

The University of Tennessee
College of Architecture and Design

Ten Tips For Interviewing and Finding the Right Job

1. Demonstrate Enthusiasm

- ◆ No one wants to work with someone who seems tentative and disinterested.

2. Your Appearance Is Part of the Presentation

- ◆ Think about your appearance: clothing, accessories, and what you carry.
- ◆ You are entering a professional environment, where clients and employers expect a professional appearance. Architects are typically not as formal as lawyers, but they do not usually dress like students.
- ◆ Clothing: Offices have different standards, but:
 - ◆ A safe bet for men is a shirt and tie.
 - ◆ A safe bet for women is a suit with skirt or pants: Avoid party clothing.
- ◆ Expensive briefcases are not essential, but a backpack is definitely a student icon.
- ◆ Avoid a student appearance (jeans and tee shirt) unless this is definitely the type of office you will want: typically very small, informal, with unusual clients.

3. Your Portfolio Is a Personal Statement of Identity

- ◆ Include a variety of work, so that you show a variety of skills:
 - ◆ SKETCHES are essential.
 - ◆ Process drawings are very appropriate.
 - ◆ Final design projects are important, but should not be the only item.
 - ◆ Model and study model photos are good.
 - ◆ Wall section from integration, materials, or technical courses are very good.
 - ◆ Some non-architecture work (photography, painting, etc.) is acceptable.
 - ◆ At least one computer image will be important, since most firms expect this.
- ◆ End on a strong project.
- ◆ Include a brief description for each project.
- ◆ Indicate what is hand drawn and what is computer drawn.
- ◆ If you fill your portfolio with computer drawings, you will get the job as a cad operator.

4. Pace The Portfolio Review:

Talk About Your Work With Enthusiasm

Highlight Your Strengths

- ◆ If you turn the pages (or click on the computer), do not move too fast, not too slow.
 - ◆ There is no need to rush, nor is there any need to explain everything.
 - ◆ The interviewer will ask questions about what he/she wants to know.
 - ◆ Be sure to concentrate on at least one really good project.
- ◆ If the interviewer turns the pages (or computer), answer questions.
 - ◆ If the interviewer overlooks something important, say something like:
“There is one project I wanted you to see... Something I wanted to point out...”
- ◆ Highlight your strengths:
 - ◆ “I always generate many alternative sketches, these are just a few...”
 - ◆ “I really enjoy building models...”
 - ◆ “My sketches are better than my models...”
 - ◆ “I’m probably more comfortable with the computer...”
 - ◆ “I like to set up quick interior perspectives on the computer...”
 - ◆ “I really spent a great deal of time analyzing the program and discussing...”

5. Don't Apologize

- ◆ Architects, and later, clients, do not want to hear excuses for what is wrong. Do NOT say:
 - ◆ "I wasn't sure what to include..."
 - ◆ "I'm sorry the photograph is out of focus in the corner..."
 - ◆ "This site plan isn't so good..."
 - ◆ "My professor made me..."
 - ◆ "I don't like the entry, it doesn't work...but I didn't have time to work it out..."

6. Ask Perceptive Questions

- ◆ Ask about the firm: What kind of work is going on? How is the firm organized? Etc.
- ◆ Ask about what your responsibilities will be.
- ◆ Ask about how much turnover there has been in the firm.
- ◆ Ask about performance review process; is there a trial period?
- ◆ Ask about opportunity for advancement and increased responsibility.
- ◆ Ask about the IDP structure in the firm.
- ◆ Be ready to answer the question about "what are your pay requirements?"
(Compare notes with classmates and with recent graduates in the region.)
- ◆ After discussing salary/pay, ask about other benefits.
(Insurance package, holidays, membership fees, parking, etc.)

7. Research The Firm on the Web

- ◆ This will really impress a potential employer.

8. Your Resume Must Integrate Format and Content

- ◆ A good resume will be clear, informative, and well composed.
- ◆ A poor resume will be sloppy and filled with mistakes.
- ◆ Sometimes, a poor resume can be over-designed and hard to read.
- ◆ Many architects are increasingly using desktop publishing skills in their resumes.

9. Writing Skills Are Extremely Important: Send a Thank-You Note

- ◆ Send a well-written thank-you letter. A one-hour interview costs the firm about \$150.
- ◆ Architects value writing skills in communicating with clients.
 - ◆ Marketing proposals.
 - ◆ Outlining and describing design concepts.
 - ◆ E-mail about simple questions regarding the design and construction.
- ◆ Architects will not let you communicate with clients if your writing is an embarrassment.

10. Demonstrate Confidence

- ◆ You have had an excellent education and have a great deal to offer.
- ◆ You will have a great deal to learn, but your abilities to think and to ask the right questions are intellectual skills that you will use throughout your career.
- ◆ University of Tennessee graduates are very successful in the profession.
- ◆ Architecture firms value our alumni.
- ◆ Our alumni are performing very well on the licensing exams:
- ◆ The average score of UT alumni places our school in the top 80th percentile of all schools of architecture in the country. This is a tribute to the basic education, but also to the fact that employers are working well with our graduates. Our graduates are able to accept responsibility in the firm.