

# INTERVIEW HANDBOOK



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# THE PURPOSE OF AN INTERVIEW

An interview is a mutual exchange of information between an employer and you, as a candidate for a position. The primary objectives are to:

- Supplement resume information
- Show that you understand your strengths and weaknesses and have a sense of direction
- Enable the employer to evaluate your personality and attitudes in terms of the demands of the organization and the position
- Allow you to gain information about the organization and the job that is not available through other sources
- Give you and the employer an opportunity to discuss the desirability of further contact or an offer of employment

The interview is a two-way process. You evaluate the employer while they evaluate you. Since there is no one way of interviewing, you will need to develop your own style. To present yourself well during the interview, you must be prepared. Preparation builds confidence and enables you to give a better presentation of your qualifications.

## INTERVIEW CHECKLIST:

- 5 copies of your resume and your references
- A notebook
- Pen
- Questions for the interviewers
- Positive attitude
- Professionally dressed

## PROFESSIONAL ATTIRE:

- Solid color suit
- Coordinated shirt
- Minimal jewelry/accessories/tie
- Moderate shoes
- Neat hairstyle

## TECHNOLOGY:

- Plan an IT dress rehearsal
- Download necessary software
- Give yourself time to prepare
- Choose your device wisely
- Choose a quiet space and background
- Consider using headphones

## INTERVIEW PREPARATION

### Technology

Make sure your technology is ready to go. You will want to make sure your device can support a virtual interview. While it is preferable to have camera capabilities in case an employer would like to speak with you face to face, you do not necessarily have to have a device with a camera. You should always test out your technology and practice the day before the interview:

- Plan an IT dress rehearsal the day before to avoid last minute surprises.
- Download necessary software and familiarize yourself with how to use virtual platforms such as ZOOM.
- Leave yourself enough time to clarify any troubleshooting questions.
- Choose your device wisely. To avoid shaky camera syndrome, use a desktop, laptop or propped-up tablet rather than a smartphone you will need to hold throughout the conversation.
- Choose your location ahead of time. Choose a quiet space with a backdrop that has minimal distractions.
- Consider using headphones if you cannot attend from a quiet, private location.

### First Impressions

Your success in an interview can depend on your appearance and the interviewer's first impression of you. Research indicates that, on average, an interviewer decides to hire in just 5½ minutes. If the first impression is not positive, it will be difficult to change the interviewer's mind during the rest of the interview.

Be punctual. Arrive 10 minutes early to allow yourself time to collect your thoughts. Take the opportunity to observe the work environment. Keep your eyes and ears open.

Look professional—neat, clean, and well groomed. Select clothing for the type of organization interviewing you. If in doubt, be conservative. It is also advisable to keep fashion accessories to a minimum, to avoid wearing strong scents, and to turn off devices such as cell phones and electronic organizers.

## BEHAVIOR-BASED QUESTIONS

- Describe a time when you dealt with problems or stresses that tested your coping skills and how you handled it.
- Describe a time when you were criticized for your work. How did you react to this feedback?
- Tell me about a time when a project really excited you.
- Tell me about a situation when you had absolutely no idea how to approach a problem and how you eventually solved it.
- Give me an example of a situation when your solution to a problem did not help. What was the outcome?
- Describe the steps you would take if a customer came to you with a problem that was beyond your responsibilities but your supervisor was not available.
- How would you handle a co-worker who you notice being rude to customers?
- Tell me about a time when you had to adapt to people from different cultures and environments.

## S.T.A.R. METHOD TO ANSWERING BEHAVIOR-BASED QUESTIONS

- Use a three-step process:
  - 1) **S**ituation/**T**ask
  - 2) **A**ction
  - 3) **R**esult or outcome.

Greet each person with professionalism and authenticity. When you shake hands, make eye contact and smile. Handshakes should be firm but not too firm; try to match the grip of the interviewer. It is good etiquette to wait to sit down until the interviewer invites you to do so.

## Know the Company/Organization

You should be familiar with the position and the organization so that you can demonstrate your interest in and match for the job. Refer to the research notes you made as you reviewed print and online materials, spoke with people about the position, and prepared your resume and cover letter.

