

# Interviewing Skills



FOR CHEMICAL PROFESSIONALS



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AMERICAN CHEMICAL SOCIETY  
Department of Career Services

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The American Chemical Society Department of Career Services (DCS) offers career assistance and information on employment issues to chemistry professionals. This booklet contains the most up-to-date information available on interviewing, based on observations of employment interviews, and can be used by the chemist at any career stage. Previous editions were published in 1994, 1996, and 1998. This edition was updated by ACS career consultants, Joel Shulman, PhD and Dorothy Rodmann. Additional input was provided by ACS career consultants James Burke, PhD, Daniel Eustace, PhD, and Donald Gatewood. Jura N. Viesulas, Manager of the DCS Office of Professional Services, reviewed the manuscript for completeness and accuracy. The Department is grateful to the current and former writers, contributors, and reviewers for their time and effort to develop this handbook.

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# Preface



You probably already know that your résumé is a tool to obtain an interview with a potential employer, and the interview determines whether you receive an offer of employment. Many candidates mistakenly believe their work ends once they secure an interview, but those who are unprepared for the interview are rarely successful. You'll want to invest the time and energy in a positive interview outcome.

An interview gives you and the interviewer an opportunity to exchange information about the open position. The interviewer's task is to determine whether you have the skills and motivation to do the job and whether you'll fit into the organization. Your goal is to present yourself in the best possible light, so you stand out as the ideal candidate. To reach this goal, you must seriously prepare for every interview, realizing your level of preparation probably will be the deciding factor in whether you receive a job offer.

You can refine your interview skills—and your first step is knowing what the process entails; consider these elements:

- Understanding yourself—your skills and accomplishments, your values and needs
- Learning about the employer's organization
- Planning and preparing for interview logistics
- Going through the meeting itself
- Determining reasonable compensation
- Negotiating an offer
- Maintaining your marketability after you get the job.

This handbook will help you learn about each part of this process, different kinds of interviews, and how to face the interview.

## DISCLAIMER

This handbook is meant to serve as a basic information resource in areas of concern to chemists. Information was compiled from published sources that we deemed reliable (see Appendix lists). Readers should consult the appropriate authorities for additional information or assistance beyond the scope of this handbook. The American Chemical Society (ACS) does not guarantee employment to any reader of this document or accept responsibility for setting standards in any topic discussed within. ACS and the authors, contributors, and reviewers also are not responsible for the accuracy of information obtained from other sources.

# Preparing for an Interview



To present yourself in the best possible light to a potential employer, begin by knowing what you have to offer.

## Getting to Know Yourself

In any job market, many well qualified candidates compete for a single position. Clearly identifying what you bring to the job will give you confidence, help you match your qualifications to market needs, and respond to interview questions such as “What can you do for us?”

This exercise is not something to be done quickly. Take the time to think about achievements in your personal life, at work, and—if you’re a new graduate—at school. Jot down everything you can think of; remember, even basic skills and modest accomplishments are worthy of note!

When you identify your skills and accomplishments, the results count. It’s not enough just to say what you did; you have to go a step farther and show the *outcome* of those actions. Be as specific and quantitative as possible—vague statements will not hold up to scrutiny.

## Categorizing Your Skills and Accomplishments

Once you identify your skills and accomplishments, place them into categories that correspond to what an employer is looking for in job candidates. While different employers may use varying terminology, the following list covers most areas of interest:

- Technical mastery
- Communication (written and oral)
- Initiative/motivation
- Innovation
- Leadership
- Problem solving
- Risk taking
- Working with others
- Dedication/work ethics
- Business orientation.



See the ACS guide, *Résumé Preparation—Tips for Chemical Professionals*, for more details on defining your skills and accomplishments.

Your list might include:

### Technical Mastery

- Developed an efficient synthesis (85+% yields) of novel sucrose derivatives and prepared 15 new compounds for testing
- Prepared and analyzed volatile and semivolatile compounds using a specially modified GC/MS technique.

### Leadership

- Supervised staff of 10 employees in review, evaluation, and validation of analytical data
- Led a group of 5 students in conceiving and executing fund-raising activity that raised \$5500 for United Way.

Note that some of your skills and accomplishments may fit into multiple categories. For example, in the above list the fund-raising activity demonstrates both leadership and the ability to work with others.

Modify and add to the list until you feel it best reflects your experience in each area valuable to employers. This list of your skills, backed by concrete examples (your accomplishments), is valuable for résumés, cover letters, and interviews.

You can ensure a good employee–employer match by using terms that positively describe your personality, such as:

- Excellent communicator, in writing and in person
- Results oriented and organized
- Creative problem solver
- Hard worker, with high self-motivation
- Uses good judgment in setting and meeting priorities
- Willing to take measured risks
- Extensive team-building and leadership characteristics.



Culture reflects current key management's beliefs, ideas, and strategies.

## A Note on Culture

One of the deciding factors in whether you get the job offer—and whether you are eventually successful—is how well you fit into the organization's culture. This is not to understate the importance of technical competence. Without it, you could not carry out your responsibilities effectively; however, it's not the only factor. Your behavior on the job, which directly relates to your overall performance, is also considered.



# Identifying Your Values

Why should you think about your personal values when contemplating a professional position? Because most of your waking hours are spent at work. It's very important to have your values satisfied in the workplace. When they are not met—or worse, are not respected—you may find yourself a very unhappy employee.

Your values play an essential part in finding the right match for career success. Values are critical in helping you establish career objectives, develop and choose alternatives, evaluate choices, and implement decisions. As your life changes, so, too, will the relative priority of your values; however, the values themselves probably will not change. To avoid potential conflict, you'll want to identify your dominant personal values and the needs they represent.

Think about what's important to you, personally and professionally, in a job and in an organization. Ask yourself questions such as these:

- *Do I want a 60-hour workweek or a 9-to-5 job?*
- *Am I willing to travel on business or relocate?*
- *Do I work best with a manager who supervises me closely or with one who gives me an assignment and lets me run with it?*
- *Is it important to me that the organization provide a relatively long tenure or rapid advancement?*

The 5 major values that influence the decisions most people make in their careers are advancement, autonomy, balance, challenge, and security. Knowing which are most important to you as an employee will make it easier to choose employers that meet your needs, as described below:

## **People who value advancement...**

- Consider upward progression in an organization as very important
- Seek visibility and financial reward or both for accomplishments
- Remain as long as there is opportunity for growth.

## **People who value autonomy...**

- Prefer to be left alone to do the job with minimal supervision and more freedom
- Like to set their own schedules and priorities
- Consider aspects of organization life to be restrictive.

## **People who value balance...**

- See balancing family, career, and personal interests as important

- Take into account commuting time, work hours, benefits, and travel associated with the job
- Do not pursue career prospects at the cost of family considerations.

