CAREER ADVICE FOR ASPIRING HEALTH RESEARCHERS
By SONIC COACH
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Summer Job Search (3): Preparing for the Interview

Through strategic networking and the submission of a polished, professional, well-targeted resume,¹ you have made a positive connection with an employer and have been invited for an interview. Congratulations! This is your opportunity to land the job. Interviewing well is skill that has many facets. These two are key:

Prepare well in advance

Make a list of the kinds of questions you'll probably be asked—many job search websites and books have examples—then develop well-thought-out responses and rehearse them until they seem natural. Ask a trusted adult who has hiring experience (e.g., a former employer, family friend in business) to conduct a “mock interview.” It'll feel strange and uncomfortable at first, but you'll develop greater confidence for the actual interview and the feedback you receive will improve your performance. Plus, you'll feel much more relaxed and make a better impression.

Explain how the employer will benefit

When answering interview questions, your task is to explain how the employer will benefit by hiring you, not how you will benefit. For example, in response to the question: “Tell me about yourself…” do not explain your plans for university and how this job will give you more experience and help you raise the funds. Rather, explain that your plans for university have driven the choices you’ve made in the past, and that through these choices (previous jobs, volunteer activities, etc.), you have developed some of the skills, knowledge and experience the employer is looking for, such as: teamwork, leadership; oral and written communication skills; ability to work independently and meet deadlines; being committed to excellence in customer service.

All the research you did when tailoring your resume to the job will help you identify what the employer is looking for and what questions you may be asked in the interview. Take heart: you have much to offer. By learning as much as you can about the interviewing process and following these key strategies, you will increase your probability of success.

Our topic next month will be on: Honesty and integrity: Critical to a life in science

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¹ For details, see SONIC Coach articles for January and February 2008.