



**RealCareer™
Employability
Skills Program**

**CHILD CARE CAREER
SCENARIO CARDS**

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Suggested uses for Scenario Cards:

5-minute icebreaker activity

1. Begin your class with a quick 5-minute workplace scenario challenge. Pick one scenario and read it to the class. You could also show it on a document projector.
2. Get students into small groups to discuss the workplace scenario, key questions and various points of view.
3. Have the class come back together and share answers to the key questions.

Journaling activity

1. Choose a Workplace Scenario Card.
2. Use the workplace scenario as a journal-writing prompt and have students answer the key questions in writing.

Pre- and post-assessment (for use with Employability Skills Program)

1. Choose the employability skill you wish to teach. Find the Workplace Scenario Card that matches that skill. Have students answer the key questions in writing.
2. Teach the lesson on the employability skill you have chosen.
3. After teaching the lesson, have students go back to the original Workplace Scenario Card and answer the key questions again using the new skills they have learned.

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Listening

Scenario: You have been working as a toddler teacher for the past two years. You love the kids and your coworkers, but there is also a part of you that is feeling restless and unsettled. You find yourself being short with the children and your coworkers, you aren't motivated to complete lesson plans and are annoyed by little things that never used to bother you. This is all very concerning to you, so you decide that you need to talk to your boss. The owner is the one you usually talk to, but she's gone, so you decide to talk to the Center Director.

As you are explaining things to the Center Director, she is doodling on her tablet and keeps checking the time. She has very little to say and seems to be very distracted. You ask her to share this conversation with the boss and thank her for her time. Two weeks pass and your boss hasn't said anything to you. You are feeling even more frustrated now and decide that the boss must not really care any more than the Center Director seemed to. You begin to look for a different job and give your two-week notice.

Points of view to consider

- You, the employee
- Your coworkers and children in the room with you
- Your Center Director
- Your boss

Key questions

- What non-verbal cues are you, the employee, showing to your coworkers and the children in your care?
- What non-verbal cues did the Center Director show during your meeting with her?
- Did you feel that she listened to you and heard what you were saying?
- How do you, the employee, feel after two weeks of no feedback from your boss?
- Do you think the Center Director talked to her?
- Do you think you could have handled the situation differently based on past experiences with your boss?
- Do a short role-play where the Center Director uses active listening skills and the boss follows up the next day.

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Respect

Scenario: You struggle with asthma and certain smells make it hard to control. A child in your care comes to class in a soiled cloth diaper, and the smell of the diaper and the blanket she brings in causes your asthma to flare. You spoke with the Center Director and she asked your co-teacher to change the child in the mornings. You wonder why she won't ask the parents to change their child before arriving and take time to wash her blanket. You voice your frustration to a coworker, who says she'll also talk to the Center Director.

Later that week, the Center Director sends out an email stating that another concern was brought up about the smell of the child's diapers and blanket. She thought the diaper situation was addressed and is having the blanket washed at the center every week. She spoke with the parents about the asthma issue and will have the center supply disposable diapers for the child, since they can't afford diapers or extra laundromat visits. She instructs staff to use center-provided diapers for this child and to continue to wash her blanket every week. The Center Director asks that no one request that diapers be brought in by them.

Points of view to consider

- You, the teacher with asthma
- The parents and child
- The coworker who spoke up
- The Center Director

Key questions

- How do you and the other teacher feel now that the Center Director has shared this information about the child and family?
- Do you think the Center Director should have shared her thoughts with you sooner?
- Would knowing how she felt have helped you to cope with the smell and asthma flairs in a better way?
- How do you think the parents feel about the request to use disposable diapers provided by the child care center?
- Did the Center Director handle this situation in a respectful manner to everyone involved?

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Responsibility

Scenario: One day, a child in your care breaks his arm. This was traumatic for all involved, but you made it through and the child is doing okay. The Center Director needs a detailed report on the accident. She asks you to take the last 20 minutes of your shift to complete the forms for the insurance company and the State Licensing Department. She will be asking your co-teacher, Gretchen, to fill them out also.