#### **People who value challenge...**

- Like to take on difficult projects and responsibilities
- Thrive on winning
- Enjoy problem solving.

#### **People who value security...**

- Look for an organization with low turnover rates
- Want good benefits and tenure in employment
- Desire stability and tend not to challenge the system.

These 5 values are not stated in any particular order, and their ranking in your life may change at any given point, depending on your situation. They're important because they help you prepare for, find, and keep a job that aligns with these values while avoiding employment you'd find frustrating or unfulfilling.

#### *Sample Questions to ask an Employer About Values*

Asking the questions below in an interview will elicit information to help you find an organization that fits your values.

#### **Advancement**

- *What opportunities are here for someone with my skills and background to grow and develop?*
- *Do you have any programs to support employees' career goals and continuing education, such as tuition reimbursement?*
- *Does the organization offer advancement in a technical track and a management track?*
- *Does the technical track offer advancement to management?*
- *How are accomplishments recognized and rewarded?*
- *How many executive positions are there and what is the turnover?*
- *What is the policy regarding promotions from within?*
- *Does the organization believe in succession planning?*
- *How are expectations for each level documented?*
- *How frequent are performance reviews?*



- *What are the possible career paths from the position I'm interested in?*
- *Does the employer support participation in professional association activities to encourage career growth?*
- *What does the organization look for in top performers, and how are they rewarded?*

### **Autonomy**

- *To whom does this position report? How are work results monitored and how frequently?*
- *How do new ideas get started—through individual efforts, by committees, or by teams?*
- *Do ideas for projects flow from the bottom of the organization up or from the top down?*
- *Are new organization design methods being implemented to allow greater decision making at all levels?*
- *What type of management oversight exists in each unit? Is there 1 layer or several?*
- *Do you have a work-at-home policy?*
- *Who gets rewarded—teams or individuals—when goals are met?*
- *May I see a copy of your organization chart?*
- *When projects are assigned, are they given to individuals or teams?*

### **Balance**

- *What factors are important for a successful manager or technical person in your organization?*
- *What is the normal work week? Is overtime expected?*
- *Under what benefits are my family members covered?*
- *How much travel is required for overnight/out-of-town assignments?*
- *What opportunities exist for taking time to enhance knowledge or skills?*
- *Do you have flex-time? Job sharing? Part-time employment? Telecommuting opportunities?*

### **Challenge**

- *What kinds of opportunities do you have to support the development of research /new products?*

- *How is value measured and rewarded?*
- *What are the greatest challenges in the position?*
- *Does the organization pay for membership in professional associations?*
- *What type of recognition or award is given to employees for taking on new responsibilities and assignments?*
- *What opportunities are there for creative thinking and brainstorming sessions, both on site and on retreat?*
- *Are job rotations available to enhance professional growth or understanding of a particular technical or nontechnical area?*
- *Are employees encouraged to attend training to enhance personal and professional growth?*
- *What resources do the organization's top performers enjoy?*

### **Security**

- *What is the turnover rate in the organization overall, and in the department or division where my position would be? Why did the position become available? How long did the last person work in that position?*
- *What are the opportunities for growth?*
- *Is a career path built into the position, for example, a technical track or management track?*
- *Do you have a policy to retrain staff in preference to layoff during tight economic times?*
- *Is this position funded to continue? What is the source of the funding?*
- *If the position is on a contract or is project funded, what is the possibility of it becoming regular full time?*
- *What are the organization's staffing plans over the next 5–10 years?*

By asking targeted questions, you'll be able to judge whether a potential employer can provide an environment compatible with your values.

## Researching the Organization

Doing a background investigation before the interview is essential; gather as much information as possible about the employer, so you can intelligently propose how you will contribute. Here are a few ideas:

- For a publicly held company, obtain a copy of the most recent annual report. You'll find a mission statement, goals for the coming year, highlights from the preceding year, milestones, and financial



statements. It also may contain useful news about the company's officers, recent mergers or acquisitions, various divisions and subsidiaries, and product lines.

- Ask chambers of commerce for information sources.
- Use the organization's website to gather details; it may also describe available positions.
- Get to know your local reference librarian—a valuable resource for information sources. Some general references include *Standard & Poor's Register of Corporations, Directors, and Executives*; *Directory of American Research and Technology*; *The Thomas Register of American Manufacturers*; and the manufacturing directory for your state.
- Contact current or former employees, vendors, or consultants you may know. Faculty members, who may have former students now in that organization, also could be helpful.
- Try to set up an information interview, as described under Kinds of Interviews starting on page 9.

Arriving for your interview after doing some research enables you to:

- Create a favorable impression by showing you made the effort to acquaint yourself with the organization
- Set yourself apart from the competition, because few candidates bother to do this
- Communicate a certain degree of respect for the employer (and the interviewer).

## What to Expect

An organization's goal in an interview is to assess your accomplishments, skills, and personality to see whether you fit their needs; your goal is to generate an employment offer. When you arrive at the interview stage, you must present your credentials in the best possible light. From a pool of many applicants, only a limited number were contacted for an interview, and only a few interviewees will be offered jobs. Because you have to assume your competition is just as qualified as you are on paper, you must stand out by being the best applicant in person.

The interviewer will focus on 3 areas:

- Your qualifications for the position (*can you do the job?*). You were invited to the interview because you have the education and expertise. This is your chance to show you can also *apply* what you know to the task at hand.



Remember to stay objective—everything you hear is a product of that person's experiences, good or bad, with the organization.



You'll never have to say "Gee, I'm really not that familiar with what you do."



Observe the people and environment during the interview to see how you would fit in or contribute to the organization.

- Your motivation to do the job well (*will you do the job?*). Give examples of your skills and accomplishments in the 10 areas listed under Categorizing Your Skills and Accomplishments on page 1.
- Your match to the employer's culture (*will you fit in?*). Demonstrate that you work well with people, and that your values match those of the organization.

Most interviewers won't cover each area equally. Because technical qualifications are more apparent, easily defined, and therefore more easily measured, some interviewers feel more comfortable focusing on those. Unlike technical qualifications, motivation and fit are more abstract concepts; few interviewers feel prepared to ask in-depth questions about these topics. Yet they still will leave the interview with some basic observations and intuition about whether you're right for the job.

Remembering these tendencies, present yourself appropriately. Review your skills and accomplishments, but also communicate—through your speech and body language—your interest and enthusiasm for the position.

## Communication Styles

Quality of communication is affected by how people perceive the world as well as by different ways of communicating. By reflecting on communication styles, you can improve your interview techniques, then enhance team productivity, negotiate more effectively, and produce better oral and written reports once you have the job.