A commonly asked interview question is "What do you know about our company?" If you are unable to answer this question effectively, employers will see this as a sign of lack of planning or interest.

## Research the Employer

Thoroughly research the organization to impress those with whom you meet and discuss your alignment with the company mission/vision and core values.

### Suggested information to research:

- Key people in the organization
- Size of organization
- Location of facilities
- Structure of organization
- Types of clients
- Product line or service
- Potential markets
- Stock and assets information
- Competition
- Training provisions
- Recent news items

### You can find this information in the following places:

- Company website
- Public Relations
- [Glassdoor.com](https://www.glassdoor.com)
- Other employees
- LinkedIn
- Company Brochures

## ANSWERING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The next phase of the interview consists of the interviewer asking you questions to try to determine your fit. Having knowledge of potential questions helps you to prepare points to include in your answers. Think about why a question is asked. What does the employer really want to know?

Behavior-based and situational/hypothetical questions are common because they are considered more valid predictors of on-the-job performance.

## Behavior-Based Questions

Behavior-based interviews elicit information about how you have performed in the past, because past behavior is a good indicator of how you will function in the future. Interviewers develop their questions around the traits and skills they consider necessary for succeeding in a position or organization.

### These questions usually begin with phrases such as:

- Tell me about a time when...
- Describe a situation in which...
- Recall an instance when...
- Give me an example of...

- Always cite a specific event and briefly fill the employer in on the situation/task.
- Have a thorough understanding of the questions.
- Ask for clarification if needed.
- Deal with all questions positively.
- Some questions give you the chance to acknowledge your failures while showing how you have learned from them.
- Don't be afraid to take a few moments to think about the question--it's better than making something up!

### EXAMPLE

“Tell me about a time you had a difficult customer. How did you handle the situation?”

When I was working at XYZ Company as an entry-level sales associate, a customer wanted to return an item purchased over nine months ago due to dissatisfaction

**(Situation/Task).** I informed the customer that the product no longer met the company's return policy and the customer became angry and demanded to speak with a supervisor. I calmly let the customer know that I would be happy to assist them in their request and shared other products as alternative solutions as the customer waited for a supervisor **(Action).** Eventually, the customer calmed down when I provided suitable alternative options and even apologized for being rude to me earlier **(Results).**

Some applicants find the format of these questions difficult to understand and have trouble responding. However, if you have done your research and prepared for the interview, you will have work, academic, and life experiences ready to share. You can prepare for behavior-based accomplishments, abilities, and show how you are a good match for the position. Be certain to tell the truth, get to the point, stay focused, turn negatives into positives, and be consistent with your responses.

### Answering Behavior-Based Questions: STAR Interview Technique

Consider following what the STAR interview response technique. It is a four-step technique for answering questions about past behaviors at work:

- **Situation.** Describe the situation or set the scene. Explain the place you were working for or the task you were given.
- **Task.** Describe the issue or problem you were confronted with.
- **Action.** Describe the action you took to intervene in the situation or solve the problem. This should introduce the key asset you would like to illustrate.
- **Results.** Describe the results your action generated. Explain how you helped solve the problem or improve the company in some way.

Example Question: “Tell me about a time that you used your organizational skills to improve a situation at work.”

Possible response using the **STAR** technique: “When I took on the job as an assistant at Marketing Solutions, I learned there was no easily accessible system for retrieving information on past campaigns. Each of the five consultants had their own computer files. I suggested to the director we set up a shared online filing system with past campaign materials made accessible for all staff. I interviewed each of the staff for input about how to categorize the files and proposed a system. The system was implemented and successful. It is still in place, four years later.”

### COMMON BEHAVIOR-BASED INTERVIEW THEMES:

- Working effectively under pressure
- Handling a difficult situation with a co-worker
- Applying good judgment and logic in solving a problem
- Completing a project on time
- Persuading team members to do things your way
- Writing a report or proposal that was well received
- Anticipating potential problems and developing preventative measures
- Making an important decision with limited facts and information
- Making a quick decision during the absence of a supervisor
- Making an unpopular decision
- Adapting to a difficult situation
- Being accepting and understanding of a different opinion
- Dealing with an upset client or customer
- Delegating a project effectively
- Explaining complex information to a client, colleague, or peer

