restaurant, visit the place and familiarize yourself with their product offering.
 - c. Visit the Internet and gather general information about the company's industry.
 - d. Some of the things you might want to find out about the company include:
 - i. Pronunciation and spelling of the company's name
 - ii. If it is a local, national, or an international company
 - iii. The size of the company



- iv. How long the company has been in business
 - v. General reputation of the business
 - vi. Reputation for working conditions and environment
 - e. In addition to specific questions that pertain to different positions, there are generally some common questions asked in most interviews. They include things like:
 - i. Tell me about yourself.
 - ii. What are your strengths?
 - iii. What are your weaknesses?
 - iv. Have you ever worked for anyone before?
 - v. Why did you leave your last position?
 - vi. Did you get along with your boss? Your co-workers? Why or why not?
 - vii. What did you accomplish?
 - viii. What skills do you have to offer us for the position that is available?
 - ix. Why should we hire you?
 - x. Have you ever been fired?
 - xi. What do you want to be doing five years from now?
- 5. Explain that interviews are two-way conversations and that they should feel comfortable asking questions, too. They should prepare a list of possible questions they would like to ask.
 - a. Some questions they might want to ask include:
 - i. Is this a new position? If not, why did the position open?
 - ii. What type of clothing is required?
 - iii. Will I need to provide my own tools?
 - iv. Will I need additional training? If so, where/when will I receive it? Who will pay for it?
 - v. What are the position's hours? How many hours per week?
 - vi. Who will my supervisor be?
 - b. Instruct students to avoid asking any questions that convey a negative attitude or lack of work ethic such as, "Will I have to work weekends?" or "Do I have to wear a uniform?" The same information can be gathered, but the questions should be posed in a more positive way, such as "Are uniforms required for this position?"



6. Consider dress and timeliness. Explain that first impressions are very important. You should dress appropriately and arrive on time or, preferably, five to ten minutes early.
 - a. So, what is appropriate dress? That will depend on the company and the position. However, it is generally better to overdress than to underdress for an interview.
7. Discuss body language with your students. Indicate that often our body language speaks more loudly than our words. Highlight the following points:
 - a. Your voice should be enthusiastic, yet calm. Be aware of how fast you are talking as well as your volume.
 - b. Make eye contact; people who don't look others in the eye when speaking are often thought to be either too shy to be effective or insecure and dishonest.
 - c. Posture is important; an upright posture, slightly leaning forward, indicates interest; leaning back in your chair may make you appear too relaxed or lazy.
 - d. Be aware of any bad habits you have such as cracking your knuckles, chewing on your fingernails, or using a lot of filler words such as "wells" or "uhs" in your speech pattern. Eliminate them from the interview.

During the Interview – *Being aware of one's actions before the interview can pay dividends.*

8. Be sure to be aware of the following before or during the interview:
 - a. Check your grooming to make sure you present a professional image.
 - b. Carry a notebook in which to take notes; have on hand a copy of your résumé.
 - c. Have the list of questions you want to ask.
 - d. Obtain directions to the interview site. Visit the interview site prior to the interview to determine how to get there and how long it will take.
 - e. Upon arriving for the interview, enter the room, smile, and make eye contact.
 - f. Give the interviewer(s) a firm handshake, a pleasant greeting, and a sincere compliment.
 - g. Note the names of those whom you meet.
 - h. Wait until you are asked to be seated.
 - i. Listen carefully to what you are being asked.
 - j. Do not treat the questions as unimportant.
 - k. If the questions are difficult, pause before answering.
 - l. At the end of the interview, cordially thank the interviewer(s).



Preparing for an Interview Activity – Use the help wanted ads or have students research agricultural positions available via the library and/or Internet (they do not have to be local positions). Before beginning the exercise, you may want to select an example position and walk through the worksheet in class.

9. Prepare for an interview activity:
 - a. Distribute RNH.4.1.AS.A, “Preparing for an Interview,” and give each student a newspaper containing help wanted ads or have them gather their researched positions from the Internet or library. Ask them to read through the ads, select a position in which they are interested, and complete the worksheet based on that position.
 - b. After the students have completed their worksheets, stage an interview.
 - i. You might ask another adult or an upperclassman to assist.
 - ii. To attract and keep your students’ attention, you may want to role-play the situation twice, once in a humorous way where the interviewee does everything wrong, and once in a more positive, appropriate way. Have students critique the role play(s).
 - iii. If you have access to a video camera, tape each student being interviewed in a role-play situation. Then, review the tape with them and critique it. This can be a very helpful tool because often we have nervous habits or say things we don’t realize. For example, a student may have a habit of playing with his or her hair or clothing and not realize it. They may even deny it if they have never seen themselves doing the behavior on tape. To add a little extra interest to this activity, invite several members of the local business community into your class to help assist in conducting the interviews and critiquing the students’ performances.
10. When the interviews and critiques have been completed, teach the following points:
 - a. After an interview, always take a few minutes to evaluate your performance.
 - i. Were you adequately prepared? Why or why not?
 - ii. Were you asked any questions that you couldn’t answer? If so, research the answer so you won’t be caught again next time.
 - iii. How was your posture?
 - iv. Were you dressed appropriately?
 - v. How do you feel about the overall interview?



- b. Follow-up Letter: Write a letter following the interview thanking the interviewer for their time and interest.
 - i. If you flubbed a question, research the answer and include it in your letter. This will let the interviewer know that you're interested and will go above and beyond the call of duty to get the job done.
 - ii. If you don't get the job or choose not to accept it, send the interviewer a thank-you note. This will signal that you are a considerate, thoughtful person and may open the door for another opportunity with the company or a referral to another organization.
 - iii. Additional assignments on this topic might include asking students to write a follow-up letter and thank-you note to their interviewer.

Connection Questions:

1. Good interviewees are able to “sell themselves” in an interview. What are some catch phrases used in television advertisements that would be neat to hear interviewees say about themselves in an interview?
2. What negative habits might a person have that would not be beneficial to display in an interview? Think about what habits you might have that you should be aware of.
3. What are some thoughts an employer might have about you if you were less than prepared for an interview or had misspellings in a thank you letter?



LifeKnowledge Connections

Precept(s) Addressed:

Action

- A3. Plan effectively.
- A5. Communicate effectively with others.

Relationships

- B2. Interact and work with other people.
- B3. Develop new relationships.

Vision

- C1. Contemplate the future.
- C2. Conceptualize ideas.
- C3. Demonstrate courage to take risks.
- C4. Adapt to opportunities and obstacles from multiple perspectives.

Personal Growth

- I2. Make clear decisions in my professional life.
- I5. Demonstrate exemplary employability skills.

Communications

- M1. Demonstrates technical and business writing skills.
- M2. Demonstrates professional job-seeking skills.

Flexibility/Adaptability

- O3. Reacts with openness to feedback and professional growth opportunities.

LK Lesson Suggestion:



- HS.38 – Interviewing Techniques
- HS.36 – Conducting a Job Search