Employers always have valued good communication skills, but in today's workplace, they take on increased significance. There is hardly a job that doesn't require proficiency in either oral or written communication—or both.

In the interview, you must understand both your and the other person's communication styles, understand what information the other person needs, and clearly present those details. Misunderstandings occur when people communicate on different wavelengths, so the more you know about communication styles, the easier it will be to communicate effectively.

The key is to recognize the other person's communication style and deliver a response that matches it. If you listen closely, you can paraphrase some of their language, using clues about the issues that concern them to incorporate into your response. For example, a decisive and results-oriented person won't be interested in all the details involved in reaching a decision; be brief, specific, and to the point. However, a person with an analytical bent who prefers to deal with facts, logic, and data may want all the details in order to process the information.



Your ability to communicate effectively will be judged in your interview.



# Kinds of Interviews

There are 4 kinds of interview situations, as described below:

## Information Interviews

In an information interview, you initiate the contacts, seek out potential employers, set up appointments, ask questions, and find out what you need to know. For example, if you want to make a career transition, you might use information interviews to build a network in your targeted field. Information interviews are a good technique, even if nothing's available at the time. Your goal is to leave a positive impression so that you're remembered when an opportunity opens.

It can be difficult to land an information interview; your best chance is through your network of acquaintances. And, like all interviews, these require research, so you can ask intelligent questions.

Formulate your questions around what you want to know about the organization or the field. Ask open-ended questions that encourage your contacts to speak at length about themselves—beginning with “who,” “what,” “where,” “when,” and “how.” Remember to ask whether the person knows anyone else you could talk to and whether you can mention their name when you contact that person.

You can structure your introduction in a number of ways; for example, if you:

- Are planning to change careers, say you're looking for some advice and would like to discuss jobs where your skills, education, and experience would be an asset
- Have already researched your chosen field or organization, say you want to ask people already working there some questions before you send out résumés
- Are new to the area, say you want to investigate local companies before you launch your job search
- Have decided on a field or organization, say you'd like feedback on your résumé; then you can discuss how realistic your goals are, determine whether your talents fit the jobs available, and find out how to get your foot in the door.

## Screening Interviews

The dual purpose of a screening interview is for the employer to verify facts and to weed out inappropriate applicants. Campus interviews and National Employment Clearing House (NECH) interviews at American Chemical Society national meetings are examples of typical screening interviews. In these preliminary discussions, the interviewer determines which applicants will be invited for in-depth site interviews.



Because you requested the meeting, you'll need to keep the conversation going.



An information interview is briefer than the employment interviews described below.



The goal is to ensure up front that you have the skills and experience to qualify.



A screening interview can also be a videoconference call.

The interviewer, looking for a candidate with a solid background, will ask you about the experience listed on your résumé and other information. In a screening interview, the interviewer usually doesn't have the power to make a hiring decision; determining your qualifications is uppermost in their mind.

The phone interview is a type of screening interview that can be planned or occur unannounced. If an unannounced interview comes when you're unable to talk freely, ask to reschedule it. During the interview, try to have a copy of your résumé and other pertinent information at hand.

Although it may seem that a screening interview benefits only the organization, it's also an opportunity for you to confirm interest in proceeding to the next interview (described below). Ask only general questions about the position and the employer, and don't try to control the interview; the time to ask more in-depth questions is during the site interview or technical presentation/seminar.

Answer questions simply and directly, giving the interviewer only the desired facts. Since screening interviewers generally are not the hiring managers, they need to obtain and document information for the person making the decision. Although this interviewer may not have the power to hire you, they *do* have the power to screen you out, so proceed carefully. Your goal is to convince the interviewer to recommend you for the next step.



At this stage, you are a viable candidate, so impress the interviewer with both your questions and your responses. Also take the opportunity to observe and determine whether you could contribute, grow, and enjoy working in the organization.

## Site Interviews

The site interview is arranged by the organization to determine whether to make you an offer. It also should give you enough information to know whether you'd like to accept the job. The site interview will focus on your qualifications (skills and accomplishments), as well as motivation to do the job well, and fit with the culture.

You may spend part of your interview with a human resources department representative. They're responsible for giving you information about policies, working conditions, benefits, typical career progression, and similar details. Remember this person, too, will be assessing your personality and behavior to determine your fit for the culture.

At the end of this interview, you may be told when to expect a decision. If not, ask what the time frame is, or what the next step will be. If you don't hear by the specified date, call to ask about the status of your application.

## Technical Presentations/Seminars

If you're a graduate or experienced chemist, you may be asked to give a technical presentation or seminar about your recent work as part of the interview process. You're not expected to disclose confidential or proprietary information; it is acceptable to present your research in general terms or to use nonproprietary examples, as long as you say so at the beginning.



This presentation is vitally important to your candidacy. It may be the group's only opportunity to form a collective opinion of you and, for some, to gain their first impressions. The seminar shows how you communicate, approach problems, and think on your feet. You need to be professional and persuasive—if your presentation is mediocre or if you try to bluff your way through, your credibility will suffer.

Try to find out about the audience and how long you'll have by calling the interviewer. That will help you decide the level of your presentation and how much background material you'll need. Here are some additional tips for your seminar:

- Ask yourself what part of your experience and research will be important to most of your audience and to the organization by reviewing your research.
- Prepare concise, uncluttered visual aids—don't overload the audience with tables of data, and use key words or phrases instead of rambling explanations.
- Focus your presentation on 3–5 primary topics, highlighting your accomplishments related to each of these main points.
- If possible, tie your achievements to the organization's needs, strategic mission, products, etc.
- Practice your presentation in advance, particularly the transitions from one slide or topic to another, and be mindful of the time. Ask friends or colleagues to help you by being your audience; ask them to be critical and try to put you on the spot with tough questions.
- Have handouts available if you think they will reinforce your concepts.
- Talk to your audience, not to your visual aids; face your audience as much as possible. If you have a pointer, use it only to make a quick visual reference on a chart or to trace the relationship of data on a graph.
- Summarize your main points and give credit to your coworkers (if you're a graduate student or postdoctoral fellow, acknowledge your adviser and any funding agencies that support your work).
- Anticipate the questions you may receive, and practice your answers. To ensure everyone in the audience hears a question, repeat it (this also helps you stay calm and allows a few extra seconds to formulate your answer). Focus about a quarter of your eye contact on the person who asked the question and the rest on others in the audience to keep everyone involved. Answer thoughtfully and honestly.
- Thank the audience when your time is over. For the rest of the site visit, reinforce the impression that you would be a valuable colleague by asking perceptive questions, and listening intently to everyone you meet.



A typical technical presentation/seminar is scheduled for 45 minutes, with another 15 minutes for questions from the audience.

