**Preparing for the Interview:**

* Check with the employer ahead of time about who at the firm you’ll be meeting with. Then, find out some professional information about the person(s) that you can use to your advantage in conversation during the meeting: for example, where the person went to law school or what types of cases the person handles.
* Also check with the employer about the environment in which you’ll be meeting—are you going to an office, having lunch at a restaurant, or meeting on campus at your law school, for example? Be familiar with the plans for the meeting so that you can have some level of comfort with the place and environment in which you’ll be meeting with the potential employer.
* Be punctual. Avoid anything that could make you late: get directions ahead of time and figure out what route you’ll take to the meeting; arrange for ample time to tend to your obligations before you have to leave for the meeting; and leave early enough to account for potential traffic jams, late trains, and other potential calamities.
* Err on the side of being conservative and formal in your dress.
* No matter how relaxed you may be at the meeting or how friendly the potential employer may be, be sure to stay professional and courteous. Even when you feel that the meeting is going extremely well, don’t get so relaxed that you let up on the level of formality and professionalism that’s required, generally, in the workplace. Remember that you’re trying to make a first impression as a professional—act like one!
* Show enthusiasm about the potential employer. Prepare some pointed questions about the position, the firm, or the employer ahead of time so that you can ask them during the meeting.
* Check the firm’s website for bios of the people who are going to interview you. Ask specific follow-up questions about the interviewers’ background, practice, and professional experience. For instance, if you see that the person works in a niche practice area, ask him or her what the most challenging or most rewarding part of working in that field is.
* Check the firm’s website for news and press releases about the firm’s recent cases, activities, and projects, and then ask about them. For example, if you see that the firm recently had a victory in an important case or a significant settlement, offer a positive comment on that case and ask a follow-up question.
* Check the firm’s brochure for interesting tidbits of information. Say, for example, that the firm is the first firm in your region to experiment with a particular practice or has had a significant amount of business in a particular area—again, offer a positive comment and then ask a follow-up question. As with any other part of the interview, the key to asking questions is to show genuine interest, enthusiasm, and a positive attitude about interviewing with the firm.

Excerpted from *Your First Year as a Laywer* by Ursula Furi-Perry (Jist Publishing, 2010).

**Sample Interview Questions to Prepare and Ask:**

**Questions Regarding the Firm or Employer:**

* What are the organization’s most important goals?
* What are the firm’s plans for the next few years, and how does this position fit into those plans?
* What is one important thing to know about the firm or company’s culture?
* What accomplishments in its history is the firm most proud of?
* What are the greatest challenges the firm faces?
* What are some misconceptions that clients might have about the firm?

**Questions Regarding the Position:**

* Good: What are the day-to-day duties of this position? Better: As I understand it, the day-to-day duties of this position are \_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_. Am I correct? Follow-up: What percentage of my time should be devoted to each responsibility?
* To whom will I report? Would you please describe the organizational structure?
* Are there formal arrangements in place to measure employees’ performance?

**Questions for the Hiring Partner or Manager:**

* What specific skills in the person whom you hire will make your job easier?
* What are your major concerns that you hope the new hire will immediately address in this position?
* What are three positive things you hope the new hire will accomplish during the first year of working in the position?
* What are the most rewarding parts of your job? Or: Why do you enjoy working for the firm or company?
* How do you like your employees to communicate with you?
* Is there anything else that I can elaborate on so that you can have a better picture of my qualifications for this position?

**Informational Interviews:**

During an informational interview, you might seek to find out information about working in a particular attorney’s field or practice area. You might start by asking the attorney the following ten questions:

* What are your job duties and responsibilities?
* What is the typical day (or week, or month) like on the job?
* Please describe how you obtained your current position, and please briefly describe the journey that took you to it.
* What skills and characteristics do you possess that help you do well in your job every day?
* What are the greatest challenges that you encounter on the job?
* What do you consider the most rewarding parts of your job?
* What surprised you most when you first started out in your field?
* What tips and advice could you share with me about working in your field?
* What general advice would you offer to a new attorney about the first year on the job?

Use these ten questions as a starting point. When the interviewee tells you something important or something that interests you, ask pointed follow-up questions. Customize the interview so that you find out about the information that is most pressing to you personally.

**Crafting Your “Career Sound Bytes”**

Imagine that you’re networking or interviewing for a job, and you come across the following questions from a colleague, an interviewer, or a potential contact. What will you say in response?

Don’t get caught by surprise: prepare an answer that makes you sound good. Construct a 30-second “sound byte” to relay your answer concisely, clearly, and comprehensively.

Q: What do you do?

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Q: What would you like to do when you graduate?

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Q: What do you bring to the table?

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Q: Why should we hire you?

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Q: Why did you decide to be a lawyer?

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