



Overcoming the Nervous Interview:

I am worried about interviewing. How can I best prepare to deal with my nerves before the interview?

This is a common problem and one that you are wise to identify early. It's normal to get anxious when thinking about interviewing; it is a very important step, perhaps **the most important step** in the admissions process.

Take the word anxiety and give it a new meaning: excitement. Take this excitement and harness it to work in your favor. Your mind will get clear and focused, and you'll articulate better and with more clarity. Welcome this excitement! Excitement can only turn into nervousness and work against you if you haven't done your homework! Preparation is the way to make that adrenalin work for you. For more information about the interview, request the FAQ "The Interview – the Second Qualifying Round" and "Interview Etiquette."

If shyness is your concern, you will need some help. Learn techniques to manage this problem to not only interview well, but to communicate with your future patients. As just a start, here are three recommended resources:

- **Dale Carnegie Courses** are designed to teach sales people how to develop rapport with customers. These are time-honored methods designed to develop people skills and build team relationships. They teach ways to create instant rapport with new acquaintances. They show you how to build business relationships where genuine concern and eagerness to serve works in your favor to produce great results. Contact *Dale Carnegie Training* at www.dalecarnegie.com.
- **Toastmasters International** is an organization with local chapters in your area. This group is designed as a collaborative forum to teach speaking skills. Find more information at www.toastmasters.org
- **"The Medical School Interview—Secrets and a System for Success"** by Jeremiah Fleenor, M.D., MBA is an excellent book how to prepare for the interview. It can be found on Amazon.com. It is especially helpful to understand the anatomy of the interview process. Interview questions are designed to get both actual information and hidden meaning. This book explains the rationale involved in the process.

The "Tell Them" Format:

The most common lament I hear from applicants who didn't interview well is: "I was nervous and so I rambled and didn't answer questions the way I wanted to."

There is a time-honored skill called the “Tell Them” format. It’s a method answering a question in an effective manner. When you are asked a question, you respond with using these three points, 1) Tell them what you are going to tell them, 2) tell them, and 3) then tell them what you told them. This method helps to give your listener an overview of where you are taking them with your answer and what supporting points you will use. Here is an example:

“Do you like spaghetti?”

“Yes, I love spaghetti. It is nutritious, versatile, non-perishable when stored, inexpensive, low fat, and very tasty. Spaghetti is one of my favorite foods.”

It’s all there:

- Tell them what you are going to tell them: “I love spaghetti.”
- Tell them by supporting your argument with facts and experience you have with spaghetti.
- Tell them what you told them with a summation of the facts and make your conclusion.

Nervous, poorly prepared applicants answer the question like this: “Spaghetti! Whoo-hoo....who doesn’t love spaghetti...besides spaghetti, I love all kinds of Italian food....I really like lasagna....I like cheese with my pasta....hey, that reminds me, there is this great Mexican restaurant next to the Italian one that I love to go to....they make the best Nachos”.....etc

The interview panel expects clear and concise answers to their questions. The Tell Them Format is a great technique and can be used to answer any question or even expanded to write a speech or tell a story. Anticipate the interview panel’s questions in advance and write out your answers in the Tell Them Format. This is a great way to be confident and prepared to deliver answers to common questions. It can be used in real time to deal with the expected questions. It’s also an effective way be ready if you are asked to supply information not prompted by interview questions and yet, you still want them to know.

Practice your answers out loud, even using a mirror. Ask someone to do a mock interview with you—someone willing to be objective and honest with their critique.

Taking acting classes or speech classes are also great ways to tackle a shyness problem. This suggestion may sound intimidating to a shy person; but this is exactly what some acting courses are designed to do—to help overcome shyness. Remember, you will eventually need these skills for patient care.

In contrast to shyness, there is another common error made by interviewing applicants: they don't know when to stop talking after they have made their point. The Tell Them Format, after points are made, helps finish up with a concise conclusion.

As you anticipate possible topics and questions for the interview exchange, know what points you would make for a specific question. Advance preparation will allow you to have clear and concise responses ready. Preparation shouldn't produce canned responses, but rather it should produce well thought-out answers, pre-articulated and ready to express. The interviewer only has a limited time to get to know you—make the best use of that time with concise communication.

Preparation is key. Know what you want to convey to an interview panel about why you chose optometry and how you came to this all-important decision. Know specifically why you chose SCCO as your program of choice. Be prepared to answer questions about the profession. Be ready for follow-up questions. Relax, enjoy, and harness your adrenalin work for you, and you'll insure your success in this inherently *exciting* interview process.

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