- In addition to your technical seminar, be prepared to give a 10–15 minute summary to senior management, which may include scientists from disciplines other than your own. In this short presentation, cover your experience—subject background, project goal, research performed, conclusions, implications, and future plans. This is a good opportunity to show you can clearly communicate to people outside your field and relate your research to different disciplines.

## Interview Techniques

The interviews you encounter may take several forms, as summarized below.



In part, this information allows the interviewer to make a hiring decision based on facts, not feelings.

### Behavioral Interviewing

In this technique—based on the premise that the best predictor of your performance is the sum of your achievements—the interviewer asks questions about past behavior. From the examples you give and details about your specific skills, the interviewer will assess your future performance.

Behavior-based interviews are more structured than other kinds, and you'll be asked about specific instances when you exhibited particular skills. Questions are likely to take the form of “tell me about a time when you were under enormous pressure...,” “tell me how you handled a time when you were criticized...,” “give me an example of when you exhibited leadership...” Aside from providing a self-portrait, this technique can bring out points or questions the interviewer otherwise might not have considered. All applicants are asked the same questions to eliminate interviewer bias.

This technique has a few potential pitfalls:

- Overreliance on the past instead of the present and future
- An interviewer's assumption that people never change
- An applicant's tendency to talk too much.

If you understand the theory behind behavior-based interviews and prepare for them, you can be more confident and better equipped to convince interviewers you're the best choice for the job:

- Know about the prospective employer and the job—including the full job description.
- Review your skills and accomplishments, paying particular attention to the values that will affect your job choice.
- Provide enough information to convince the interviewer you're the right person for the job; don't just say what you think they want to hear. Take the time to develop an answer, then support it with quantifiable examples and facts.



The quality of what you say—rather than how much you say (or how long it takes you)—determines the effectiveness of your response.

- Don't turn the response on its head. You may be tempted to twist your answers to avoid saying anything negative about yourself. But if you really can't think of an example, say so, then give a hypothetical example of how you might behave.
- Answer all the questions the interviewer asks, not just those you prepared for...do not evade any questions.



A good way to answer is to “build a CAR”: *Context, Action, Result*. First, describe the *context* of the situation in enough detail that the interviewer fully understands your role. Then, describe the *action* you took and discuss the *results*, quantifying them with examples whenever possible.

## Group or Panel Interviews

Group or panel interviews are becoming more popular; they can save time for you and the employer. Interviewers don't have to rely on the memory of individuals or the quality of note taking; they all hear the same answer. And you don't have to answer the same question again and again for different individual interviewers.

Panels can vary in size, but will generally consist of 3–4 interviewers. The questions are likely to be the same as in a one-on-one interview, but may be efficiently divided among several individuals who are responsible for a particular line of questioning—such as technical, communications, leadership.

Panel interviews are not designed to be stress interviews, but they *can* be stressful if you're not prepared for the process. It can be unsettling to enter a room and encounter several people seated around a table, ready to ask you questions. The best preparation is to know the employer, review your skills and accomplishments, and be certain you can give examples using the “CAR” approach described in the sidebar.

## Interviewing for Academic Positions

The academic interview requires some additional preparation. Of course, you must do your homework—know the faculty members, the department, and the institution:

- Read any available literature, the institution's catalog, and the ACS Directory of Graduate Research to become familiar with each faculty member's research interests.
- Be ready to ask questions and to present your research, both formally and informally.
- Bring to the interview reprints and/or preprints of your work, along with copies of your research proposals, including an estimate of start-up costs.
- Prepare your technical presentation/seminar as outlined on pages 10–12—remembering that in an academic environment, the interview also will evaluate your teaching abilities. A well rehearsed, well organized presentation is essential.

In addition to a formal research seminar, most university departments will request an informal overview of your proposed research, including these points:



Be especially realistic about industrial support; junior faculty rarely obtain support from industry.

- The time needed to complete the work, as well as whether the research would be suitable for undergraduates or graduate students.
- Which agencies you would approach for support—with a realistic budget for necessary equipment, supplies and expendables, student support (usually in the form of guaranteed teaching assistantships), and possibly a summer salary.
- A focus on originality, relevance, and fundability.
- Statement of teaching philosophy, listing courses you're qualified to teach (undergraduate and graduate), special topics of interest and expertise, and innovative approaches (such as interdisciplinary courses or multimedia methods).
- Emphasis on projects of manageable size so there will be a reasonable chance of completion within an academic year or in a summer of research with undergraduates.



As this chapter shows, all interviews share a common requirement: preparation, preparation, preparation.

# How to Ace the Interview

You know that putting your best foot forward requires professional and personal preparation. But you also have to keep track of what, where, when, and how—and then look your best at the interview to make the optimum impression.

## Refining Your Preparation

As the date of your interview approaches, you'll have many details to keep you busy. Use these lists to keep your preparation schedule on track.

### The Week Before

- Practice interviewing by role playing—a great tool. Talk aloud about your skills and accomplishments as well as your possible responses to behavioral-type questions. Have a friend—preferably someone who's been through the process—ask you questions and listen to your answers. If possible, have someone videotape a practice interview and critique it.
- Request that any forms (and a job description) be sent to you in advance. Take your time to review and fill them out neatly and completely, without having to rush.
- Study your résumé. No matter how many times you've read it before, read it again. Dates and achievements must be fresh in your mind so you can be ready to tell the interviewer all about them and how they match the organization's needs.
- If your interview is out of town, confirm all transportation arrangements. Remember to ask about procedures for submitting your expenses, too.
- Prepare a list of job-related questions.
- Fine tune your presentation and materials.

### The Day Before

- Verify the meeting details. Who will be there? When will it start? How long will the meeting last? Where will it be held?
- Confirm the directions. Make sure you know how long it will take you to get there and what time you'll have to leave. Jot down the time and place (including floor and suite number) so, even if you're a little nervous, you will still arrive at the right place at the right time. Make a note of the interviewer's phone number so you can call if you're delayed.



The ACS Department of Career Services offers videotaped mock interview sessions at all national meetings. Take advantage of the opportunity.



See Identifying Your Values (Chapter 1) and Questions You Might Ask (Chapter 3) for ideas to formulate your questions.



If you have a cell phone be sure to turn it off before the interview has started.

- Pack the essentials. In your briefcase or folder, place the information you've assembled about the organization, the questions you have prepared, extra copies of your résumé, your publication list, a list of references, a pad of paper, and a couple of pens or pencils. Bring enough change for subway fare, parking, tolls, and telephone calls. Listen to the weather forecast to determine whether you need an umbrella or raincoat.
- Get a good night's sleep. And don't forget to set the alarm to leave you plenty of time to get ready.



For more advice about clothing, ask at a reputable clothing store or consult a placement office counselor at your college/university.

