

How to prepare students for interviews lesson for grades 9-12

Overview

If you're here, it means you're looking for ways to teach your high school students professional skills. This 60-minute lesson plan has everything you need to teach your students interviewing skills so they're ready to land that summer internship or nail their first job interview.

It includes materials, learning objectives and standards, activities and instructions, and student handouts. We also recommend tech tools that you can use to make the learning experience fun and interactive for your students.

Resources

- Interviewing lesson plan (you are here)
- [How to prepare students for interviews powerpoint](#)
- [Let's get prepared for interviews jigsaw activity + handouts](#)
- [Who do you think you are? Elevator pitch activity + handouts](#)
- [How to ace your next interview fishbowl activity + handouts](#)
- Video: [How to answer, "tell me about yourself?"](#)
- Video: [How to give an elevator pitch](#)
- [Written elevator pitch examples](#)
- [Jigsaw instructions](#)
- [Fishbowl instructions](#)
- [Self-assessment handout](#)
- Tech tool recommendations
- Stopwatch/timer

Grade Levels: 9-12

Time: 60 minutes or 1-2 class periods for the full-length lesson—which includes one activity. 25-30 minutes for each activity.

Learning Objectives:

- Students will prepare answers to commonly asked interview questions.
- Students will practice answering commonly asked interview questions.
- Students will write and deliver an elevator pitch.
- Students will gain confidence and feel more comfortable about preparing for future interviews.

Common Core Standards:

English Language Arts College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards For Speaking and Listening
Comprehension and Collaboration

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1b

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1c

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1d

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.3

Lesson plan

Do Now (5-7 minutes)

When students enter the classroom or sign into class online, project the slide that has this scenario. You can also use a collaborative tool like [Padlet](#) and post the question there.

Imagine that you are going to an interview. The hiring manager says, “Tell me about yourself.” How do you answer? Take five minutes to write down what you would say.

Debrief Do Now (5 minutes)

1. Invite students to share out. If you use Padlet, give students the opportunity to read each other’s responses before they share. If you’re teaching in person, you can cold call or ask for volunteers. Online, you can ask students to type in the chat box. As students are sharing, note patterns that come up in their responses.
2. Once several students share, ask the class if this question was hard to answer? Why or why not? Ask them if they felt prepared to answer it. Show students this [video](#) to dig deeper into the debrief if you find it useful and have time.

Framing: Why do we need to learn this? (5 minutes)

It’s likely that many students will find this hard or feel put on the spot. It’s not always easy to talk about ourselves. Where do we begin? What’s important to share? How do we describe ourselves without sounding arrogant? Taking the time to sit down, think, and prepare a thoughtful response to questions like, “why are you a good fit for this job?” and “where do you see yourself in five years?” helps us become more self-aware.

Share with students that they’ll soon have the opportunity to interview for jobs and/or schools. Share that you want to teach them how to prepare and give them the chance to practice in class, so they feel ready and confident when the time comes.

Activity: Let's get prepared for interviews jigsaw (30 minutes)

Resources

- [Activity handout for students](#)
- [Sample job description handout](#)
- [Sample company description handout](#)
- [Common interview questions handout](#)
- [Self-assessment handout](#)

In this activity, students will work together in groups of three to explore a professional scenario. They will practice preparing for an interview and have three resources to work with: a job description, a company description, and a list of common interviewing questions.

The activity is designed as a [jigsaw](#), which is interactive and holds students accountable for contributing to the work equally. At the end of the activity, the class will work together to develop a checklist for interview preparation (there is also a sample checklist in the activity description and the slide deck).

1. Share with students that one of the most important things they need to do for a successful interview is to prepare and that they are going to do an activity where they practice preparation.

Framing tip:

Remind your students of the importance of going into interviews prepared. Reassure them that even though some of these practice exercises might feel awkward at first, everyone is here to help each other out. And that this kind of practice will lead them to greater self-awareness. Remind them that these activities are all about helping their future selves feel confident and ready for job interviews when the time comes.

2. Split students into groups of three.
3. Give each student a scenario. The scenarios will include:
 - A job description.
 - A company description.
 - Common interview questions.

Common interview questions:

- What is your greatest strength?
- What would your teachers say about you?
- Why should we hire you?
- Where do you see yourself in five years?

4. Explain the [jigsaw instructions](#). Each student is responsible for reading and thinking about one of the documents (job description, company description, and interview questions). Note: If you are teaching online, put each group in a different breakout room so they can work together. Students can use a Google Doc to collaborate.
5. Students work independently for five minutes to familiarize themselves with the information on their documents.
6. When five minutes are up, each person summarizes what they read and what it made them think about with the rest of the group.
7. The group works together to come up with answers to the interview questions.
8. Bring the class back together, and pose the question: what do we need to do to prepare for interviews?
9. Work together to draft an interview preparation checklist. Here are some ideas for what the checklist might look like once you've co-created it together

Interview preparation checklist:

- Research the company.
- Read the job description.
- Prepare responses to common interview questions.
- Practice your responses to these questions.
- Plan your outfit.
- Make sure you know how long it will take you to get to the company or, if you are interviewing online, what information and tools you need to log in.

Activity: Who do you think you are? Elevator pitch (30 minutes)

Resources

- [Activity handout for students](#)
- Video: [How to make an elevator pitch](#)
- [10 elevator pitch written examples](#)
- [Self-assessment handout](#)

This activity is a great way to get students thinking, talking, writing, and speaking. Students will learn what an elevator pitch is and write their own. There are a lot of supplementary materials that you can use to show them examples, both video and written. There's also a list of writing and delivery tips. Students will practice delivering their pitch, and use glows and grows to give and get feedback.

