



Hi my name is Joan Kang, and I am a Senior Career Services Advisor at Santa Monica College in the Career Services Center, and this presentation is focused on interviewing for RT positions.

PRE-INTERVIEW

WHAT TO DO?

- Do your research
- Review your resume
- Review the job description
- Brainstorm possible questions
- Practice outload
- Stay up-to-date
- Notify your references
- Think safety
- Prepare to dress professionally

What you do before an interview is important. Just as you customized and reviewed your resume and cover letter before applying for a job/program, preparing and practicing prior to your interview will help you make a positive impression on the employer and here are some things you can do before your interview.

Do Your Research

Take the time to learn about the company you applied to and the people who might be interviewing you. Is a group or individual interview? Are there people representing multiple departments or positions represented? See if you can identify the type of interview you are going to attend. If you have a contact who works for the employer, see if you can meet with him/her for an information interview. Try to identify what they're looking for in a candidate, the purpose of the position, their target population, their goals, mission, values, needs, etc. If you can identify the people who you will be interviewing with, write down their names and research who these people are, their roles, background, and interests. Often, you can find this information on the company's website, LinkedIn, Google, etc. Be able to explain why you are interested in working for them and with them as well as incorporate what you have learned about the company in your responses.

Review Your Resume

Job seekers often forget about their resume once they submit a job application. Be prepared to discuss experiences, classes and your clinical rotations that you listed on your resume.

Review the Job Description

Review the responsibilities and tasks listed on the job description. Make sure you can match your experiences and skills to what's required. Many of the interview questions will be related to what is listed on the job description.

Brainstorm Possible Questions

Think of possible questions that might be asked of you and write the question and responses on presentation slides in Google slides or Microsoft PowerPoint. Be able to talk about yourself and how you would make a great candidate for the job. This requires knowing the job description inside and out. Again, many of the interview questions will be related to what is listed on the job description. Later in this presentation, I'll go over some typical interview questions.

Practice

Don't just practice responding to questions in your head. Practice out loud. This is critical. Participate in a mock interview. Practice responding to interview questions with anyone in the field and/or schedule a mock interview appointment with the Career Services Center. Know your resume/portfolio well and be prepared to answer questions about them. However, don't over exhaust yourself. Make sure to also get some rest.

Stay Up-to-Date

Read the newspaper, check the internet, read articles related to the company and or career industry. You may be surprised with ice breaking small talk about current trends and/or events.

It is also important to stay up-to-date with your profession in general. If an answer allows you to weave in how your involved as member of a state/national RT association, this shows a reflection of your professionalism.

Notify Your References

If you haven't done so recently, you will want to inform your references that you have been offered an interview for a job and they might receive a call or email from the prospective employer. Let your references know who might be calling them, what job you are applying to, a copy of the job description, and any points you want them to stress in their recommendation of you.

Think Safety

It is important to think about your safety and protecting yourself during the interview process. Trust your instincts and if you feel uncomfortable, express your thoughts.

Dress

Lastly, prepare to dress professionally.

DRESS CODE

WHAT TO WEAR?

- Dress professionally
- Engage in good hygiene practices
- Be well-groomed
- Avoid smelling of strong scents and odors
- Cover anything unprofessional (tattoos or certain piercings)
- Leave your gum/candy at home

You should plan your interview attire at least a day before your interview, preferably a couple of days to a week earlier. Consider the company's culture when dressing for an interview. In general, be conservative with your choice of clothing, accessories, hair style, make-up and jewelry. Examples of professional outfits include dress pants, dress shirt, tie, sport coat, business dress, skirt and blazer. Avoid wearing sneakers/tennis shoes, workout gear/athletic leisure wear, shorts, jeans, ultra-high heels or flip flops/sandals. Engage in good hygiene practices prior to your interview. Look neat and be clean and well-groomed. It is also important to be cognizant that some people are sensitive to different and/or strong scents/perfumes/colognes. Do not smoke, chew gum, suck on candy. Cover tattoos and any unprofessional piercings. First impressions can matter.

THE INTERVIEW

WHAT TO BRING?

- Your state/government issued ID
- Several copies of your resume/Access to your portfolio
- A notepad and pen
- List of references and their information
- Any materials requested by the employer
- Talking points
- \$\$\$ (dollars, coins, and card) for parking
- Contact information of the person interviewing you/main office information
- Address/Directions
- Positivity

Now that you know more about what to wear to your interview, what are some things you should bring to your interview.