It's been a tiring day and you want to leave early. Gretchen is also filling out the forms and she's a better writer, so you scribble down some general information and put it in the Center Director's box. You get to leave 15 minutes early!

Later that night, you receive a text from the Center Director, asking for specific details of the accident. She needs more information because your forms weren't thorough. You text Gretchen and ask her about the report. She tells you that the Center Director asked her to fill out the actual report documents. She is working on them right now and they are due first thing in the morning. You feel badly because you didn't complete your responsibility and others are needing to pick up your slack.

Points of view to consider

- You, the employee
- Your coworker, Gretchen
- Your Center Director

Key questions (Review the definition of responsibility)

Responsibility – A duty or task that you are required or expected to do; something that you should do because it is morally right, legally required, etc.

- What are you responsible for in this scenario and why?
- What should you have done differently?
- How has this impacted each person involved in this scenario?
- How can you restore trust after you have been irresponsible?

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Patience

Scenario: Every month, there is a mandatory all-employee meeting at the child care center where you work. During these meetings, there is always business to discuss, training information to learn and important information to share. The Center Director does most of the talking, but there is also a lot of laughter, talking, commenting and sharing of personal stories by coworkers. Some of you sit very quietly, while others talk and interrupt constantly. The Center Director doesn't seem to mind this. She laughs along with them and answers their questions. She always asks if there are any other questions or comments, but you get too annoyed with your coworkers to ask. Why do they need to talk so much! Your time is valuable too; if they would just be quiet, the meetings could get done a lot quicker! You mention this to the Center Director, but she says that most of the employees like getting together and enjoy talking with each other and hearing each other's stories. She encourages you to be patient with them and to participate in their conversations.

Points of view to consider

- You, the employee
- Your fellow employees
- Center Director

Key questions

- What signs of impatience do you exhibit during the staff meetings?
- What do you feel is the root cause of your impatience?
- Do you think your coworkers sense how you are feeling during the meetings?
- Do you think your Center Director should make your coworkers be more considerate of your feelings?

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Presentation Skills

Scenario: As a Lead Teacher at a child care center, there are times when you need to talk with parents and present them with information about their child. Sometimes it is as easy as telling them a silly story or that their child had a great day. However, you get nervous when you need to talk to a parent about a concern you have or discuss negative behaviors with them. There is one parent who makes you exceptionally nervous, and you tend to repeat the same thing in different ways in front of them and don't fully complete your thoughts. One day, you try to tell this parent that her child was being more physical than usual. You want to ask if she has noticed him giving forceful hugs and tackling at home, but you just keep repeating that you observed him jumping on you and his friends all day. You get flustered when she asks if this was something that she needed to be concerned about and were relieved when the conversation ended. You later find out that she called the Center Director and asks why you just repeated the same thing over and over. The Center Director explains that you tend to repeat yourself when you are nervous, and that you were only trying to let the parent know what you had observed.

Points of view to consider

- You, the employee
- The parent
- The Center Director

Key questions

- What could you have done to better prepare yourself for presenting the information to the parent?
- What types of presentation skills could you have used during this scenario?
- How could your Center Director help you to improve your presentation skills with parents?
- Is there anything that the parent could do to help you with your presentation skills?

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Using Technology

Scenario: Sarah loves her job as a child care teacher, but she is feeling like she would like a new challenge. She also loves technology and has many ideas on how to improve the company Facebook page. Sarah approaches the Center owner and asks if she can implement some of her ideas. As they are talking, her boss seems very open and excited about the things that Sarah is presenting. Her boss tells her that she needs to see if she can afford a part-time social media person. Sarah leaves the meeting feeling confident and excited. About a week later, Sarah's boss calls her into the office and tells her that she is sorry, but there isn't room in the budget for a new position. Sarah offers to do some updating of the website and Facebook page for free, but the owner says, "No thank you". Sarah is confused and disappointed. Later, as she is talking to her close friend, she mentions this situation. Her friend suggests that maybe Sarah's boss looked at Sarah's personal Facebook page and decided not to have her representing her company in that way. Sarah is ashamed and hopes that this is not the case. She never considered that her personal use of social media could influence future job opportunities.

