


**BUILDING SUCCESSFUL  
INTERVIEWING SKILLS  
FOR APPRENTICESHIP  
AND CONSTRUCTION  
EMPLOYMENT**

ADDING A GENDER LENS TO THE BCTD'S MULTI-  
CRAFT CORE CURRICULUM:  
Building Job Readiness and Respect For Diversity

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**Overview of the format and learning objectives for this module**

This is a four part lesson plan–

1. 1-2 hours for overview, guidelines and tips to prepare participants for mock interviewing
2. Practice homework assignment with family, classmates or friends
3. Mock interview session and debrief
4. Recap and review



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**Overview of the format and learning objectives for this module**

□ The module will cover:

- The role and importance of interviews in the apprenticeship application process and for construction jobs
- Group exercises and discussion of qualities interviews are designed to measure
- Characteristics of women's communications styles
- Practice questions
- Self-Assessment of personal strengths and weaknesses in interviewing
- Tips for interviewing
- Practice interviewing and being interviewed



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### Overview of the learning objectives for this module

- Participants will be able to:
  - Understand the importance of interviews in the apprenticeship application process and for construction jobs
  - Know what to expect in an interview
  - Know how to prepare for an interview and anticipate and answer interview questions
  - Identify body language and other non-verbal behaviors that impact an interviewer's assessment and judgment
  - Practice interviewing and get feedback on their performance
  - Understand how to address questions that may not be legal
  - Assess and revise communication styles related to gender that may get in the way of making a strong impression in an interview



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### Why are Interviews Used?

- Used to gain first hand knowledge of a candidate through a question and answer format
- To give a committee of industry members a chance to get an impression of a candidate's fit through assessment of behavior, attitude and appearance
- To determine if you are a promising candidate for apprenticeship or employment with a company



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### Why are Interviews Used?

- Interviews are conducted:
  - As part of the apprenticeship selection process
  - Conducted after an aptitude test
  - Following a written application by an employer looking to hire someone to provide a first job as an entry route into an apprenticeship
  - On a jobsite by a superintendent or crew leader to fill a position



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### What To Expect In Your Interview

- Interviews will be conducted by a small group, usually representing employers and union members—they are unlikely to be professional human resource managers and likely to have served an apprenticeship and faced a similar interview when they were starting out
- Interviewers are most likely volunteers conducting multiple interviews over the course of a day—as many as 4-5 an hour, or over 30 per day—they will likely be tired and perhaps even bored
- Interviews will last 5-20 minutes—be mindful of the time allotted for your interview
- Interviewers will 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



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### Do Not Expect..

- That the interviewers will try to make you comfortable
- That the 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 responses
- That you will get any immediate feedback
- That all interviewers will be well trained in conducting an interview



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### What Are They Looking For?

- 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 they are applying to
  - has good communication skills and can provide responsive, clear and articulate answers to a variety of basic, employment related questions
  - appears enthusiastic, energetic, willing to learn and has a positive attitude
  - demonstrates determination and dedication and a full commitment to this apprenticeship/job and career in the trades
  - has the ability to perform under pressure and produce at a high enough rate so the contractor makes money, meets the job deadlines and avoids costly mistakes
  - presents as cooperative and as someone who can work with others successfully and can take direction
- MOST IMPORTANTLY
  - Are you willing to put in the effort to complete an apprenticeship and work as a journey person?
  - Is it worth making an investment of the apprenticeship resources in you?
  - Can you demonstrate a commitment to completing an apprenticeship and making a career in the trade: will you stay long enough so your future earnings contribute to the good of the industry and trade, equal to the expense and time the industry will invest in your training?



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### What Are They Looking For- MOST IMPORTANTLY

- Are you willing to put in the effort to complete an apprenticeship and work as a journey person?
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### How Are These Qualities Measured?

- They will rate (with notes, or checking off on a form):
- your responses to questions
  - Observation of your behavior and appearance
  - assessment/impression about your attitude, energy
  - how much you know about the trade you are applying for
  - perception of your level of interest and commitment to the trade you are applying for

**Remember: An interview is a subjective measure—there may be written guidelines or oral instructions given to interviewers, but they ultimately rely on their own perceptions and judgment.**



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### Gender Differences in Communication Styles

- 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...")