General Interview Materials

Bring your state issued driver's license/ID, extra copies of your resume, your portfolio (if you have one), a notepad with some questions prepared for the interview, a pen to take any quick notes, your list of references, notes with talking points or examples of your experiences, any materials requested by the employer, and especially a positive attitude. Make sure you bring different forms of money (dollars, coins and card) to pay for parking. Depending on where you park, you may only have access to using one form of payment. Also, note that not all organizations will provide free parking and/or validation. Lastly, it is also important to bring the contact information of the person interviewing you and/or the main office information and the address/directions of where you are going.

Know Where You are Going

Ideally, you want to know where you are going before the day of your interview. Drive by the location of your interview before the day of your interview. Identify places to park. Take note of the meter limits and street parking signs. If possible, visit the location of your interview during the same time of day so you can see what the traffic is like. Do not be late to your interview.

Positivity

Always be positive. Although you might be asked to reflect on a negative experience, limit your story/answer from focusing all about the negative part. If only, spend enough time so the employer understands the context and quickly proceed to show the positive outcome. Change the narrative (focus on your actions to solving the situation and the results achieved from your hard work.)

Employers want to hire someone who thinks patient first and drama out. You can teach clinical skills, but employers don't want to deal with someone they have to teach how to treat others. Remember bedside manners are important. It leads to patient satisfaction. Employers want someone with the right attitude and personality. Also remember, there is a difference between being confident and being cocky.

THE INTERVIEW

WHAT TO DO?

- Arrive early
- Turn off any unnecessary technology
- Treat everyone you encounter as if they are interviewing you
- Smile and provide a firm handshake
- Be genuine
- Be engaged/show your passion/enthusiasm
- Listen and ask questions
- Identify the next steps
- Express thanks

Now let's fast forward to your interview day. It is okay to be a little nervous during an interview. Everyone experiences nervous feelings during an interview. Try to stay focused and remember what you practiced. Still nervous? Try taking slow, deep breaths to help you relax. It is also okay to pause and give yourself a moment to gather your thoughts and respond to the interview question. A couple of seconds is fine. Minutes not so much. That being said, here are additional suggestions to help you during your interview.

Arrive Early

For in-person interviews, always give yourself extra time. You don't want to be late because of unexpected traffic, street closures and/or traffic accidents. Plan to arrive at least 15 to 20 minutes early to give yourself a buffer and to use the restroom. Arriving early will allow you some time to remove animal hair, shoulder flakes, check for static, wash clammy hands, etc. Consider checking in at the organization's interview check-in area about 5 to 10 minutes before your scheduled interview time, unless noted earlier by the prospective organization. Leave your coffee or soda in the car.

For virtual interviews, make sure your internet and computer are functioning properly and that you have and know how to use software being used to host your interview. Consider checking in only 5 to 10 minutes before your interview, unless otherwise noted by the organization. Through the meeting software (i.e. Zoom, Google Meet, etc.) check that you can be heard through your microphone clearly and that you can clearly hear others speak before logging into the virtual room.

Use the test equipment feature. Before your interview, prepare a professional looking digital background or make sure your personal background is clean and organized. Turn off any computer notifications such as emails and discord. Find a quiet place without any interruptions or added noise to have your interview.

Technology

Turn off or completely silence your phone/smart watch. Everyone can hear a phone vibrating. This is different than completely silencing your phone. Set your smart watch to theatre mode. Stay off any forms of technology while you are waiting to be interviewed. Use this time to focus on your interview.

Greetings and Handshakes

Treat everyone you encounter like an interview. You might be asked to spend time with different members of the hospital informally and formally. Don't forget to always smile. Remember, you need to demonstrate that you fit with the organization and smiling helps to convey that you're friendly and approachable. Hiring managers may also ask other staff to share their impression of you. Treat everyone as if you are being interviewed. If greeting with a handshake, make sure you provide a firm handshake.

Be Genuine

Be concise and to the point, yet sincere in your responses. Be open to learning. Your answers should be authentic. Do not lie about or exaggerate any aspects of your education or experience. Don't fake it till you make it. As an RT, you are literally dealing with holding people's lives in your hands.

Remember, to have a professional conversation. If you stutter, forget your train of thought, mess up, etc., you can acknowledge it and correct it. Always be positive in your communication and attitude. Do not speak negative of past employers, colleagues, etc. Remember you are trying to sell yourself. Communicate clearly and avoid any grammar errors or use of profanity. Steer clear of expressions such as "like," "um," "uh," "yeah," and "you know." It is okay to pause briefly and collect your thoughts before responding to a question. Don't be afraid to ask for clarification on a question. Never answer a question with just "yes" or "no." Always elaborate. You always want to make sure you answer each question clearly accurately but not ramble at the same time. You'll learn more about the STAR method to answering questions later in this presentation. In your answers, try to demonstrate your good work ethic, dependability, flexibility, problem-solving skills, teamwork, etc.