Points of view to consider

- Sarah
- Sarah's employer
- Parents at the child care center

Key questions

- What are appropriate and inappropriate examples of technology usage?
- As an employer, would you consider looking at social media posts of current and potential employees? Why? What would you be looking for?
- How would you feel about an employer or future employer searching your social media profile?
- How do you think parents would feel about you caring for their child if they were to look at your social media profile?

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Problem-solving

Scenario: You are a new teacher in a 3-year-old classroom and have been training in this new classroom for two weeks.

Today is your first full day as the Lead Teacher and you are excited. You greet each child by name, say hi to the parents and document each arrival time. At breakfast time, the cook delivers french toast and apples to your classroom. As the children eat, another child arrives, but you weren't expecting her until after breakfast. You hurry to get a plate ready and offer it to her as she sits down. The mother is still in the room and says, "She can't have that! It has eggs in it!" You grab the plate and, before thinking about it, you ask, "is she allergic to eggs or something?" The parent is visibly upset and rudely snaps, "Yes! Everyone here knows that!" Before you can respond, the cook enters with different food, the mother storms out the door and the other children start asking to be excused. As you glance at the refrigerator, you see the card that notifies you of all allergies in the classroom. You know that you forgot to check it, but didn't realize french toast contains eggs since you've never made it. You feel frustrated, embarrassed and upset about the whole situation.

Points of view to consider

- You, the teacher
- The parent
- The child
- The cook and/or Center Director

Key questions

- There are many factors at play here. How do you decide which is the most important thing to focus on?
- Who else needs to be involved in the problem-solving process for this situation?
- What role does the Center Director play in this situation?
- How can you respond to the parent the next time you see her? Is there anything you can do to establish her trust in you?
- What can be done to prevent this scenario from happening again?

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Negotiation

Scenario: You just completed your degree in Early Childhood Education. You interviewed for a full-time teacher position at a child care center. The wage was not posted or discussed, but you feel that you deserve at least \$12 per hour. Paid time off and paid holidays would be great too! You have been offered the job, but when you ask about the starting pay and benefits you are told that you will start at \$10.75 per hour. \$12 per hour is what most Lead Teachers make when they are managing a full classroom, lesson planning, conducting observations and assessments, holding parent-teacher conferences, and carrying out all the other day-to-day tasks required of a Lead Teacher. The wage will be looked at once you begin taking on these Lead Teacher responsibilities, which could be in as little as 2 months or as much as a year, depending on your comfort level and desire. Paid holidays and paid time off don't start until a person is employed for one year.

Points of view to consider

- You, the potential employee
- The Owner
- Other employees at the center

Key questions

- Do you accept the offer as is? Why or why not?
- Why do you believe you are worth at least \$12 per hour?
- Why should you start at a higher wage than some of the current employees make?
- Do you believe you should negotiate the starting pay? Why or why not?
- How can you use the five stages of negotiation to reach an agreement?

Five Stages of Negotiation:

Stage 1: Preparation and planning

Stage 2: Definition of ground rules

Stage 3: Clarification and justification

Stage 4: Bargaining and problem solving

Stage 5: Closure and implementation

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Networking

Scenario: Megan will be graduating from college and is searching for her first job in the Early Childhood Education field. She knows that a lot of her classmates already work in child care centers, but she chose to focus on her studies and work in a coffee shop during school. Now there are job postings for many different child care centers, but they all require experience and she doesn't know anything about any of the centers. She's very quiet and finds it hard to talk to people, so she decides to look at day care center Facebook pages and will try to message a few classmates about good centers to work in.

Points of view to consider

- Megan
- Megan's classmates
- Potential employers

Key questions

- Do you think Megan can find a job by searching Facebook profiles?
- Are there other social media platforms that she could use for making meaningful professional connections?
- How could Megan let employers know that she is interested in applying for employment with them?
- How would you define a good place to work?

