

Interview Guide

PRIOR TO THE INTERVIEW

Step 1: Know the position, company, and industry trends

Being prepared for an interview starts with being aware of the duties and skills required for the position as well as the mission, initiatives, goals, business practices, services/products, recent changes, and culture of the company. Conducting this research provides three benefits:

1. The interviewer will see that you are prepared and knowledgeable
2. You will gain a clearer picture of what you can expect in the position and the company
3. You can identify any questions you would like addressed by the interviewer

Start your research with thoroughly reviewing the job description, the company's website and LinkedIn page, and any other sources that may be available. It is also helpful to be in tune with any industry trends or news. Subscribing to industry specific news sites and podcasts is a great way to stay up-to-date.

Step 2: Prepare for interview questions (see [Mastering Interview Questions on page 3-5](#))

Before creating an outline of responses for common interview questions, conduct a thorough self-assessment of your skills, education, experiences, goals, and values; this will ensure you are prepared for any question. Additionally, always have questions prepared to ask the interviewer (examples on page 5).

Step 3: Preparing materials, transportation, and attire for the interview

The day of the interview, you will need (1) copies of your resume, (2) a notebook and pencil/pen to take notes with, (3) a printout of the questions you would like to ask, (4) an appropriate interview outfit, and (5) reliable transportation. Be sure to prepare these items ahead of time.

You should provide each person you meet the day of the interview with a copy of your resume. If you do not know how many people you will be meeting with, bring at least 10 copies.

Interview attire should be professional, appropriate and conservative:

- Suits and clothing should be well-fitted, tailored, and free of wrinkles or stains
- If wearing a skirt, the skirt must be at least to the knee and stockings should be worn
- Shirts and clothing should not be tight-fitting, sheer, or revealing in any way
- Wear conservative colors and patterns
- Groom hair/facial hair; Do not wear perfume or cologne
- Makeup and jewelry should be kept to a minimum
- Wear closed-toe **dress** shoes that are free of scuffs or dirt; do not wear sneakers or casual shoes
- Do not wear backpacks; professional looking totes and purses can be worn

If you plan to drive yourself, map out the trip and drive to the location for a test run before the interview so that you know exactly where you are going. If you need transportation to the interview, look into options as soon as possible. Find bus routes, arrange a taxi, Uber, Lyft, or ask a friend for a ride and have a backup plan just in case. **Helpful tip- plan to double the travel time to account for unexpected delays.**

Step 4: Mock Interviews

Mock interviews provide an opportunity to practice answering interview questions. Set up a time to meet with Career Services or ask a friend or family member to participate in a mock interview. Treat this interview as you would for the real one; dress professionally come prepared with copies of your resume and bring questions you would like to ask. Use this time to also practice your handshake!

DAY OF THE INTERVIEW

Turn off your cell phone and show up ten minutes early. ***You will be evaluated from the second you walk in building to the second you walk out the building.*** Therefore, when you arrive be friendly and respectful to the front desk staff and sit quietly or review your notes until you are called into the interview.

When meeting the interviewer, make eye contact, introduce yourself, and firmly shake their hand. The interviewer will most likely invite you to take a seat; if not, wait until the interviewer is seated before you sit down. At this point, you can thank them for meeting with you and give them your resume.

During the interview sit upright, remain enthusiastic and engaged, and give it your best! Be sure to articulate your answers well and avoid using slang. Provide the employer with specific examples to show your skills and strengths and tie those experiences back to how it will benefit the company or meet the needs of the position. Once the employer has finished asking questions, bring up some of the questions you compiled ahead of time; being careful not to drill them but rather make it more conversational.

At the end of the interview, politely ask for the interviewer's business card if you do not already have their contact information (you will need this information to send thank you letters following the interview). Politely inquire about the next steps and when you will be notified with any updates. Thank them for their time, offer a firm handshake and mention you look forward to hearing from them.

FOLLOWING THE INTERVIEW

Send a Thank You Letter

Send a thank you letter or email ***within 24 hours*** of the interview. A thank you email/letter should be sent to each person you interviewed with. Start by thanking them for the opportunity to interview for the position. Then tailor the message to highlight a part of the discussion you found interesting. Offer a strong closing statement regarding your interest in the position and mention that you look forward to hearing from them. The note should be no more than 5-6 sentences.

Evaluate the Interview

More likely than not, there were probably some questions that caught you off guard, and that's ok! Every interview is a learning experience and with proper reflection following the interview, you will continue to improve each time. Think about the following points:

- What went well?
- What do I need to improve upon?
- What questions could I had better prepared for?
- Did I convey knowledge of and interest in the position/company?
- Did I take the opportunity to emphasize relevant skills, experiences, and accomplishments?
- Did I talk to much or too little?
- How was my body language? Did I seem nervous?