Be Engaged

Listen carefully to the questions and comments from employers. Show interest in the interview by smiling, nodding as well as using other verbal/non-verbal cues. Sit up straight, lean slightly forward towards the interviewer and make frequent eye contact with those interviewing you. Do try to avoid slouching, fidgeting, moving side to side in your chair, playing with your pen or other objects, leaning too far back, crossing arms, finger tapping, cracking knuckles, yawning, touching your hair/face, etc. If conducting a virtual interview, make sure you are looking directly at the camera versus to the side.

Also note that sometimes an employer might not be directly looking at you. It is not a reflection of your answer or how you are doing in the interview. Focus on the camera, focus on the direction of your audience. Sometimes, especially in a virtual interview, you might not be able to see that the employer is taking notes on your interview. Conducting notes of your interview is a common action during an interview. Some interviews are even recorded.

Listen and Ask Questions

Listen and questions. This is your opportunity to show your interest in the job and company. You are interviewing them just as much as they are interviewing you. Be prepared to ask the employer/organization questions at the end of the interview. Just make sure you are not asking a question that was previously answered during the interview.

Next Steps

If the employer doesn't mention the next steps following your interview, be sure to ask. You want to know what the next steps are in the interview process and when they might occur.

Express Thanks

Don't forget to thank the interviewer for their time and consideration. Also, if possible, make sure to thank anyone else who helped you on the way out.

POST INTERVIEW WHAT TO DO?

- Assess your interview
- Send thank you notes/emails
- Complete any follow-up instructions provided by the employer
- Follow up with employer post decision
- Post decision (communication/feedback)

Now that you have finished your interview, here are things you should do after a job interview that can increase the odds of getting a job offer.

Assess your Interview

Once you have left the interview and are no longer in the presence of any employees, write up a summary of the questions you were asked along with your answers. Hence the notepad and pen to bring to your interview. This summary will preserve a record of your responses for future reference if you secure a follow-up interview, help you in drafting thank you notes to the interviewers and can be used to prepare for any future interviews.

Send Thank You Notes

It is recommended that you send one email within 24 hours of the interview to each interviewer. A handwritten card is suggested as a supplement when a personal or more creative touch might be especially valued. Reference in your note either of the following: a topic that discussed during the interview, one or two examples showing off your expertise or a response to one of the key interview questions or if need be, sharing a skill or experience that you did not have the opportunity to discuss during the interview.

Complete any Follow Up Instructions Provided by the Employer

Make sure to follow the instructions provided to you by the hiring manager/HR team. For example, if they tell you, it will take two weeks, wait the two weeks. If they said follow-up needs to be done

by email, do not call them on the phone. It is natural to be anxious but that does not give you the permission to pester/stalk the employer. After you have left a message and followed up at their recommended time, if you haven't heard back after two contacts, you should move forward and prep for your next round of interviews.

Post Decisions

If the organization does provide you with an offer, make sure to follow up accordingly. If you need more time to consider, professionally ask for more time.

If you were not offered the position, professionally ask for feedback on your interview. Ask what you could have done as a candidate to improve your candidacy. Just note, sometimes, it isn't about how you performed during the actual interview. Here are some reasons you might not have received an offer:

- Company culture match
- Competitive application pool
- Interactions with other employers were not positive
- Punctuality
- Follow-up communication
- Technical interview results
- Visual appearance/body language
- Social media presence
- References
- Something changed – things out of your control.

PRACTICE ?s

WHAT ARE SOME?

- General/typical interview questions
- Previous Experiences questions
 - Behavioral questions
 - Job description requirement questions
- RT technical skills/procedures
- Diversity/patient care philosophy
- Ask the employer questions

So, we've talked about everything else about interviewing, but what about the actual questions and how to practice answering questions.

First, practicing for your interview is going to be important because it will help you be more confident and comfortable during your actual interview. Whether you are practicing on your own and especially out loud or through the help of another person, make sure to include typical interview questions, questions related to your past and present experience and these question types usually come in the form of behavioral and how you meet the job description requirements structured questions, and lastly questions asking you to explain any RT skills/procedures. It is also a good idea to be prepared to share a question you might have at the end (have multiple question options too) and answers related to working with diverse patients to what is your patient care philosophy. I'll share question examples on the next couple of slides; however, just note your answers can come from past and current work experience, clinicals, class labs and courses, etc.