(Adapted from <https://www.thebalancecareers.com/how-to-answer-behavioral-interview-questions-2059622>, 2019, August 4)

## CLASSIC QUESTIONS

In addition to asking the other types of questions, many employers rely on a series of standard questions, and you should prepare for them:

- Tell me about yourself.
- What are your short-term goals? What about in two and five years? How are you preparing to achieve them?
- What is your vision or mission statement?
- What do you think you will be looking for in the job following this position?
- Why do you feel you will be successful in this work?
- What other types of work are you looking for in addition to this role?
- What supervisory or leadership roles have you had?
- For you, what are some advantages and disadvantages of working in a team environment?
- What did you like/dislike about your last job?
- What motivates you to do a good job?
- What are your strengths/weaknesses?
- What kinds of problems do you handle best?
- How do you reduce stress and try to achieve balance in your life?
- How did you handle a request to do something contrary to your moral code or business ethics?
- What do you know about us?

By analyzing the questions asked of you, you will discover further details about the position. Does the interviewer seem to be emphasizing certain skills, knowledge, personality traits, and attitudes? That insight can help you tailor your answers more easily to the employer's position.

For example, in response to the query "What experience do you have organizing projects?" you determine the qualification being evaluated is organizational skills. Your statement could be, "I have developed excellent organizational skills by working on two major projects. The one I would like to tell you about successfully ended six months ago."

Make statements that are authentic and true to who you are. Ideally, the illustration you choose to confirm your statement should be a project that required similar competency to the typical project the prospective employer wants you to complete. If you do not have a similar experience to relate, try to choose a relevant story from your academic, extracurricular, or volunteer activities.

Choose words that will help the employer visualize you in the experience. Whenever possible, include positive feedback from supervisors, colleagues, professors, and others to reinforce your accomplishment.

The next step is the one that most candidates forget. Tell the interviewer what specific benefits or competitive advantage you can bring to the position because of the experience you have just described. For example, "As part of the team, I would be able to coordinate...." Avoid generic statements such as "All organizations need people with leadership ability."

## Situational/Hypothetical Questions

An interviewer will use situational/hypothetical questions to establish how you would react to and handle real-life situations on the job. For situational/hypothetical questions, candidates must have a good understanding of the job and its requirements.

### ***Here are some examples of this type of question:***

- If you had met your project deadlines and your direct supervisor was unavailable, describe how you would remain busy.
- You are the manager of a small marketing team, and one individual is continually late for work and taking extended breaks. How would you approach the issue?
- During construction, a contractor unexpectedly finds a very large object in one of the trenches where he is about to dig. He requests that you tell him how to proceed. How would you deal with this situation?
- You plan a workshop to teach newcomers to the country how to use word processing software. Unfortunately, only four people have registered, and you are required to have a class of ten. It is five days before the class is scheduled to begin. What do you do?
- You have a conflict with someone who is senior to you and is not your supervisor. Describe how you would handle it.



## HOW TO SHARE YOUR STORY

In an interview, you need at least four to five stories that highlight skills, accomplishments, character traits, or passions. People remember stories, and you want to be memorable. All stories should have a purpose in telling them, either to highlight something you did or to demonstrate you learned something. All stories have a beginning, middle, and an end. Leave one out and it is not a story.

**BEGINNING:** Describe the scene so the interviewer understands the context.

**MIDDLE:** Next, identify what YOU did to make this happen. Be specific and make sure you are teaching the person something positive about you.

**END:** Share the results of what happened. Even if it was not positive, what did you learn from it? Describe what you would do differently next time.

## ANSWERING CLASSIC QUESTIONS- PAWS MODEL

The **PAWS** model is a useful method for answering classic questions such as "**Tell me about yourself.**" The answer should take approximately 90 seconds (the length of a typical attention span).

When an employer asks this question, the employer is looking for those aspects of your life that are relevant to the job, such as how you became interested in the field, related experience, and courses taken.

