



Interview Prep

How to Become an OCFA Firefighter

ATTITUDE AND EFFORT!

The Process

- Application
- Resume
- EMT
- Biddle
- Interview Packet
 - Copies of Fire-Related Certificates/Classes (FF Academy, Haz Mat, etc)
 - Letters of Recent Recognition
 - Letters of Recommendation (be sure these letters are written specific to the agency you are applying for)

TOPICS OF DISCUSSION

- The Interview Style Behavior Based Interview
- Characteristics to be Evaluated
- Knowledge and Preparation
- Interview Format
- Strategies for Success



THE INTERVIEW STYLE

- Your past is not your future, Can you change?
- What you “have done” not “what you would do”
- Use real stories to prove that you possess the qualifications to be a Firefighter for the OCFA
- Have real life stories that tell about yourself

BEHAVIOR BASED INTERVIEWING

- Focuses on experiences, behaviors, knowledge, skills, and abilities that are related to the eight main criteria.
- You may use work experience, activities, hobbies, volunteerism, school projects, family life... any experience you feel is relevant... to provide examples of your past behavior.

IMPORTANT CHARACTERISTICS –OCFA score sheets

- Questions based off of current Firefighter job description
- You will be evaluated based on 8 main criteria:
 - Initiative in Learning
 - Practical Orientation
 - Role Adaptability
 - Service Orientation
 - Oral Communication
 - Job Motivation
 - Teamwork
 - Respect for Diversity

EVALUATING YOUR QUALIFICATION

- Know yourself and what you have to offer
- Realistically appraise your strengths and weaknesses
- Inventory your assets, talents, interests, experiences and accomplishments
- Emphasize your strong points!

CONTENT SKILLS

- **Content skills**, also known as technical, job specific or vocational skills, include those that relate specifically to your line of work.
 - Express these skills as nouns. For example:
 - “I have a current National EMT Certification.”
 - “I am a certified Human Resources Trainer.”
 - “I am a licensed Vocational Nurse.”
 - “I am a certified Forklift Operator.”

FUNCTIONAL SKILLS

- Skills such as organizing, managing, developing, communicating, etc.
 - These are expressed as verbs. For example:
 - “On my current job, I manage three other employees. I am responsible for opening and closing the store, as well as responding to customer complaints.”
 - “In my current position, I prioritize and coordinate the patient schedule for five different doctors in our surgery center. I am also responsible for communicating this schedule to all employees at the beginning of each week.”

ADAPTIVE SKILLS

- Personal characteristics such as:
- Honest, dependable, trustworthy
- Loyal, hard-working, punctual, patient, etc.
 - Expressed as adjectives. For example:
 - “Because my boss considers me to be responsible and trustworthy, I am the only employee allowed to approve the use of petty cash funds.

GET TO KNOW THE OCFA!

- Who are we really
 - What is a typical day like for a OCFA Firefighter or a Probationary Firefighter?
 - To learn as much as you can about the OCFA, visit at least one OCFA Fire Station.
 - You can find a local OCFA Fire Station by visiting www.OCFA.org (“I WANT TO” tab, Locate Fire Station)
 - Call the business phone and speak with the Captain on duty to determine the best time to visit
 - Ask questions, take notes, look the part!
-
- How big is the OCFA? How many square miles do we cover?
 - What is the population of our service area? Demographics?
 - What sets the OCFA apart from other agencies?
 - Why do you want to work for the OCFA?

ORAL INTERVIEW FORMAT

- Panel of three
 - FAE or FC
- There are 3 basic components of the interview:
 - Opening Statement
 - Body (Questions)
 - Closing Statement

Opening Statement

- You will be given an introductory question in your interview (usually the 1st question)
- This question will lead to your Opening
- Introduce yourself and highlight 4 or 5 of your strongest qualities that relate to the job of FF.
- Be concise and to the point, you will be able to elaborate more as you answer questions in the body of the interview.