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Self-Confidence

Scenario: You are attending the monthly staff meeting and everyone is talking, as usual. There is a particularly good training topic that you are all discussing. The Center Director has asked for input on an upcoming center-wide assessment, but most people keep getting off topic. You feel like you have some good thoughts to share because you've been to several trainings on this subject, but you're nervous and shy. You don't want anyone to think that you're trying to score points with the boss, but you are pretty sure that your input could make a difference for most of the classrooms.

Points of view to consider

- You, the employee
- Your coworkers
- Your boss

Key questions

- Should you speak up and share your thoughts? Why or why not?
- What kind of positive self-talk can you use to increase your confidence?
- What could your boss or Center Director do to make the atmosphere more comfortable for sharing ideas?
- What can your coworkers do to make the atmosphere more comfortable for everyone to share ideas?

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Stress Management

Scenario: You are the Center Director of a child care center. The new school year has just started, so staffing patterns are all jumbled due to changing enrollment, college students going back to school and having different availability, and Lead Teachers needing different hours because their kids are in school. The 4K program is starting in a week and you need to be prepared to give the presentation for their orientation tomorrow night. The following night is the annual Family Night, which requires additional staffing and preparations. There is construction taking place in two classrooms, which should have been completed three weeks ago. The construction foreman just told you that the water will be turned off in the classrooms for 30 minutes and one of the rooms just started their diaper-changing time. You are feeling angry, tense and anxious. You keep looking at the attendance numbers so you can figure out what to do with the children who need diapers, but you are having a tough time concentrating. The phone rings and a family wants to come for a tour of the center in 15 minutes! How much more of this can you take?

Points of view to consider

- You, the Center Director
- Your employees
- Your boss
- The potential clients

Key questions

- What signs of stress are you exhibiting?
- What stress management techniques could you use to calm down?
- How do you handle multiple tasks at one time? How do you prioritize and decide what is important?
- How can your employees help? How can your boss help?

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Teamwork

Scenario: You are the Lead Teacher in a 2-year-old classroom at a child care center. Your Center Director has told you that you will be getting a new co-teacher named Amelia. She is experienced and educated, so you are excited to have her in your classroom. The expectation for any new employee is for them to have a week of training in a new classroom. It is the responsibility of the Lead Teacher to train the new employee in the routines and responsibilities expected in the classroom. As the week goes on, you have tried to teach Amelia how to do everything that you do; the way you run your classroom works well, so you would like to have things continue this way. Amelia seems to have other ideas. She keeps talking about how she did things in her other classroom and is repeatedly asking if she can try different things. The children in your care are getting confused and are misbehaving. You're feeling frustrated and irritated; this new teaching team is never going to work if Amelia can't do things the way she is taught! You decide to let her do things her way and see how badly she fails.

Points of view to consider

- You, the Lead Teacher
- Amelia, the new employee
- The Center Director
- The children in your care

Key questions (Review the definition of teamwork)

Teamwork - when two or more people work together cohesively towards a common goal, creating a positive working atmosphere, and supporting each other to combine individual strengths to enhance team performance.

- What can you, the Lead Teacher, do to help Amelia understand that children need consistency?
- How can Amelia demonstrate to her new employer and new co-teacher that she is a capable teacher if she is expected to only do things the way she is shown?
- Review the definition of teamwork and consider how you and Amelia could both contribute to a “positive working atmosphere” in your classroom.
- What could the Center Director do about the obvious tension between these two employees?
- What effect is the lack of teamwork having on the children in the classroom? Are they misbehaving because of the new teacher or the lack of teamwork?

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Communication

Scenario: As a child care provider, it is necessary for you to communicate with parents about their child. You're comfortable talking to most parents, but you are also expected to write notes or send messages to them through the digital communication program your child care center uses. Spelling and grammar really aren't your strengths, but you do what you are expected to do. You have talked with your boss about spell-check being added to the software used, but she says that the creators don't feel that it is necessary. Today, you had to send a note about an accident that a child had on the playground. Later, you noticed that the parent stopped by the office before picking up their child and now you overhear the parent laughing with a coworker about your spelling errors. You wrote "scrapped" instead of "scraped", "knew" instead of "knee" AND you did it more than once! You feel embarrassed and angry.