The "PAWS" acronym stands for Profile, Academic, Work, and Skills. Include all or as many of the four (in any order) to reinforce your qualifications for the job. As with any interview response, limit your answer to a maximum of ninety seconds. Here are some examples of what to discuss in each of the four areas:

**Profile:** Mention how you became interested in this field and perhaps point out any relevant community involvement, extracurricular activities, memberships, and personal interests that further demonstrate your commitment to the field

**Academic:** Talk about your educational background (degrees/diplomas/certifications) and other related training and professional development initiatives/courses that you participated in

**Work:** Highlight paid or unpaid experience related to the job

**Skills:** Refer to specific technical skills that relate to the position or field (programming C++, knowledge of GIS) and relevant transferable skills (time management, problem-solving skills)



## TRICKY SITUATIONS

Awkward situations may occur during an interview, and it is up to you to be prepared to confidently handle whatever happens. To increase your confidence and prepare for an interview, practice interviewing. Check for quality of information in your answers, and the positive, non-verbal reinforcement of your words. By practicing responses out loud, you can hear your answers and assess their effectiveness; however, don't practice so much that you lose your spontaneity and your answers sound rehearsed.

The key to tricky situations is to remember that barriers to employment can be overcome by focusing on the positive. Circumstances that you may find problematic are:

1. Salary
2. Silence
3. Interviewer is an excessive talker
4. Note-taking
5. Being stumped
6. Negative questions
7. Many short-term jobs or gaps in employment history
8. Having never worked or no recent work experience
9. Being over-/under-qualified
10. Low grades
11. Ageism
12. Disclosure of disability
13. Reasons for leaving last job
14. Poor or no references
15. Proprietary information

## SALARY

If applying for short-term work (such as co-op or summer positions), you will likely have only one interview, so it is acceptable to discuss salary. If you need to know the salary, and it has not been discussed, ask about it as your final question.

Employers hiring full-time or contract staff may inquire about salary during a first interview to see if your expectations are compatible with what they are offering and to see how much value you place on your experience, skills, and educational background. Try to defer the subject until you are offered the job, but if the employer insists, be prepared to offer a salary range that you know is realistic based on your research.

Over eighty percent of employers expect you to negotiate salary. Therefore, it is appropriate to do your salary research and develop a negotiation strategy. Make sure to discuss salary negotiation techniques with a career counselor.

## SILENCE

If you answer a question and there is no prompt response or follow-up question, what do you do? Try to remain calm and collected. Silence may not be a negative sign; the employer could be taking time to process and record your answer or could be considering the next question. A few employers create periods of silence during an interview to see how candidates handle stressful and awkward situations.

In response to uncomfortable silence, ask the interviewers if they require any further details regarding your last response, shifting the responsibility to them. Resist the temptation to ramble because you may provide irrelevant information that may hurt your chances of being offered the job.

## NOTE-TAKING

Although the interviewer will likely take notes, generally you should take basic notes. If you have your head down writing everything frantically, the conversation will be uncomfortable and disengaged because of your lack of eye contact and inability to show enthusiasm.

Making brief notes is acceptable when you need to record information you might easily forget, such as a key word, phone number or contact information. If you fear you may not recall other pertinent details, document the information immediately after the interview.

## BEING STUMPED



### BEING STUMPED

Try not to focus on “what you should say.” Focus on the purpose of this question. What do you think they want to know about you, based on the question they asked? They might be purposely testing your ability to solve problems under pressure. Provide a response that demonstrates your process in finding a solution to a problem.

Example: What is your experience with supervising others?

- They might want to know your leadership style, or how you handle conflict between co-workers.

“I haven’t had the opportunity to supervise others yet. However, I led my senior capstone project in developing a business plan... (provide detailed info on how you lead the team).”

“In the past three years working at XYZ Company, my leadership responsibilities have grown from being part of a project team to spearheading a new project...(provide detail info on how you’ve increased your leadership opportunity).”

You may have difficulty communicating your thoughts clearly and concisely, especially when you are not sure how to respond to a question. The key is to remain calm and positive, focus on the question, and continue to remind yourself that you are doing well. You may request clarification if you are not sure what the interviewer is asking or pause and politely ask for a few moments to consider your response; however, don't take too much time because employers want to see that you can think well under pressure.

After a brief pause, if you still cannot respond to the interviewer's question, you may ask to defer your answer to the end of the interview. The risk is that interviews usually follow a certain structure and the question might be missed entirely, leaving the interviewer with an unanswered question. Of course, if you're stumped because you simply do not know the answer, be honest with the interviewer in a positive and professional manner.