## A Good First Impression

You never get a second chance to make a first impression, so get it right. Arrive on time; there are no acceptable excuses for being late to an interview. And look well groomed; your appearance will influence the interviewer's final decision about you.

A suit is a good choice for men or women; select an attractive, conservative style and color, with only a modest amount of jewelry.

## The Interview Itself

If you've adequately prepared for the interview, you should do well. The more interviews you have, the more comfortable you will feel with the process. Here are some tips for increasing your confidence.



See the ACS guide, *Résumé Preparation—Tips for Chemical Professionals*, for assistance with your résumé.

## An Effective Introduction

The first few minutes are the most important—that's when your interviewer will form a lasting impression of you. How you look and behave will set the tone for the rest of your meeting.

Begin with a firm handshake and look the interviewer in the eye. Be enthusiastic in your greeting. Smile. Wait until the interviewer is seated or invites you to sit down. Don't use the interviewer's first name unless you're invited to do so.

During the interview, sit up straight (but not stiff) in the chair and keep your feet on the floor; you want to avoid a swinging leg. Also be careful about moving your arms or hands excessively as you talk. Maintain eye contact with the interviewer and a pleasant look as you listen to and answer questions.

## Promoting Yourself Without Exaggerating

This sounds obvious, but it's good to avoid the temptation to embellish your accomplishments. False information can cost you the interview or the job. Your behavior is likely to give you away, anyway. If you stammer or appear hesitant or anxious, an observant interviewer probably will ask follow-up questions. If you're asked whether you can perform a certain task and you dishonestly say yes, it will

be very embarrassing to admit you can't once you're on the job. If your credibility is damaged there's little you can do to recover, and you're likely to lose the job even if you get it.

No matter how much you want the job, go about it honestly. If you've reviewed your résumé and other materials, you can be clear about your skills and accomplishments without having to exaggerate.

## Being an Observer

Pay attention to what is said and how—be sure you understand what's being asked before starting to answer a question. If you are not sure, ask the interviewer for clarification.

The interview is a conversation, not an interrogation, so strive to spend 50% of your time listening and 50% talking. Interviewers often will drop cues about the organization through what they say during an interview.

Also note how people act and interact with each other. Are they formal or informal, friendly or reserved? Would you enjoy working there? If you see a bulletin board, stop and look at it. Are job openings posted? If so, what kinds? Are there any flyers announcing activities, such as a softball team or internal training? Try to be alert to any details important to the work environment.

## Meal Etiquette

If your interview includes a meal, remember that you're still being observed—it's just as much a part of the interview process as the discussions about you and your work activities.

Avoid foods that are difficult to eat when talking or foods that are messy (ribs, overstuffed sandwiches). Don't order the most expensive item on the menu—tempting as that may be—but you're not obligated to order the cheapest, either. Decline alcoholic drinks. And be sure to thank your host for the meal.

If you're uncertain about behavior during interview meals, get a book about social etiquette.

## Closing

Before the interview ends, the interviewer will ask for your questions. Add to those you've prepared any that occur to you during the interview process. Not asking questions when invited to do so may cause the interviewer to think you're either not inquisitive or not sufficiently interested in the job.

Save questions about salary, vacation, and benefits for the negotiation process, once you have an offer in hand. If you bring up these topics too early in the interview, you risk giving the impression you're interested in only what you can get from the employer.



If the interviewer breaks the ice with some chitchat, realize they're trying to put you at ease. One tells the story of a recruiting trip to his alma mater the day before a big football game.

The recruiter thought a conversation about the game would be a perfect way to get started with a candidate.

When the candidate arrived and introductions were made, the recruiter asked, "So, what do you think about the big game tomorrow?"

The candidate looked down at the recruiter and said rather sternly, "Sir, we're here to talk about me, not football." The interview went downhill from there.



Meals during the interview process are at the employer's expense.



Without an offer, you have nothing to negotiate.



Ask for business cards from all the individuals you meet.



Your goal is to sell yourself to a prospective employer by demonstrating belief and confidence in your work, sincerity in your purpose, courtesy in your dealings with others, and tact in difficult situations.



The main purpose of the letter is to thank the interviewer, not to sell your qualifications.

It's unlikely that you will be offered a job on the spot, so don't be discouraged if that doesn't happen. At the end of the interview, ask the interviewer about the time frame for making a decision, but don't force the issue. Try to get a contact for follow-up if you haven't heard by the designated time.

Leave the interview the same way you started it: Look the interviewer in the eye, smile, and shake hands firmly. Be sure to let the interviewer know you're enthusiastic about the job and the organization, enjoyed the meeting, and look forward to hearing from them soon.

## Following Up With a Thank-You Letter

Write a short letter (not an email) to each interviewer within 24 hours of your visit to thank them for their time. Show you were paying attention by mentioning something discussed during the interview. Say you were impressed with the organization, people, and position, but don't overdo it. Be enthusiastic about the job—confirm that you can do it and that you want the position, but keep it simple and concise.

If you've decided you are not really interested in the position, send a thank-you letter anyway. You want to leave a good impression—in the future you may want to apply for another job with the same organization, or you may end up working for an employer doing business with this organization.

If you had an information interview where no specific position was discussed, still thank the person for their time and ask them to keep you in mind if a suitable position opens up.

After a screening interview, thank the person for meeting with you to discuss the position, and reiterate your interest.

If your interview was out of town and the organization is covering your expenses, be sure to submit an expense account with your thank-you letter. Include all your receipts.



# Interviewing FAQ

## (Frequently Asked Questions)

This chapter presents sample questions an interviewer might ask and suggested responses—for recent graduates and experienced candidates. They're to increase your confidence, not to memorize; remember, you may be asked a totally different set of questions! We also include ideas for questions *you* might ask.

### For Recent Graduates

If you're a new graduate just entering the workforce, you probably don't have work experience for the interviewer to evaluate. Therefore, they will tend to focus on your performance in school, how open you are to learning, and how well you can translate what you've learned to apply it at work. As always, your goal is to stand out from all the other graduates. This means avoiding ordinary responses such as, "I'm a people person" or "I'll do anything."

*Q. Would you tell me something about yourself?*

A. The interviewer doesn't want to hear a long, rambling answer. You will need their help in narrowing the scope of this broad question so you can give a satisfactory response. Ask, "What area of my background are you most interested in?" so the interviewer can be more specific and help you avoid giving irrelevant information.

*Q. Why did you choose chemistry as a field of study? Why did you select (name of college) to obtain your degree?*

A. These questions are attempts to determine how you reason. Therefore, you should say you went into chemistry because it was your favorite subject, for example—not because all your friends majored in chemistry. Likewise, you want to emphasize that you chose a certain institution because of the quality of the program or the presence of a particular faculty member—not that your parents wanted you to or that your friend was going there. Your responses should emphasize that these decisions involved your careful thought.