Points of view to consider

- You, the child care employee
- The parent
- The Center Director
- The coworker

Key questions

- How are the different types of communication involved in this scenario? Verbal, nonverbal, written?
- Knowing that the software does not include spell-check and understanding that spelling and grammar are not your strengths, what could you do to better present yourself through written communication?
- How does the parent feel about this employee?
- Should spelling and grammar be considered a reflection of ability to care for a young child?
- Did the coworker make the situation better or worse?
- Is there a way that this person could have supported you and communicated differently with the parent?
- How do you think the Center Director handled the situation? How should it be dealt with?

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Motivation

Scenario: You've been employed at the same child care center for 3 years. You have worked with the same age group and during the same hours for the entire time. You feel like you need a change, so you've asked your boss for earlier hours. She was open to your request and honored it quickly. You have now been working the earlier shift for 3 weeks and love getting done earlier in the afternoon. You have been on time 3 days out of the 15 that you have been scheduled, but you start earlier than your boss, so there's no way she knows that you've been late. There has been some grumbling from your coworkers about your tardiness, but that's just what they do. Everyone needs to cover for others occasionally. On the next schedule, you notice that your hours have been changed back to your old schedule. When you confront your boss, she tells you that she needs to have people that she can rely on in the early hours and being late 12 out of 15 days does not demonstrate reliability. You acknowledge that you were wrong and apologize. You ask for a second chance to show your boss that she can depend on you.

Points of view to consider

- You, the employee
- Your coworkers
- Your boss

Key questions

- What do you need to do to demonstrate your motivation to be entrusted with an earlier schedule?
- How does your attitude toward tardiness affect your coworkers and the families who rely on you to be in your classroom on time?
- Your boss demonstrated her respect for you by quickly honoring your request. How do you think she feels about your lack of motivation to uphold her trust and respect?
- What intrinsic and extrinsic motivators can you identify to increase your performance?

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Work Ethic

Scenario: For the past two years, Grace and Macy have worked as floaters at a child care center. As a floater, your job includes taking care of children and cleaning the classrooms at the end of the day so that Lead Teachers can leave. They will both be graduating this year and are hoping to be hired as Lead Teachers. Grace has a great attitude, is always on time for work and doesn't mind staying late when asked. Macy often asks to be done early and requests a lot of time off. Macy also takes extra time cleaning classrooms because she's heard that people who are slow cleaners get to work more with the kids and Macy really gets tired of cleaning.

As the semester comes to an end, Grace shares that she has been offered a full-time Lead Teacher position as soon as school is out. When Macy approaches her boss and asks what classroom she'll be taking over, the boss seems surprised.

Her boss says that she didn't expect Macy to be staying, based on her attitude and obvious dislike of her job. Macy thinks she has been working all semester to demonstrate how much she prefers to work with children over cleaning.

How could her boss not see that?

Points of view to consider

- Macy
- Grace
- The employer

Key questions

- What message was Macy sending by her attitude toward her job responsibilities?
- What positive characteristics was Grace exhibiting through her attitude and work ethic?
- What negative characteristics was Macy showing?
- As the boss, how would you feel about offering Grace and Macy a full-time Lead Teacher position?

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Flexibility

Scenario: As the Center Director at a child care center, it is your job to schedule the staff. Once the schedule is created you do not like to make changes, because one change often causes a ripple effect, creating more changes. One of your most reliable Lead Teachers, Megan, has come to you with a scheduling dilemma. Her son is starting school next week and the after-school care that she had lined up fell through. She is asking to be done two hours earlier every day so she can be home for him. You ask if there is any way that she could find alternative care 2 of the 5 days per week. Megan talks to a neighbor and arranges for her son to go to their house two days per week. She is comfortable with this and scheduling her off early the other 3 days will be much easier.