When asked a question about a skill that you do not have, demonstrate that you have the transferable skills necessary to succeed in the position. For example, "I have excellent computer skills, but I do not have knowledge of that specific software. However, I did learn Dreamweaver, a similar program, on my own and quickly applied the concepts by independently creating a website for a project that received a grade of 90%."

## NEGATIVE QUESTIONS

Interviewers will often ask negatively phrased questions to assess your perceived weaknesses and strengths. The following are a few examples:

- What are your weaknesses as an employee?
- Recall a time from your work experience when you made a bad decision or mistake. How did you get beyond it?
- Give me an example of a time you did not meet a project deadline. How did you handle the situation?

Be honest and discuss a real work-related weakness or past event that would not negatively impact performance for the job you are applying for. Avoid the popular advice to turn a weakness into a strength (for example, "I'm a perfectionist...") because this kind of response is unconvincing and over used. Be sure to end your "weakness" response on a positive note by indicating what steps you are taking to overcome the weakness.

It is important to be as positive as possible, even when answering a negatively framed question, and to keep your answer short.

## **MANY SHORT-TERM JOBS OR GAPS IN EMPLOYMENT HISTORY**

It is becoming more common to work for shorter periods for a variety of employers, so employers may not place as much emphasis on dates worked as they might have in the past. However, if asked, be prepared to provide reasons that the employer will understand for your frequent job changes or gaps in employment history.



### **GAPS IN EMPLOYMENT EXPLANATIONS**

“While I was in between positions, I volunteered with community fundraisers and the local Food Share to improve my organizational and customer service skills.”

“I utilized this gap in employment to help out my family, which also gave me the chance to improve my competencies in time management and digital technology. I completed several self-guided courses online through LinkedIn Learning.”

Gaps in your employment history can occur for many reasons, some within and some beyond your control: short-term positions, lay-offs, health or personal concerns, raising a family, extensive traveling, completing a degree, unemployment, or time for career planning. In creating a targeted resume, you may also have chosen to omit some experiences.

Although you should truthfully explain in a few words the reasons for your job changes or gaps in employment, focus on what you did during the gaps that was related to the position.

### **HAVING NEVER WORKED OR NO RECENT WORK EXPERIENCE**

Tell the interviewer about any relevant courses, workshops, volunteer or internship experiences, and extracurricular activities. Indicate if you have researched and joined associations or societies in your field to learn or stay knowledgeable about industry trends and connect with other professionals. Convey your interest in the position and indicate that you look forward to a long-term association with the company.

### **BEING UNDER-/OVER-QUALIFIED**

Although you may be concerned about your qualifications, the interviewer liked something about your resume or you would not have been offered an interview. Counter the interviewer's fear that you may not be suitable by emphasizing your positive traits and describing how your experience, education, and skills will help you succeed in the position. Demonstrate to the employer your commitment by describing how the position aligns with your career goals and how your decision to apply for the position was carefully planned.

### **LOW GRADES**

Low grades can stem from a lack of commitment (such as skipping classes or excessive socializing), enrollment in an unsuitable program, or dealing with traumatic personal events. Explain briefly and honestly what happened, and describe what steps you have taken to remedy the situation so that it is no longer an issue: "I know my grades were less than stellar during my third year, but I really improved this term because I attended a series of study skill workshops and they made a huge impact. I now know how to manage my time successfully, and I'm confident that I will perform well in this position."

## IF YOU HAVE POOR OR NO REFERENCES:

If you were unable to obtain a reference from your previous place of employment because you left on bad terms, you must briefly explain why. Read the section on "Reasons for Leaving Last Job."

Quickly follow up your statement to suggest that the interviewer contact other references from your list to obtain a more accurate picture of your previous work experiences. Stress how direct managers, supervisors, teachers, and colleagues enjoyed working with you and can attest to your achievements and skills.

If your references are outdated, you must decide if they are still appropriate to use. If you feel your references can still successfully highlight your skills, follow up with them to request their permission to be contacted by potential employers. You will also want to remind them of your previous accomplishments and provide them with an updated resume. If you do not obtain their permission, you must obtain new references by volunteering, requesting client testimonials, etc.



