

# Interview Techniques and Tips Notes

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### Introduction

I did not transition from an educator to instructional design. I did, however, rapidly transition from the military to corporate and eventually instructional design. It was a long road, but it was worth it. I hope to tell you about some of my experiences so that you might make your transition a little easier.

The key to all successful interviews is establishing rapport. If you can make a shared business connection, you are well on your way to further rounds.

In establishing rapport, find a topic that will resonate between you and a potential interviewer. Start to work on ways to gain rapport. But make sure it is genuine. LinkedIn would be a great resource for this as well as knowing other interviewer's backgrounds.

### Language

Speak ID language to people who understand ID language. Speak business language to business leaders. Always strive to speak profitability to corporate businesspeople. Speak in ways that will show how your learning enhancements will boost the bottom line. Your preparation will guide you during these events.

### Preparation

#### Researching the Company

Know your company inside out. Do this by researching the following topics:

**Company website** - For the company website, check out the company values, mission statement, or company culture page. Find some values that resonate with you.

**Company financial health** – don't get involved in a financially troubled company. This could lead to a very toxic environment if hired.

**Required skills** – you should be able to glean the knowledge, skills, abilities, and other requirements from the job posting. My view is if the employer requires graphic design, Photoshop, and video creation/editing, then it just dilutes the instructional design capabilities. But some employers want that and if you have those skills, go for it!

**Social media** – Check out the company's Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter pages, as well as their YouTube channel. If they have a less-than-professional tone, then that is a big red flag.

LinkedIn is also a great resource telling you about the company's promotions, hires, job postings, and related companies. Use it to research your interviewers, including the hiring manager.

**Google and Google News** – Do a search of the company’s name for more research. The News tab will yield more info such as product recalls.

**Glassdoor and other employee sites** – use Glassdoor’s company listing to find common interview questions and company info.

**Marketplace** – it is a good idea to research your company’s competition to find their operating environment in the marketplace. Use similarweb.com by typing the company’s name in first and then click “similar sites.”

**Inside connections** – if you know someone who works at the company, then ask them for insight. Therefore, networking is so important; you might have a connection that can put you in front of the right person.

### Applying for Your Dream Role

You must upskill, both with ID knowledge and technical knowledge. Set weekly goals and start with a plan of action. Your plan of action might look like this:

- Learn ID theories
- Learn ID tools/software
- Build portfolio
- Update resume
- Apply
- Repeat

### Learn ID theories

I would suggest learning the steps of the ADDIE model, systems thinking, Gagne’s Nine Events of Instruction, and adult learning/andragogy to start.

### Learn ID tools/software

Remember that technology just delivers the instructional message, so you must have a foundation in ID theories prior to learning ID technology, such as authoring tools.

Many employers want either Articulate Storyline/Rise or Adobe Captivate. I would suggest viewing videos and other help topics prior to subscribing to a trial version so you know what to do with the authoring tool. The trial version has a limited time so you must be as efficient as possible during that time.

### Build portfolio

Some people say to build portfolio products on what you are passionate about. I recommend you build something that solves a business need. How about a product that explains email best practices or Teams/Zoom best practices? These would make the workforce more efficient, raising

profitability.

Include a document (or a tagline) that explains why you chose your portfolio topic and your design thinking.

You most likely will need a website to house your portfolio. Once created, drive traffic to it by including it on your LinkedIn profile, business cards, and other self-marketing methods.

### **Update resume**

Once you gain more skills, update your resume. I would make this a continuous cycle, even after you land your ID role.

Make sure your LinkedIn profile matches your resume and know your resume inside and out for your interviews.

### **Apply**

Don't apply just to apply. A prospective employer will find that out very quickly in an interview. Apply to what you are passionate about and have the skills to succeed. If you don't have 100 percent of all the skills and knowledge, apply anyway. You never know if your other skills and enthusiasm in the interviews will override the lack of skills you don't have now.

Don't be frustrated either that after submitting your resume, you must basically retype it into the company's application portal. It just seems like that is the way things work right now. I also highly recommend submitting cover letters.

Do not apply to ID jobs until you have ID skills on your resume. Just having classroom experience will most likely not land you an ID position.

### **Interview Types**

**Informational** – You gain these interviews by sending focus pieces (emails) to company executives. In this interview, you are not asking for a job, just information. You preferably would like to interview with a company executive because if you can solve a problem of theirs before the requirements of the job are set by HR, then you will have that executive in your court. You could solve a company problem of effective communication with your proper email procedures portfolio piece for example. This provides an information sharing forum. If the executive is not sold on your idea, then ask them if they could forward your idea to their colleagues.

**Screening** – Usually a short interview to gauge your enthusiasm about the role and how much you know about it. Have your answers to these general questions ahead of time.

**Individual or personal interview** – Be prepared to answer the question types below. Always ask how long the interview will take so you can judge how much detail you will need to provide in your answers.

**Group or panel interview** – Make eye contact and rapport with everyone in the panel when giving your answers, not just the person who asked the question. Try to find out the names of the people making up the panel along with their backgrounds.