Belinda, a part-time floater who was hired to close 4 nights per week, comes to you and asks to be done before closing 3 nights per week. You remind her that she was hired for the closing shift and that you depend on her to work the hours she was hired for. She says that she knows you are allowing Megan to leave early, so she should be able to as well.

Points of view to consider

- You, the Center Director
- Megan, the teacher
- Belinda, the floater

Key questions

- A floater is typically a college student or an employee without as much experience and/or education as a Lead Teacher. Should a person in this position expect the same flexibility as a Lead Teacher?
- How can you, the Center Director, help Belinda to understand that her position as a closing floater is extremely important to the child care center? Without floaters, the Lead Teachers could not be present for the important teaching parts of the day and the classrooms would not be cleaned each night.
- How will your flexibility with Megan allow her to be a better teacher and parent?
- What could Belinda do to earn more flexibility in her position?

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Interpersonal Skills

Scenario: You were recently promoted to Center Director of a large child care center. You worked toward this goal for several years and feel confident that you have all the necessary skills and knowledge for the job. After about 3 months in the new role, you are feeling very overwhelmed. There are so many responsibilities and expectations that you didn't know about. There are so many employees, your boss, as well as parents and children; everyone needs something all the time! You tend to handle stress with sarcastic humor. Everyone knows you are new to this position, so they can adjust to how you handle things.

Your boss has called a meeting with you. She says that there have been complaints from employees about your negativity, lack of communication and snappy attitude toward them. Some parents have voiced concerns because you have been short with them or have not responded to their calls and emails. She suggests that you take a continuing education course on communication and team building and states that your interpersonal skills are lacking.

Points of view to consider

- You, the Center Director
- Your boss
- Your coworkers
- The parents and children

Key questions

- What could your boss do to help make the transition to your new role easier? Is it her responsibility to do so?
- How should you feel about the suggested continuing education?
- How can you regain the trust and respect of your coworkers? As the Center Director, you need them to trust you and respect you.
- How can you instill trust and respect with the parents?
- What interpersonal skills do you think you need to work on first?

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Time Management

Scenario: You recently took on a new role as the Assistant Director of a child care center. You are excited and want to show the owner and Center Director what you are capable of. One exciting part of this job is getting to do a variety of tasks all over the center. You like to do a lot of different things, so you don't get bored. You also love to talk to people and this job allows plenty of opportunity for it.

You are given a list of tasks that need to be done each week.

By the end of the first few weeks, you are finding it hard to complete all of the tasks. During week four, the Center Director says that she is noticing that you aren't completing your tasks and wants to know why. You tell her you think there are too many tasks for you to accomplish each week. You suggest that they cut down on the number of tasks they are expecting from you. The Center Director seems less than pleased by this response and suggests that you may need to talk less and work more. You feel insulted and concerned. There are more tasks next week and you still need to finish things from the past four weeks. The owner just asked you to meet with her and the Center Director next Monday.

Points of view to consider

- You, the new Assistant Director
- The Center Director
- The owner

Key questions

- What time management techniques could you implement that would help you monitor your time? Would this help you see if “talking less and working more” could be helpful?
- What time management strategies could you utilize to help you prioritize the tasks you are given each week?
- As the Center Director, is there a more effective way that you could help a new Assistant Director learn her role rather than just handing her a list of tasks each week?
- As the owner, was it best to wait for over a month before meeting with a new Assistant Director? Should you cut your losses and replace her, or are there things you can do to help her to be more successful in her new role?

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Interviewing

Scenario: You have just graduated with your degree in Early Childhood Education. You have been working for a small after-school program for two years but would really like to have a full-time teaching position. A friend told you that the child care center where she works is hiring full-time teachers. You apply and have just been called in for an interview. You are nervous. What can you do to prepare for this interview?

Points of view to consider

- You, the potential employee
- The owner or Center Director
- Your friend

Key questions

- What do you do to prepare for the interview?
- What questions can you ask your friend before the interview
- What can you do to create a great first impression?
- What questions will you ask the owner or Center Director?



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