## DISCLOSURE OF DISABILITY

People with physical, sensory or learning disabilities or chronic medical conditions are advised, like all job seekers, to **focus on abilities and interests when choosing a career.**

It is important to be up front and honest about your situation if your disability may present a performance barrier or if you need to request accommodation or assistive devices. If you determine that your disability does not pose any risk to you or to fellow workers, you may choose to disclose your disability once a job offer is formally presented. It is not necessary to disclose your disability in your resume or cover letter, although you may prefer to do so if the company you are applying to has a specific policy to hire people with disabilities or if you are applying to an agency that works with persons with disabilities.

Employers may not understand what your disability involves and may feel uncomfortable asking; the result is they may perceive your disability to be more of a barrier than it actually is. Determine how you can overcome or compensate for any perceived or real stumbling blocks to employment so that you can explain your situation more clearly and positively. For example, you may say, "Due to a spinal injury, I have no sensation in my legs. I can get around and travel easily in my wheelchair. My injury does not affect how I think, solve problems, or communicate and will not affect my performance on the job." You may also want to ask if the employer has any additional questions.

Some regions offer assistance to help you secure employment. As well as offering job placement programs, programs may provide you with specialized equipment, sign language interpreters, readers, and note takers to help you with job searching and interviewing.

## REASONS FOR LEAVING LAST JOB

An employer may inquire about your reasons for leaving a job to determine if concerns from a previous job might affect the organization. Employers like to gauge your attitude toward work, management, organizational change, and policies or guidelines.

Begin your response with a positive statement regarding your previous place of employment. Honestly and concisely, state your reasons for leaving. If you left on good terms, offer the interviewer letters of reference that outline your relevant achievements. If the conditions under which you left were negative, focus the interviewer's attention on what you accomplished and avoid speaking negatively about past managers, colleagues or the organization. Emphasize that you will be able to handle the present job no matter what may have happened in the past.

## KNOW YOUR RIGHTS IN THE INTERVIEW

There are clear legal rights and guidelines for employment interview questions. An applicant for employment may be asked to divulge only information relevant to the position applied for. By law, an employer must focus on gathering information relevant to deciding if an applicant can perform the functions of a position.

Some employers mistakenly believe that they have a right to ask any question they choose since they are paying the salary. Others are simply awkward in their technique and an unlawful question results. However, the law does not distinguish between the interviewer who is asking questions with the intent to discriminate and the one who is just curious or inept at interviewing.

Some questions are inappropriate and others are illegal. You do not have to answer questions that are illegal. Most regions have laws that prohibit discrimination in employment on the grounds of:

- Race
- Ancestry
- Place of origin
- Ethnic origin
- Citizenship
- Religion
- Gender
- Age
- Record of offenses
- Marital status
- Family status
- Disability
- Medical history

## PROPRIETARY INFORMATION

If asked to provide confidential information about a past employer, it is best to refrain from giving any information that is not publicly available. Revealing information about a past employer, who may or may not be a competitor, could create a breach of confidentiality. Even though you may have worked for this employer some time ago, you are still obligated to keep confidential information private. The interviewer could be testing to see if you divulge any company information because doing so may be an indicator that you will reveal confidential information about the interviewer's company.

If your portfolio includes performance reviews or samples of written work, ensure that no proprietary information is included, such as the names of customers or clients.

## HANDLING ILLEGAL QUESTIONS

What should you do if you are in the middle of an interview and have just been asked what is clearly an illegal question? There is no clear-cut answer. Much depends on you.

In some cases, you may be able to answer the "hidden" question. Think of what information the employer is trying to elicit. For example, "Do you have or plan to have children?" may indicate a concern about an ability to work overtime or to travel. In this example, your answer should convey your willingness to maintain a flexible work schedule. You may elect to say "Why do you ask?" or "Would you explain how this point is connected to the qualifications for this job?" This could cause the employer to reconsider or clarify the question. It may offend some employers, but probably not the majority.

If you feel that you should not answer the question (you shouldn't have to, after all) or that you are not interested in working for the company, you may state, "I don't feel obligated to answer personal questions unrelated to the position" or "That question seems inappropriate for an interview." If you choose this option, you will either enlighten (the employer may not realize it is illegal and will be happy that you pointed it out) or offend (the employer may not consider you for the position).