**Second Interview** – Usually longer interviews. Ask what the agenda will be and who you will be meeting with, so you know what to expect for that day. Research the backgrounds of your interviewers. Be enthusiastic during all phases!

Actual Interview

Interview Question Types

Question types you might experience:

**Verification** – Questions about your GPA or the duration of an occupation you had. Also, may ask about your responsibilities at a position.

**Opinion** – Examples of these questions are “What would you do in this situation” or “What are some of your strengths/weaknesses.” For the answers to these, I suggest your answer include how you positively impacted the company or organization. For the weakness question, I would explain what you learned from it and how you improved. This shows growth.

**Behavioral** – These questions typically start with “Tell me about a time when you did xyz” or “Give me a specific example of how you did that.” The idea here is that what you did in the past is a prediction of what you will do in the future.

To prepare for these questions, write up your success stories that hopefully you can support with numbers. If your story supports both leadership and communication skills, then you have a multi-role story. So, if the interview asks about your leadership skills, you can role this story to answer that. If on another interview they ask about your communication traits, you have this same story to fall back on.

Use the STAR method to answer these questions:

**Situation** – Situation you faced

**Task** – The task required

**Action** – What action did you take

**Result** – What was the result of your action

Devlin Peck provides great insights on this in his YouTube channel. Look for the “In-Depth Instructional Design Interview Prep with STAR” video.

**Strange** – Questions such as “What animal would you be” and “What color best describes you.” These test your ability to think on your feet and there is no real right or wrong answer. I would like to be a crow by the way because they are so intelligent, and you get to see the world from a top-down view. The downside is that you eat a lot of trash.

You might get others such as “How do you pronounce the Amazon founder’s last name?” I think this is more like playing games but could show your research and preparation skills. It’s “Bayzos” by the way.

**Math** – Questions such as what is 999 divided by 5 or how many ping pong balls fit in a refrigerator? These test your math skills as well as creative ways to derive formulas.

## Overcoming Biases

You might encounter interviewers that want to check if you know ID theory and its authoring tools. That is why it is important to upskill and not apply just to apply. If you are conversant in ID theories and models as well as the tools and have portfolio samples to show, you will do just fine.

## Communicating with Recruiters

Communicate with recruiters just as you would in an actual interview. Be on your toes! If the position they describe is of interest, sound enthusiastic about it! Be prepared to answer general questions such as where you are located, what your current occupation, and “tell me about yourself.” But be prepared to talk about salary expectations as well. The recruiter wants to know if your expectations exceed their client’s budget. I would suggest telling them in your market research that the salary range is from this to that and that you are comfortable with that range. You can negotiate more with the company itself if you find it necessary.

## Communicating with Your Dream Company

Use your knowledge of the company and stories while communicating with your dream company.

**Knowledge of the company** – Go back to your preparation phase and leverage that knowledge to impress the interviewers on why you are a good fit for the company as well as what drives the company, such a community involvement. Discover more info by looking at the company’s Facebook page and Twitter feeds. Go past the landing pages of the company website and look at the info and press pages.

**Stories** – tell a story of your accomplishments and career trajectory that aligns to the business needs of the company you are interviewing with. This is better than an unaligned set of job titles and experiences.

## Red Flags

Interviews should be a two-way conversation. Determine what the company culture is. Don’t wait until the end to ask questions. These are three red flags I encountered.

In a lunch interview, the interviewer said, “I like to keep spies at all my branches so I can know what is going on.” This job ended up being a very toxic environment, where that interviewer played one against the other, and there was a lot of backstabbing.

I was asked once what I thought about having 16 learning objectives for one lesson. The client wanted that, but the company did not. Was there a conflict? What other challenges did they face with this customer?

I was asked in one interview how I would solve a retention problem with training. I asked myself, was retention totally a training problem? What else was going on?

## Follow-Up

### Follow-up and Salary Negotiation

I recommend sending a post-interview thank-you email shortly after your interview, preferably the same day. Keep it brief and mention a positive note about a particular discussion you had and appreciated. Do not appear desperate in your communications. Stay patient and inquire again only after their set elapsed timeline has passed for an update. Please ask the interviewers what the timeline will be for notifications at the end of the interview.

Salary Negotiation – Evaluate what you have to offer the potential employer and your market value (also taking geography into account).

I have two personal examples. The first is when I was offered a salary and I told the interviewer that I needed to speak to my wife first before accepting. People hate silence. Later that evening I got a call saying they had increased my salary for the position.

The second is when I realized I needed to take a pay cut to stay employed. I believed that my former employer overcompensated employees and that was a big reason they could not land government contracts. The company I was interviewing with paid their employees a lower wage but was winning a lot of contracts. I accepted their first offer and have been employed with them for over eight years.

## Resources

Devlin Peck YouTube channel

Purdue University Global website “How to Research a Company for a Job Interview.”

Suggested LinkedIn people to follow/connect: Sarah Cannistra, Devlin Peck, and Cara North. Also use LinkedIn’s search feature by typing “transitioning teachers.” See what comes up and read and connect with groups and individuals that you find useful.