Lastly, if you are practicing with another person, especially if you have scheduled a mock interview with the career services center, ask for feedback. If you are practicing on your own, record yourself on camera, through Zoom. Make sure to provide yourself with honest feedback.

Remember interviews are an opportunity to market yourself and share how you are a good match with what they are looking for and how you would add value to their organization (based on your research).

PRACTICE ?s

GENERAL/TYPICAL ?s

-
- Tell me about yourself/about your education/experience.
 - Brief introduction of you (i.e., academic, professional, and personal qualifications)
Think elevator pitch
 - Tell me a time that you disagreed with a colleague/supervisor?
 - Why did you pursue a career as a respiratory therapist?
 - What interested you about our company and/or this position? (Why should we hire you? How are you a fit?)
 - Share a strength and/or weakness of yours, in terms of being a respiratory therapist.

So, here are some general/typical questions you might be asked during your interview.

PRACTICE ?s

GENERAL/TYPICAL ?s CONT'D

-
- How do you deal with conflict/disagreement/difficulty/change/risk?
 - Share a project you did independently/as a team?
 - What qualities do you think a successful RT needs?
 - What motivates you? Tell me a time you showed initiative? How do you prioritize your time?
 - How would a friend, colleague, professor, and/or supervisor describe you?
 - What do you know about our organization?
 - Tell a time you worked with little supervision.
 - Where do you see yourself in 5 years?
 - What are some challenges faced by RTs?

Additional general/typical questions continued.

PRACTICE ?s

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE

-
- What is your experience assessing a patient's condition as well as creating an individual care plan?
 - Describe a challenging respiratory condition. (Share your approach)
 - Tell me about a time you had to teach/educate a patient/patient support person(s) a particular respiratory treatment.
 - Share a time you came across a patient/patient support person(s) who disagreed with your treatment plan.
 - Describe your experience providing emergency assistance to a patient in a critical condition.

These are questions that ask you about your current and past experiences in RT and/or healthcare.

PRACTICE ?s

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE CONT'D

-
- How have you handled good and bad news to a patient/patient support person(s)?
 - How do you motivate uncooperative patients?
 - What are some of the most useful therapies for patients with ... and why?
 - What respiratory equipment do you know?
 - Do you have experience with this type of therapy or patient?
 - Tell us how you would proceed in diagnosing this patient...

Additional questions related to your over RT and/or patient experience.

PRACTICE ?s

STAR METHOD

- Used to address behavioral and situational questions
 - Tell me a time ...
 - Share a situation ...
- Determine what is being asked of you.
- Showcase your skills that determine if you “fit” the needs of an organization

Situation: Describe the situation. Set the stage for your story.

Task: What did you need to do?

Action: What did you personally do?

Results: What happened because of your efforts?

So how exactly can you craft your answers to questions I shared on the previously slides? For questions that ask you to address a behavioral or situational experience, for example, tell me a time or share with me a situation, use the STAR method. Then determined what is being asked of you (patient care/safety, teamwork, ambition, analytical thinking, supervision style, skill evaluation, risk/caution, relationship building, communication skills, conflict resolution, customer service, decision-making, detail oriented, delegation, flexibility, initiative, interpersonal skills, integrity/honesty, leadership, adaptability, listening, motivation, organization, problem solving, setting goals, sound judgement, setting priorities, etc.) so you can speak to those topics. You’re graduating form a great school and passing the exams and obtaining your licensures will show you have the RT competency. Using the STAR method is a great way to showcase your other skills as well as help show an employer how you fit the needs of their organization. Why do they need you and how can you make their department a better place to work.

Situation

Describe the situation. Set the stage for your story. It is best to describe relevant work situations. However, depending on how much direct experience you have (clinical/RC student experience), you might be limited to using transferable experience such as academic projects, volunteer work, other types of employment outside of that company's industry or outside of the RT role. Be sure to highlight your specific role/responsibilities rather than provide a general context. Don't spend too much time describing the situation. The least amount of time should be spent on describing the situation, as employers are more concerned about your actions and the results of the

situation. Limit yourself to two or three relevant pieces of information needed by the employer to understand the context and situation.

Task

Describe the goal or task set out for you as it relates to the question being asked. Like describing the situation, this shouldn't take much time and you should limit yourself to one to two point that best highlights the task you needed to complete.

Action

Talk about the actions that you took to accomplish the task. Be sure to provide specific actions that you took to handle the situation. You should spend the most amount of time describing your action as this is what employers use to establish whether you are fit for their organization. Clearly define and discuss a few things you did to impact the success of the task. Also, when describing your actions, remember an employer is looking to hire you and not a team you worked with, so you should focus on using the word "I" versus "we" to highlight your specific roles and contributions.