*Q. Have you had a chance to work on any group projects?*

A. This question is an invitation to talk about what you learned in school that could be used on the job. You could say you learned about teamwork and interacting with others, or describe a project you did from start to finish and what you assimilated in the process. Concentrate on what you got out of the experience that has prepared you for real-world situations.

*Q. Have your career plans changed since you began your studies?*

A. An interviewer may ask this question to determine how focused you are and whether you're drifting along without a game plan. If your career plans did change, be prepared to provide an acceptable reason, for example, "I really liked being in a lab—hands-on work was my greatest strength, and I never thought about working anywhere but in the lab. Still, I like to read and enjoy being in libraries. In school, I had a great senior seminar that involved library research. Then I talked to someone who's working in chemical information science and decided to give it a try; I've been happy ever since."

*Q. If I were to call your references, how do you think they would describe you?*

A. The interviewer is looking for clues to what kind of person you are. Your answer will reflect how you feel about yourself and what it would be like to work with you. Don't rattle off a list of adjectives; select 1-2 traits, and be ready to back up your answer with concrete examples. Stick with positive characteristics, such as "goal oriented," "enthusiastic," "able to speak and write effectively," "team leader," "goes the extra mile to get things done," or "someone who likes challenges."



Stay away from stale answers such as, "A job in management."

*Q. What are your short-term goals? Long-term goals?*

A. The interviewer wants to see whether you've thought about what you want to do with your life. Your short-term goal might be "To learn everything you can about the organization and the industry, to identify the opportunities." By that time, you should have a better feeling for your long-range goals. It's difficult to form true long-term goals before you have some work experience as a basis. You can be honest about that.



Leave the interviewer wondering what the organization ever did without you.

*Q. We have many people applying for this position. What makes you more qualified than the other applicants?*

A. In one sense, this question seems unfair; the interviewer is asking you to compare yourself with the competition, which you know nothing about. Don't let that tactic intimidate you; instead, consider this an opportunity for you to sell yourself and your skills. Stress your positive personality traits (drive, motivation, communication skills), your desire to learn, and your ambition. Summarize the job description, and match each point with your skills.

*Q. Tell me about your research.*

A. This is not an invitation to launch into a seminar. The interviewer is looking for a short (probably 5 minutes) overview of what you have

done. Hit the highlights of your undergraduate research, thesis work, or summer/co-op experience. Provide sufficient detail so the interviewer can understand your personal contributions and results—where you added value—but don't go into excessive descriptions. Bring a 1–2 page handout to help get your points across quickly and leave with the interviewer for recalling the details.

## For Experienced Candidates

If you are an experienced candidate, you already have a track record for the interviewer to evaluate. You'll be asked in-depth questions about your professional experience and career successes. Give some thought to the questions, and frame your responses in a way that stresses your attributes.

*Q. What did you like (or dislike) about your last job?*

A. The best answer to this question is that you liked everything about it. Never, under any circumstances, criticize your former employer. It's a red flag that you might be a problem employee. Make your answer short and positive, then state your goals for future positions. If you worked for a large company, for example, you might be looking for a job in a smaller company, where you can make a greater contribution. If you worked for a small employer, you might be looking for a job with a large organization, so you can focus on a few major areas.

*Q. What have been some of your more significant contributions or accomplishments in your current job?*

A. If you've thought carefully about your skills and accomplishments, several examples should come to mind. Emphasize that you anticipate making significant contributions to your future employer as well based on your past performance; don't leave the impression that your greatest achievements are behind you.

*Q. What skills would you like to improve or develop?*

A. With this question, the interviewer may be trying to uncover your weaknesses. Avoid admitting something that could damage your candidacy. One approach is to put any issue into a developmental perspective: "I haven't had an opportunity to use that software, but given my proficiency in the others we've discussed, I anticipate no problems in picking it up." Another way to answer the question would be to reemphasize you have all the skills necessary to do the job but that because you believe in continual professional development, you're always trying to improve.

*Q. Where do you relate best—up a level, down, or with your peers?*

A. In answering this question, your goal is to come across as a team player—indicating you interact well with all levels and kinds of people. For example, you:

- Keep your supervisors updated regularly, seek their input, and get them to support you
- Motivate those who work for you and delegate based on their strengths and weaknesses
- Coordinate projects with your peers and work together to meet deadlines.

*Q. Do you prefer to work in teams or alone?*

A. Again, the interviewer wants to determine whether you're a team player. If your résumé highlights positions where you did most of your work on your own, don't say you prefer to work in teams. Instead, confirm you can work independently when necessary, without a lot of direction or reassurance, yet can be part of a team because of the feeling of accomplishment when people pull together on a project.

*Q. What are you looking for in a new job?*

A. Be careful with this question, emphasizing what you can do for the organization. Talk about the contributions you anticipate making to the employer.

*Q. Why were you unemployed?*

A. If there are any gaps in your résumé, be prepared to explain them. Don't complain about the tight job market or how you feel you were a victim of discrimination. Such comments alert the interviewer that you may be a disruptive employee who acts as if your situation is everybody else's fault. Emphasize that you're looking for a place where you can make a long-term contribution, not for just another paycheck. Indicate that you like the organization, the job sounds like what you want to be doing, and you want to be part of the team.

## How to Handle Illegal Questions

Perhaps the questions that stump most candidates—and cause the most stress—are illegal...questions that probe into personal lives and backgrounds. These questions are rarely intentional; it's more likely the interviewer is inexperienced or unfamiliar with the laws governing employment interviews. Rather than assume the worst, remain polite and shift the focus from your personal life to your skills and accomplishments.

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination against any person based on race, sex, age, national origin, or religion. Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 covers employment of persons with disabilities. In addition, many states, such as New York and California, have laws that protect people against discrimination in interviews. What constitutes an illegal question? Here's a guide to what interviewers may or may not ask:



Remember that the goal of the interview is to get a job offer. Later, if you decide this isn't the organization for you, you can always reject the offer.

Acceptable	Unacceptable
Have you worked for this or other companies under a different name?	What is your maiden name?
Are you over 18 years of age?	What is your age? What is your date of birth?
Is there anything we should know about that would make it difficult for you to relocate?	Does your husband/wife need a job for you to be able to relocate?
This job requires work on Saturdays. Is that a problem?	What religion do you practice?
What languages do you read, speak, or write fluently?	What is your native language?
Can you perform this function with or without reasonable accommodation?	Would you need reasonable accommodation in this job?
Do you drink alcohol?	How much alcohol do you drink each week?
How many days were you absent from work last year?	How many days were you sick last year?