MASTERING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Evaluating your education, experiences, interests, skills, values, and goals as they relate to the position will help you in answering interview questions. A well-prepared interviewee spends time practicing responses to questions but also sounds genuine and sincere in their answers. It is best to prepare for questions they might ask while allowing yourself freedom to change gears if asked a question outside of what you are prepared to answer. Below are a few common questions and how to best prepare for them:

“Tell me about yourself.”

This is a question that you will inevitably be asked and responding to this question can be trickier than it seems. Viewing your educational and professional history as a roadmap can be very useful when preparing for this question. For example, you can outline your education, what led you to be interested in the field, and how your background combined with your passions led you to apply to the position/company. It is best to keep your answer between 30 seconds and 1 minute long. This question serves as an introduction; you will have a chance to outline your experiences in more detail later in the interview.

“What are your strengths?”

Reflect on your strengths and select ones that will be most useful in the position. State your strength, an example of when you used the strength in the past, and how you plan to use the strength in the position.

“What are your weaknesses?”

When choosing what weaknesses to identify, pick ones that will not severely influence your ability to fulfill the position or work at the company. State your weakness followed by how you address it in order to end your answer on a positive note. Be sure not to use “I am a perfectionist” as your answer; while this may be true, interviewers interpret this answer as avoiding the question.

Conversational Questions

These open-ended questions are intended to help the employer to get to know you. When possible, include relevant skills and examples in your responses.

- So tell me about yourself. (See page 2 for response tips)
- What are your strengths/weaknesses? (See page 2 for response tips)
- What do you know about our organization?
- Why are you interested in our organization?
- Why are you interested in the position?
- What experiences have prepared you for this position?
- Where do you see yourself in five years? What are your short-term/long-term goals?
- What was the most useful criticism you received?
- What motivates you?
- How do you define success?
- How would a friend, coworker, or supervisor describe you?
- Why are you the best person for this position?
- How do you best learn?
- What qualities do you look for in a supervisor?

Field Specific Questions

With a quick Google search, you can easily find common interview questions for the type of job or field you are going into. Don't stress if you don't know the answers to all the questions! Reviewing these questions to help feel more prepared going into an interview and refresh your memory about any skills, knowledge or experiences that you might have forgotten about.

Behavioral-Based Questions

A style of interviewing that employers currently use is behavioral-based interviewing. The interviewer will ask questions that require the respondent to use actual examples of past behaviors. For example: "Tell me about a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty to complete a task or project." Think about past experiences (both job and internship experiences) and be prepared with examples about leadership, conflict management, interpersonal skills, initiative and motivation. A helpful means of preparing yourself to answer these types of questions is using the STAR behavioral interview format:

Situation	Define the situation by explaining the problem or opportunity <ul style="list-style-type: none">Identify who, what, where, when, how and why to provide context for the interviewer to understand
Task	Identify the task <ul style="list-style-type: none">Given the situation, describe what your goal for addressing it
Action	Describe the action you took or initiated <ul style="list-style-type: none">Talk about the <i>skills or qualities</i> you utilized and <i>how you approached</i> the task
Result	Highlight the result achieved and how this example relates to the position or company <ul style="list-style-type: none">Identify the positive result and outcome (quantify when possible)Tie your approach, skills, or outcome back to the position or company

Other examples of behavioral-based questions include:

- Give me a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.
- Describe a time you had to work with someone who was difficult. How did you handle it?
- Give me an example of a time when you set a goal and were able to meet or achieve it.
- Tell me about a time you had to work in a team.
- Describe a time when you set your sights too high (or too low).

Case Questions:

Case questions prompt you with a hypothetical scenario that you have to address. While you have no way of knowing what the scenario may be, understanding how you can apply your skills and expertise will help you to respond. An example of such a question may be "You just finished a counseling session with your 17 year old client and her family is demanding to know what was discussed. How would you respond?"

DEVELOPING QUESTIONS TO ASK THE INTERVIEWER

Interviewing is indeed a two-way street, with both parties assessing if there is a good fit. As such, it is important to develop thoughtful questions to ask the interviewer. This will not only give you a clearer picture of what to expect, but also show the employer that you came prepared and are interested in the position. Below are some questions to consider asking:

Position Specific Questions

- What would the typical day look like?
- Whom will I report to?
- How will success in the position be measured?
- What do you believe would be the most challenging aspect of the position?
- Will there be travel associated with the position?

Interviewer Targeted Questions

- What do you like most about working here?
- What lead you to this company?
- What is one thing you wish you could change about your workday?

Company Specific Questions

- Do you foresee any changes in the future?
- How would you describe the company culture/atmosphere?

Field Specific Questions

- How do you see the recent _____ influencing your goals or initiatives?

Questions to Avoid

Do not ask any questions relating to benefits or salary; these questions will have to wait until you are offered the job. The only exception is if the interviewer asks you what your salary expectations are. In which case, be sure to give a number that is in range with what the going rates are for similar positions. You can find this information by doing a thorough internet search and using websites such as glassdoor.com.