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.

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Characteristics that interviewers are looking for: Communication Style

- Engaged listening and comprehension of the question
- Answering the questions that are asked with specifics to the point and related examples
- Avoiding yes or no answers
- Ability to think on your feet
- Full sentences
- Clear voice, loud enough to be heard, but not too loud
- Intonation – don't speak in a monotone



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Characteristics that interviewers are looking for: Attitude/Behavior

- Timeliness
- Prepared
- Enthusiastic
- Energetic
- Respectful
- Appropriate
- Attentive to the task
- Positive
- Committed
- Sincerity, Honest and Ethical
- Confident, but not arrogant or bragging



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Characteristics that interviewers are looking for: Non-verbal signals

- Appearance
- Eye contact
- Calm and collected
- Posture
- Facial expressions
- Handshake
- Walk
- Smile
- Arm and hand movement and placement
- Nodding while listening
- Smile



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### Characteristics that interviewers are looking for: knowledge, skills and abilities

- Ability to describe the duties of the trade and the working conditions -provide examples for a variety of apprenticeship programs
- Ability to describe the qualifications and characteristics of a model apprentice/or employee -provide examples for a variety of apprenticeship programs
- Some basic technical understanding of the trade -provide examples for a variety of apprenticeship programs
- Demonstrate understanding of/articulate the meaning of apprenticeship and the specifics of the apprenticeship you are applying for
- Providing the information/documents requested



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### Basic Tips For Making Your Interview Count

- Arrive at least 15 minutes ahead of time -practice traveling to the location in rush hour to assess how long it will take.
- Make time to get your appearance ready-good grooming and neat, conservative clothing-whether or not this is work gear will depend on where interview is being held, i.e., a jobsite, an office
- Be likable-even if they forget what you say, they will remember if they liked you.



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### Ways To Ace An Interview

- Arrive on time
- Speak confidently and clearly
- Answer questions thoroughly and specifically without rambling
- Make the interview more of a dialogue than an interrogation
- Exhibiting knowledge of the trade and apprenticeship structure
- Make a good first impression with a firm handshake, appropriate dress, confident stride and upright posture
- Making the interviewers feel comfortable and connected to you
- Being memorable for the right reasons: your commitment, interest, enthusiasm and energy



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### Ways to Blow an Interview

- Showing up late
- Hemming and hawing
- Avoiding or dismissing a question
- Inability to answer questions coherently
- Missing documents
- Not exhibiting knowledge of the trade and apprenticeship structure
- Unkempt appearance, inappropriate dress, distracting body art and jewelry
- Posture
- Inappropriate language
- Disrespect
- Freezing up
- Acting disinterested, nonchalant, aggressive, over-confident
- Being confrontational or dismissive



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### Basic Tips For Making Your Interview Count

- Be prepared and practiced –
- Mention the training program and your accomplishments in it or other related preparation
- Be yourself –be authentic
- Do not give superficial or only a yes and no answer
- Berelatable –Do not be intimidated by superficial differences of race and gender
- Don't ramble –answer the question that is asked
- Belogical



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### Give examples, be specific and concrete

- I'm dependable –I maintained perfect attendance in my pre-apprenticeship class
- Instead of I'm a hard worker, talk about how your productivity exceeded expectations on your last job.
- If you have a hard time giving yourself credit, think about things supervisors or co-workers have complimented you on and you can phrase it that way if it feels more comfortable.
- Awards, promotions, or other tangible rewards for good work are also great to mention.



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### Sample Interview Questions

#### Question

- Describe how you have handled situations in your life that are relevant to success in apprenticeship.
- 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?

#### Possible Answers



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### How to handle Illegal Questions: they are not appropriate, but still may be asked.

#### Illegal Question

- 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 senior parents or another family member that depends on you?

#### Positive Answer



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### Recap

- Be prepared and practiced
- Arrive early
- Make a good first impression with a firm handshake, appropriate dress, confident stride and upright posture
- Speak confidently and clearly, monitor your body language and other non-verbal communicators
- Answer questions thoroughly and specifically without rambling and with examples
- Exhibit your knowledge of the trade and 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!



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