As a candidate, you may feel caught between a rock and a hard place when asked an inappropriate question. If you do answer, you could be providing information that results in not getting an offer; if you don't answer, you appear uncooperative; if you challenge the question, you risk appearing argumentative.

If you begin to feel that the line of questioning has become too personal, ask the interviewer to explain the relevance of such questions.



Also see *Identifying Your Values* (Chapter 1) for more question ideas.

## Questions You Might Ask

This opportunity is your invitation to demonstrate you've done your homework on the organization. It also will help you understand the position's responsibilities and clarify your feelings about whether you want the job. Don't ask a question just for the sake of asking one; an astute interviewer may ask why you're interested in that information and what it has to do with whether or not you take the job. Here are some suggestions:

- *How long has the position existed?*
- *How long has the position been open?*
- *Why is the position open now?*
- *What is the time frame for filling the position?*
- *What do you consider the most important daily responsibilities of this job, and why?*
- *Who would be my coworkers?*
- *What are the department's goals over the next few years?*
- *What are the department's strengths?*
- *What are the reporting channels?*
- *Who would be my supervisor? Would I have more than one boss?*
- *What are my potential career paths within the organization?*
- *How much overtime is involved? How much travel is involved?*
- *How frequent are the salary reviews?*
- *Are reviews based on merit and performance?*
- *How does the performance appraisal and reward system work?*
- *Do you have an orientation program for new employees?*
- *Does the organization encourage outside professional development and training? What portion of costs do you cover?*
- *Would there be opportunities for increased responsibility and broader experience?*

# Compensation and the Art of Negotiating

CHAPTER FOUR

## 4

Before you formally accept a job offer, there is the issue of compensation. If you're an entry-level candidate, the salary probably is not negotiable. If you are accepting a high-level position, however, you may have some room to bargain.

## Salary Requirements

You'll want to think about your salary requirements before the interview—considering what you've achieved, what you have to offer, and what you are worth to an employer. Keep in mind that many factors affect how much the organization might offer. If they've had a difficult time finding the right person, for example, chances are the perfect candidate could negotiate a higher salary than originally offered. However, if they know many other qualified candidates are available and willing to take the offered salary, the employer may not want to budge from a lower offer.

The importance of filling the position and how long it's been vacant are other elements—as are the organization's interest in you and your interest in the job. You also have to factor in the potential for personal/professional growth and promotion.

Before beginning any discussion about salary, estimate your minimum monthly financial requirements: rent or mortgage, utilities, car payments, gas, insurance, student loan payments, groceries, credit cards, etc. Subtract those amounts to derive your minimum pay. You do not have to discuss this amount with anyone, but it gives you a place to start. Also, find out what your skills are worth in the marketplace. The ACS Department of Career Services conducts annual salary surveys of members and annual starting salary surveys of new graduates in chemistry/chemical engineering. These surveys present data by highest degree, employer type, employer size, work function, and other demographic data. Once you identify your requirements and market value, you can come up with a figure that would make you happy. Don't be outrageous; keep it within reality.

You should now have 3 amounts in front of you: the minimum you need to earn, an average based on the market, and your ideal figure. Negotiate down if necessary from your ideal, but not below your minimum.

## Talking About Money

Salary questions are ordinarily raised once you're under serious consideration; don't knock yourself out of the running by revealing what amount you have in mind. For the same reason, never indicate your salary requirements on the application; write "open" or "negotiable." If the question is raised early, postpone the



If you undernegotiate your salary, every subsequent raise will come from this lower base, adding up to significant dollars lost over the span of your career.



Salary surveys are available on the ACS website—[www.chemistry.org/careers](http://www.chemistry.org/careers)



Do not be misled by the gross salary figure—you're likely to lose 30%–40% of that total to federal and state taxes. Add to that pretax deductions, such as your contributions to health insurance premiums. Also take into account your monthly living expenses. Figure out what you will have to spend in *after-tax* dollars, because that's what you'll have to live on.



You want to maintain the advantage and keep yourself in a strong negotiating position by getting the interviewer to provide salary information first.

topic until you have more facts and are sure the organization considers you a serious contender. Let the interviewer know you still have some questions about responsibilities of the job and that you'd prefer not to talk about pay until you have a full understanding.

An interviewer who asks about your salary history is looking for the frequency and percent of your raises—indicators of your performance as well as the relative value of their offer. Your goal is to negotiate a salary based on the job you're applying for, not based on your previous salary. You could reply that because this is different from your current job, your existing pay wouldn't be very useful in evaluating your worth for the new position.

Once the interviewer asks, "What are your salary requirements?" you have several ways to respond; here are a few options:

- Itemize what you would be doing daily as well as the scope of your responsibilities, then ask the interviewer what figure they had in mind for someone with your experience or, better still, what salary range has been authorized for the position.
- State that you're certain the organization will make you a fair offer, because you believe your credentials demonstrate you are well qualified, then ask the interviewer about the range.
- Let the interviewer know you expect a salary appropriate to your experience and ability to do the job well, then ask what range the interviewer had in mind.

Your objective, of course, is getting the interviewer to reveal the salary range first. Once you have that information, you can adjust your range so that the minimum overlaps the offered maximum. For example, if the interviewer's range is \$55,000–\$60,000 a year, you can respond with \$58,000–\$62,000. Now you and the interviewer have something to talk about. If you ask for too much, you risk pricing yourself out of the job; if you ask for too little, you don't know how much you are worth. The last thing you want to do is to give a specific dollar figure because then you have no room to negotiate.

## Getting What You're Worth

You like the job, you know you will be successful, you're prepared to give it your best efforts, but the initial offer is lower than you expected—is there some room for negotiation? Most employers operate in one of these modes:

- *Take-it-or-leave-it deal*: They say there's no such thing as negotiation for this job.
- *Set salary range*: They've set a predetermined range for the position, and placement is determined by your experience. The top of the



range is rarely offered to a new hire, but is reached by a series of raises over the years. To increase the salary significantly, the job would have to be upgraded to the next range. (If the employer has underestimated the necessary skills to perform the job well, this could happen.)

- *Flexible salary:* They have flexibility to adjust the salary. This is the best position for bargaining; however, if there are other candidates who are equally qualified, and the employer would be happy with any of them, your power to negotiate is reduced.

Another option is to agree to a performance review after 6 months that would include a salary adjustment. Lump-sum signing bonuses are nice, but that money isn't added to your base salary or figured in for your review. Because future raises will be based on your actual salary, you want to come into the job with as high a salary as you can negotiate.

Once the salary question is settled, you will need to address the benefit package.

## Benefit Packages

Although benefits vary widely across employers, larger organizations usually have more comprehensive packages. Think about what types of benefits you will need. Some organizations have flexible plans that allow you to select the benefits you value most.

Benefits are considered part of total compensation, adding a value of up to 30%–40% to your salary.