Results:

Present the results that followed because of the chosen action. What was the outcome based on your action? You should spend slightly less time on describing the results than describing your actions. Highlight and discuss two or three most impressive results, what you learned from the situation and why you're a stronger employee because of the experience. Be as concrete as possible. If possible, quantify your results.

PRACTICE ?s

SKILL BASED

- Be able to provide examples of how you meet the job description (each bullet point/ask from an employer)
 - Tell me how familiar you are with ... ?
- Answer why, not just how, when it comes to making clinical decisions. Support your claim.
- Know your clinical situations, how to read and interpret results and what to do next.

It is important to look at the job description. It is like your study guide. Some or many of the questions might be based on the information listed on the job description. Therefore, for everything asked by an employer on the job description, be able to produce 2 to 4 examples of how you meet that requirement. Ideally, these examples should be direct RT examples, if not examples that related to the situation or where you are highlighting similar skills need. Craft your answers, including required and preferable skills, listed on the job description. This can help show an employer how you are a good fit for the job. Avoid being vague. Give specific examples.

PRACTICE ?s

DIVERSITY/PHILOSOPHY

-
- What is your experience working with diverse populations (patients/staff)?
 - Tell us about a time when you have taken steps to ensure that everyone felt included.
 - What training/education have you received focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion and how can you apply it to this job?
 - How have you promoted equity and diversity?
 - Share with me how you might handle cultural differences in a healthcare setting?
 - Describe a time when you adapted your communication style to help a patient.
 - Share a time you advocated for someone.

In your interview, you might also be asked questions that show your experience working with diverse populations as well as your patient care philosophy. These questions allow employers to gauge your sensitivity towards patients' diverse backgrounds and your commitment to providing equitable care.

PRACTICE ?s

ASK THE EMPLOYER

-
- Do you have any questions for us?
 - Opportunity to:
 - Gain more information about the company
 - Show your interest in a position/company
 - Help you determine if the job is a right fit for you
 - Don't ask about money or benefits during your initial interview

Finally, during the interview an employer might ask if you have any questions. Usually, you are asked this question twice.

At the beginning of the interview, it is more about the structure of the interview about to happen.

At the end of the interview, this question is about giving you, the candidate, an opportunity to gain more information about the company, show your additional interests in the position/company as well as help you determine if the job is a right fit for you.

PRACTICE ?s

ASK THE EMPLOYER CONT'D

-
- What do you like best about working here?
 - Can you describe a typical workday?
 - What do you provide your staff as far as new hire training, continuing education, or updates on care guidelines, etc. are concerned?
 - Is there opportunity to become involved in ...?
 - What constitutes success with this position/department

Here are some sample questions you might ask. Just remember to practice asking different questions, as some of the questions you might be prepared to ask could be answered by the employer at anytime of the interview. Also make sure the question or questions you asked are not reflected on the job description or other materials directly or indirectly provided to you by the employer, themselves.

ADDITIONAL HELP

CAREER SERVICES

Major and Career Exploration | Employment Resources | Workshops
Phone: (310) 434-4337
Email: careerservices@smc.edu
Website: www.smc.edu/careerservices

PEER NAVIGATOR PROGRAM

Peer Mentoring | Workshops | For 1st Year Students
Email: peernavigator@smc.edu
Website: <https://www.smc.edu/student-support/academic-support/counseling/special-support-programs/peer-navigator/>

ACADEMIC COUNSELING

ED Plan | Transfer Assistance
Website: <https://www.smc.edu/student-support/academic-support/counseling/>

HEALTH SCIENCE DEPARTMENT

Respiratory Care / Nursing / Allied Health Professions

Contact Information:

<https://www.smc.edu/academics/academic-departments/health-sciences/rta-application.php>

RT Website: <https://www.smc.edu/respiratorytherapy>

STUDENT GOVERNMENT AND CLUBS

Student Government (AS) / Clubs and Organizations

Website: <https://www.smc.edu/community/office-of-student-life/student-government/clubs.php>

GAINING EXPERIENCE

Website: <https://www.smc.edu/student-support/career-services/career-interest-areas/health-and-wellness-career-interest-area/health-and-wellness-experiential-list-of-opportunities/>

CAREER GUIDES

Website: <https://www.smc.edu/student-support/career-services/career-interest-areas/health-and-wellness-career-interest-area/health-and-wellness-career-guides/>

And to end my presentation, for RT students, here are some valuable resources.