1. Circle back to the **Do Now** and ask students to have their responses close by.

2. Explain that an interview is a chance to make a strong first impression, but in order to do that, you have to be prepared. One way to prepare is to write an elevator pitch—or a quick synopsis of your background and experience.

Framing tip:

Remind your students of the importance of going into interviews prepared. Reassure them that even though some of these practice exercises might feel awkward at first, everyone is here to help each other out. And that this kind of practice will lead them to greater self-awareness. Remind them that these activities are all about helping their future selves feel confident and ready for job interviews when the time comes.

3. Tell students that an elevator pitch needs to be short (30-60 seconds).
4. Share this list of elevator pitch writing tips with your students.

Elevator Pitch Writing Tips:

- Keep it brief. Don't tell your whole life story. Give a short recap of who you are and what you do.
 - Be persuasive and positive. Like a strong thesis statement, you want to get the hiring manager's attention. Focus on what you want to do—not what you don't.
 - Mention your goals. Get to the point and say what you're looking for.
 - Know your audience. Research the industry and company and notice the language they use when they talk about their work, and write your elevator pitch using that language.
5. Share an example. You can share a [video](#) or [written examples](#) on the slides.
 6. Students write their elevator pitch.
 7. Students will pair up with another student and give their pitch.
 8. Ask students to give each feedback (a glow and a grow) using the Elevator Pitch Writing Tips as a guide. Students can also use this list of criteria for how to deliver a strong elevator pitch.

Elevator Pitch Delivery Tips:

- Don't speak too fast.
- Avoid filler words "like," "um."
- Deliver your pitch with energy and enthusiasm.
- Avoid a monotone delivery and use expression.
- Make eye contact.

9. There are a lot of different ways you can extend this activity. You can ask students to make a video of themselves and then watch their elevator pitch. They can set a goal for areas they want to keep practicing and improving on. You can give students opportunities to keep practicing their pitch with each other and giving and getting feedback.

Optional Do Now Recap (5 minutes)

In a subsequent class, ask students to answer: Did you have a chance to practice your elevator pitch outside of class? How did it go? What did you learn?

Activity: Answer today, ace your interview tomorrow fishbowl (30 minutes)

Resources

- [Activity handout for students](#)
- [Common interview questions handout](#)
- [Self-assessment handout](#)

This activity gives students an opportunity to practice answering interview questions and observe their peers' answering questions. It's set-up as a fishbowl or inner/outer circle, so students participate and observe. Because an interview involves both verbal and non-verbal communication, it's helpful for students to speak and watch. By the end of the activity, students will have a better understanding of the best practices for answering interview questions and more confidence.

1. Tell your students that one of the most effective ways to prepare for an interview is to practice the questions that hiring managers commonly ask.

Framing tip:

Remind your students of the importance of going into interviews prepared. Reassure them that even though some of these practice exercises might feel awkward at first, everyone is here to help each other out. And that this kind of practice will lead them to greater self-awareness. Remind them that these activities are all about helping their future selves feel confident and ready for job interviews when the time comes.

2. Explain that in this activity, they will have a chance to practice answering questions and observe their classmates answering questions using a [fishbowl](#) or inner/outer circle.
3. Display the slide that has these questions. Here are additional questions to choose from if you want to swap out or modify.
 - What is your greatest strength?

- What would your teachers say about you?
 - Why should we hire you?
 - Where do you see yourself in five years?
4. Divide students into two groups. Determine which group will be in the inner circle (answering questions) and the students who will be in the outer circle (observing) first.
 5. Set a timer for seven minutes and invite students to read the questions and jot down notes (7-10 minutes)
 6. Lower the stakes for students. Explain that the purpose of this activity is to start to figure out some of the more effective ways to answer questions at an interview. In addition, we are often unaware of our body language and tone, so it's helpful to watch and notice what people do when they deliver a strong answer.
 7. Share with students that when they are in the inner circle, they will answer questions, and when they are in the outer circle, they will observe their classmates.
 8. Depending on class size, decide how much time you'll spend. Plan to spend at least 10-15 minutes in the circle before you swap.
 9. If you're teaching online, stay in the Zoom room, and ask students in the outer circle to mute themselves. They can take notes in the chat. If you are teaching in person, set-up your classroom, so the chairs are arranged in two circles, one outer and one inner.
 10. Now is your chance to facilitate the process and observe. Ask questions and call on students. Keep track of time.
 11. Once both groups have been in the inner and outer circle, bring everyone back together for a debrief. Here are some questions to ask:
 - When you were in the outer circle, what did you observe your classmates saying and/or doing when they gave a strong answer?
 - When you were in the inner circle answering questions, how did it feel? What questions were easier to answer than others?
 12. Share with students that you will do this activity again so they can keep practicing, and that the more they practice, the more confident and prepared they will feel.

Cool down (5 minutes)

No matter what activity you did (or if you do all three), give students the opportunity to reflect and set a goal. These self-assessments will also help you figure out what you need to do next to help them meet the learning objectives/grow stronger in interviewing skills. Here are some suggestions:

- You can use a tool like [Mentimeter or Poll Everywhere](#) to do a pulse check. Ask students on a scale of 1-5 (1 not confident, 5 ready for the interview now), how prepared they feel for interviews. This information is also helpful for you, as you can use their responses to think about how much more practice they need and whether or not you want to dig deeper into this skill.
- Create a Google Form that gives students a place to reflect and set a goal. Here are some questions you might include:
 - What do you feel your interviewing strengths are?
 - What do you want to work on before you are interviewed?
 - What do you need more practice with?

Amplify with additional resources

If you want to dig deeper into teaching interviewing skills and give your students more practice, check out [Open P-TECH's self-paced student courses](#).

*Note: You'll need to register for Open P-TECH to access this content.