Typical benefits include:

- Health (medical, dental, vision, hearing, pharmacy, long-term care)
- Life, disability, and accident coverage
- Profit sharing
- Stock options
- Paid time off (sick leave, vacation, holidays, bereavement, jury duty)
- Transportation benefits (parking, company cars, or subsidies)
- Retirement (company paid, employee paid, or a combination of these)
- Miscellaneous (childcare, tuition reimbursement, flexible hours, telecommuting).



Take a win/win approach to the negotiations; your attitude can affect the outcome.



Review Identifying Your Values (Chapter 1) as you work on your decision.

## Evaluating an Offer

Once you have an offer in hand, you need to evaluate it. You don't have to give an answer on the spot; ask for a reasonable period to think it over. Use the time to talk with your family and others whose advice you value. Be careful not to consult with too many people, though—if you ask 8 or 10 you're likely to get just as many different viewpoints, making it difficult to weigh so much advice along with your own judgment.

Perhaps the best thing to do with your advice is to put it on paper. Draw a line down the middle of a page; label the left side "Pros" (reasons to accept the job) and the other side "Cons" (reasons to reject it). List your reasons in each column, then analyze your results. If you're lucky, one column will be much longer than the other. If not, rank your reasons, giving more decision weight to the higher-priority items.

As you consider the offer, think about the base salary and salary potential, future career prospects, benefits, commuting time, the people you'll be working with and reporting to, job responsibilities, and all the other intangible variables. Questions to ask yourself include:

- *Do I like the work?*
- *Can I be trained in a reasonable time, giving me a realistic chance of success on the job?*
- *Are my responsibilities likely to be challenging?*
- *Is the opportunity for growth in the job compatible with my needs and desires?*
- *Are the organization's location, stability, and reputation in line with my needs?*
- *Is the atmosphere or culture of the organization conducive to enjoying the work?*
- *Can I get along with my new manager and immediate work group?*
- *Are the salary offer and total compensation package the best I can get?*

## Accepting an Offer

You may accept an offer verbally on the condition that you receive it in writing. Make sure the offer covers salary, starting date, benefits, and any other details you have negotiated. If you are currently employed, make it clear you want to give your employer sufficient notice before starting the new job.



Remember, money is only part of the evaluation process; salary cannot substitute for job satisfaction. Nothing is worse than waking up every Monday morning dreading the coming week. On the other hand, gratification from your daily work can be more valuable than the dollars.

If you receive a counter offer when you notify your current employer, resist it—for these reasons:

- The factors that prompted you to look for another position in the first place have not changed.
- If you accept the counter offer, your current employer may doubt your loyalty.
- The prospective employer may conclude you were trying to gain leverage with your current employer and were never a serious candidate, which could damage future opportunities.

Call other employers where you've had interviews and explain you have a firm offer with a certain period for a response. Ask about your status with them. If you are not their first-choice candidate, they will likely tell you; if you have the luxury of choosing offers, redo the Pros and Cons exercise to decide, then negotiate the best terms you can get.



# Staying Marketable

Once you've landed your job, it's still essential to maintain your marketability. A few suggestions follow:

- *Maintain Your Network*—Keep in touch with your former colleagues/professional associates, and continue to cultivate as many contacts as you can. Collect business cards from everyone you meet, at conventions and seminars, for example. Note on the back of the card where you met, for future reference. Touch base periodically to see how things are going. This issue here is not only whom you know but also who knows you.
- *Expand Your Knowledge and Skills Base*—An old saying applies here: "The broader the base, the higher the tower." By all means, develop your expertise, but don't specialize to the extent that you become narrow and jeopardize your future employability. Stay current in your field *and* what's happening in chemistry and science in general. Continue to refine your communication and interpersonal skills, ability to work as part of a team, and business knowledge. Learn another language. And expand by studying a related discipline, such as biology, materials science, or engineering. In some way you'll always want to continue your education.
- *Make Yourself Visible*—To make you and your abilities visible, take every opportunity to publish and present. Participate actively in professional associations such as ACS. Make the effort to communicate with and learn from your peers.
- *Be Flexible*—Expand the responsibilities in your current job by making a lateral move, taking a short-term assignment, participating in a task force, or doing anything that gives you a chance to see opportunities elsewhere in the organization—even if it means relocating.



Job security is best defined as your ability to find another job.



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# ACS Department of Career Services



The American Chemical Society Department of Career Services exists to enhance the economic and professional status of chemical professionals by providing:

- Career assistance
- Contact with employers
- Information about employment data, trends, and issues
- Salary Comparator

Programs and services are offered in 6 categories (see details below):

- Employment services
- Personalized career assistance
- Workshops and presentations
- Workforce analysis
- Local Section Career Program
- Career-related publications

## **Employment Services**

- NECH (National Employment Clearing House) and RECH (Regional Employment Clearing House).
- C&EN (Chemical & Engineering News) classifieds and careers online

## **Personalized Career Assistance**

- Career Consultant Program
- Mock interview sessions
- Résumé reviews

## **Workshops and Presentations**

- Career management
- Effective job searching
- Employment outlook
- Recruiters panel

### **Workforce Analysis**

- Millennium Series
- Annual salary surveys
- Special studies

### **Local Section Career Program**

Contact Karen Dyson, DCS, at 800-227-5558, ext. 4432 or email her at [k\\_dyson@acs.org](mailto:k_dyson@acs.org).

### **Career-Related Publications**

- Academic Professional Guidelines
- Careers for Chemists—A World Outside the Lab
- Career Transitions for Chemists
- The Chemist's Code of Conduct
- Coping With Job Loss
- Early Careers of Chemists
- Employment Guide for Foreign-Born Chemists
- Interviewing Skills for Chemical Professionals
- Lifetimes in Chemistry
- Professional Employment Guidelines
- Resources for Career Management
- Job–Search Strategies for Chemical Professionals
- Résumé Preparation—Tips for Chemical Professionals
- What a BS/BA Chemist Should Consider Before Accepting an Industrial Position
- What a Chemist Should Consider Before Accepting a Position
- What a Chemist Should Consider Before Accepting a Government Position
- What a Chemist Should Consider Before Becoming a Consultant
- What a MS/MA Chemist Should Consider Before Accepting an Industrial Position
- What a PhD Chemist Should Consider Before Accepting an Academic Position



- What a PhD Chemist Should Consider Before Accepting an Industrial Position
- Women Chemists

These services are available to all ACS members—full members, national affiliates, and student affiliates. For more information, contact:

American Chemical Society  
Department of Career Services  
1155 Sixteenth Street, NW  
Washington DC 20036  
800-227-5558 ext. 4432  
<http://chemistry.org/careers>  
[career@acs.org](mailto:career@acs.org)