

**Don't eat the powdered sugar
doughnuts!**
And other tips on interviewing...

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Beginning: Your Personal Statement

- What are your:
 - Themes
 - Stories
 - Passions
- What distinguishes you?
 - “Hooks”
 - When your name comes up in their match meeting, what will they remember about you?
- Be nice on phone and email

Shopping and Grooming

- Look the part!
- Smell the part!
- BE the part!

...the dignified young surgery professional

Safe vs risky distractions

Shopping and Grooming

Everyone:

- Solid colors or muted patterns
- Deodorant a must; fragrance none or light
- Glasses: business-like
- Jewelry: business watch, wedding band, simple earrings (ladies)
- No symbols or visible tattoos, nails groomed

Rowland & Lang, 2007

Shopping and Grooming

Gentlemen:

- Hair: Conservative, trimmed
- Business suit
- Shirt: L/S, white or blue, not button-down collar
- Tie: tied with dimple
- Blend: sox/pants, belt/shoes
- Shoes: tied, leather

Shopping and Grooming

Ladies

- Pants/skirt: latter conservative length (no thighs)
- Blouse: avoid high collar, ruffles, cleavage
- Shoes: pumps w low heel, comfortable, hose
- Make-up: natural, light/clear nail polish
- Hair: Shoulder length or above, “spray strays”

Practice

- Faculty
- Friends
- Family
- Especially if there are tough subjects

Packing

- Small sewing kit
- Tide® stick
- Double-sided sticky tape
- Hotels have irons and ironing boards
- Ladies: extra pair of hose in purse

The Night Before – Meeting the Residents

- Unsure about dress? Call Prog Coordinator
 - Err on the side of formal, shed to casual
- Drinking? Limit is one – beer or wine
 - Some programs don't offer alcohol
- Not drinking? Don't make others wrong
- Good table manners

Interview Day

- Everyone has a say!
- Be nice to fellow applicants: you'll see them a lot
- Don't eat the powdered sugar, or the jelly-filled, doughnuts!

Interview Day

- Nametag
 - Right side, not under lapel, straight, legible
- Handshake
 - Webspaces to webspaces, firm, eye contact, SMILE

Interview Day

- Body language
 - At a table
 - Across or next to a desk
 - Chair across from chair

Interview Day

- The Chair
 - Butt back, sit up, keep hands visible
 - Don't slouch, lean too far back, forward or side
 - Balance: too relaxed VS you want to jump out of your chair
- What to do with chair arms & your arms:
 - If chair arms wide, elbow on one or none
 - If narrow, elbow on one

Interview Day

- Swivels and wheels: don't
- Legs and feet
 - Gentlemen: feet on floor or cross ankle on knee
 - Ladies: Cross at ankles (or knees if wearing pants or a skirt that won't ride up)

Interview Day

- Purses, folios: set to the side or down
- CVs: ask Prog Coordinator if unsure
 - Updated info to ERAS & call Prog Coordinator
 - Artwork?

Interview Day

- Speech
 - High-pitched speech
 - Fast-paced speech
 - Accents: US regional and international
 - If you have one, ask a friend who doesn't to listen to you, tell you what words might be said more clearly, and practice
 - Soft speech
 - "So" is this year's "Like"
 - Practice with friends, ask them to stop you at "So", "Um", or "like"
 - Pauses vs running on: both beginning & end of questions, learn to stop

The Friendly Interview

- Judgments in first few seconds
- The low-ball opening: “Tell me about yourself”
- What the interviewer knows (may not be much or entire file)
- Interviewers usually have agendas/things they want to ask
- Keep your answers short, answer the question, STOP
- Use your (2-3) stories and themes from your PS to illustrate your qualities (e.g., “I’m a hard worker” VS a story about being a hard worker)

The Friendly Interview

- Short, concise answers about your research
- Answers to common questions, know how to answer a question about your weaknesses/challenges you've faced/a time when you overcame failure, etc.
- If you're caught off guard:
 - Pause . "That's a great question." Pause...answer.

The Friendly Interview

If it's in your application, you should
be able to talk about it

The Stress Interview

- May involve a panel
- Rapid-fire questions
- Comments to stress, make you sweat, doubt your answers

Whether this actually validly simulates the stress of a hypotensive trauma patient at 2 am is questionable, however...

The Stress Interview

- Zen. 10 deep breaths as you walk in.
- Remember handshake, eye contact, smile.
- Try to control pace.
 - Don't get into stress snowball
 - Pause, eye contact
- "I don't know" (and the answer is ALWAYS "I don't know" if you don't) doesn't mean an unsuccessful interview (au contraire...)
- Likewise, neither are answers YOU aren't satisfied with.
 - E.g., minute anatomy questions, carving an ear out of a bar of soap
 - Maintain your equanimity and move on

The Illegal Interview

- Some interviewing faculty are just uninformed
- Interest in spouse fair in couples matches
- Otherwise, unless YOU bring them up...questions about:
 - Marital status or intentions
 - Intentions for family (now or in the future)
 - Age
 - Sexual orientation
 - Abilities as they relate to your gender
 - Where you are going to rank them
 - Where else you are interviewing

...are OFF LIMITS. BUT THEY STILL GET ASKED!

The Illegal Interview

- You have to have an answer...
- Informing interviewer about rules not a good idea
- A smile and a non-committal answer, repeated as often as necessary
 - Be a good politician
- You CAN answer questions you are comfortable with
 - E.g., you have small children and you want them to know
- But once YOU open the door you can't go back.
 - Indicating how you are going to rank a program can come back to bite you...

Questions From You

- Review program webpage the night before
- Don't pubmed your interviewers
- Ask multiple interviewers/residents same Qs
 - Different people may have different answers
- OK to ask about environment for women
 - Especially if not many there

Thank You Notes

- If they say don't, don't
- Keep them short
- Must to PD, Chair, PC
- Nice to interviewers
- OK to email but beware cut-and-paste
 - Bad form mentioning UCLA to UCSF chair
 - Bad form sending same note to all interviewers (they all send them to PC)

Bibliography

- Rowland PA and Lang NP. Communication and Professionalism Competencies: A Guide for Surgeons. Cine-Med Publishers, Woodbury CT, 2007.
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Questions?