BODY OF THE INTERVIEW

- You will be evaluated based on 8 main criteria:
- Initiative in Learning
- Practical Orientation
- Role Adaptability
- Service Orientation
- Oral Communication
- Job Motivation
- Teamwork
- Respect for Diversity

INITIATIVE IN LEARNING

- Initiative defined:
- The power or ability to begin or to follow through energetically with a plan or task; enterprise and determination.
- A beginning or introductory step; an opening move: took the initiative in trying to solve the problem.

- Considerations:
- What learning opportunities have you been involved with, or participated in? What examples can provide for how these experiences have helped you, or benefitted others?

PRACTICAL ORIENTATION

- Considerations:
- We may describe people as practical when they make sensible decisions and deal effectively with problems.
- Practical ideas and methods are likely to be effective or successful in a real situation.

ROLE ADAPTABILITY

- Adaptability defined:
- The ability to change (or be changed) to fit a unique situation or circumstances.
- Synonyms: flexibility, versatility, adjustability

- Consideration:
- Have you ever had to adapt to a new or different role in order to accomplish an important task?

SERVICE ORIENTATION

- Considerations:
- Are you interested in a career that involves helping people, or serving your community?
- Have you ever helped someone in need?
 - Our success and failure as an Organization depends on the SERVICE we provide to the citizens of Orange County.
 - Are you the OCFA Way?

ORAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS

- Are you able to communicate well and resolve conflict when necessary? This skill is demonstrated both in your communication skills throughout the course of the interview and also in your examples.
- Firefighters communicate with the public in emergency and non-emergency settings every day and need to be able to clearly and confidently express themselves.

WHY DO YOU WANT TO BE A FIREFIGHTER?

- Considerations:
- Do you understand the role of the fire service in the community?
- Do you understand what a career as a Firefighter with the OCFA entails?
- What things have you done to prepare for this position?

TEAMWORK

- Considerations:
- Have you worked in a team environment?
- Has there ever been a time where you participated in a project or endeavor that required coordination with other people?
- You will need to demonstrate the ability to work effectively as a member of a team.

RESPECT FOR DIVERSITY

- Considerations:
- How do you define “Diversity”?
- Do you know anybody with different opinions or beliefs than your own?
- Have you had any interaction with people from a different background than your own?
- Diversity in a service organization is what makes the service provided great! We can better understand, communicate with and connect with the community we serve.

BODY OF THE INTERVIEW

BODY OF THE INTERVIEW

Consider using the “STAR” model to structure your answers.

Situation



Identify the **SITUATION** or problem you solved or encountered.

Task



What was the specific **TASK** or targets?
(who, what, when, where, what's required)

Action



Detail your specific **ACTION**.
What did you do? How did you do it?

Results



Explain the **RESULTS**. Quantify.
(savings, accomplishments, recognition, etc.)

ANSWERING QUESTIONS

- Let's practice using the STAR model!
- Sample Question:
 - *“Tell me about a time you helped plan an event”* (TEAMWORK)
 - S – Identity the Situation
 - T – Task you needed to accomplish
 - A – Actions you took to get the job done
 - R – Results

CLOSING STATEMENT

- At the end of the interview, you will be asked if there is anything you would like to add.
- Mention any specific items in your background or personal qualifications you didn't already share
- Clarify earlier points, if necessary
- Briefly sum up what you believe makes you a good candidate for the job of Firefighter for the OCFA

INTERVIEW BASICS

- Make sure your suit fits!
- Look the part! Present a neat, businesslike appearance
- Practice, Practice, Practice!! Practice your answers out loud and in front of others
- Consider video recording yourself!
- Be aware of body language, voice inflection, nervous habits
- Force yourself out of your comfort zone in order to learn how to manage your anxiety before the interview

INTERVIEW BASICS –AT THE INTERVIEW

- Think before responding
- Ask for clarification if you need it
- Be confident and enthusiastic
- Make good eye contact with all panel members
- Smile!

INTERVIEW BASICS –BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

- Survey interview location ahead of time, identify parking, consider traffic... make sure you are at least 15 minutes early!
- If you are unable to attend your interview, call Human Resources as soon as possible at (714) 573-6800
- **READ THE ENTIRE EMAIL ANNOUNCING YOUR SELECTION!!** There are documents that will need to be prepared that you must bring with you!