For more information about illegal interview questions, contact your local, state or federal employment service office.

## VERBAL AND NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Smile when appropriate during the interview. Be enthusiastic and responsive. As you talk about your past and present activities, your passion and energy are communicated through your words and your body language (an excited tone of voice, leaning forward, nodding your head in agreement). Maintaining eye contact is important; failure to do so may imply a lack of confidence or, worse, cause the employer to question your truthfulness.

## QUESTIONS TO ASK THE INTERVIEWER

Your questions should be pertinent to the position and show your enthusiasm and knowledge. By asking intelligent, well-thought-out questions that genuinely matter to you, you will convince the employer that you are serious about the organization and the position. Avoid asking questions mentioned in the interview.

- What do you see as the priorities for someone in this position?
- Please describe a typical day on the job.
- What training programs do you have available for your employees?
- What level of responsibility could I expect in this position?
- What are the company's plans for the future?
- What do you see as the greatest challenges for the organization?
- What are the greatest opportunities for the organization?
- How would you describe your organization's management style, culture or working environment?
- What do you like most about your organization?
- How are employees evaluated and promoted?



Sit comfortably, without slouching. Do not put anything on your lap or in your hands if it will restrict your natural body movement or if you may be tempted to play with it. Keep your clipboard, note pad, briefcase, or portfolio on the floor beside your chair for easy retrieval.

Respond to questions specifically and concisely but give sufficient details to enable the interviewer to evaluate your credentials. Interviewers become frustrated when they have to listen to long, rambling answers. Think before you speak. It is quite acceptable to pause before talking in order to organize your thoughts. Avoid verbal fillers such as "um," "ah," "you know," or regularly repeating the question to provide thinking time.

Use business language. **Avoid slang.** Speak clearly. Watch the interviewer for clues on how the interview is progressing. Is the interviewer's face or body language telling you that your answers are too long, not detailed enough, too boring? If in doubt, ask the interviewer if more or fewer details are needed.

Prepare in advance to talk about any topic that you are concerned or feel uncomfortable about. If there is something that you don't want an interviewer to inquire about, it will likely be raised during the interview. Practice your answer out loud often enough to feel confident. Maintain poise and self-control. Consider a difficult issue as a learning opportunity that has made you a better person.

## TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

### INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

The most common interview format is one interviewer interviewing one candidate, either by phone, via video or in person.

### INTERVIEW WITH TWO OR MORE PEOPLE

It is also common to be interviewed by a panel of people. Although it is important to have good eye contact with the person who asks you a question, also look at the other interviewers frequently to include them in the discussion. Try to remember each person's name and use his or her name during the interview.

### GENERAL/GROUP INTERVIEW OR INFORMATION SESSION

This approach is intended to provide applicants with a large amount of information about the organization and the job. The format is used to save time and ensure that everyone understands the basic facts. This process is usually followed by an individual interview. A well-timed and intelligent question may help the employer remember you positively.



## INTERVIEW RESOURCES

### Mock Interview

- Schedule an appointment with one of our staff members to practice a mock interview and get helpful tips to prepare for your next interview.
- The mock interview will take approximately 15 to 20 minutes. Staff will provide feedback, helpful tips and suggestions.
- It is helpful to share your resume and a copy of the position description (job posting).
- If you are not applying to a specific position, it is recommended that you bring a sample position description to effectively conduct a mock interview.

### Employer Interviews

- There may be times throughout the school year when various local employers will offer mock interviews for students.
- There might be times when employers who are actively recruiting for a position(s) and they will conduct interviews on campus or virtually via ZOOM.

## COMPETITIVE GROUP INTERVIEW

In this interview format, one or more people interview many candidates at the same time. This type of interview is sometimes used when a position involves teamwork and the interviewers want to see how you interact in a group setting, when the company wants to see who emerges as a leader within the group, or when people are being interviewed for several similar roles within the company. It is important to thoughtfully and intelligently contribute, be attentive to the contributions of others, and not to monopolize the conversation.

## TELEPHONE INTERVIEW

Telephone interviews are an effective way to quickly and cost-effectively screen or hire candidates. If there will be more than one interview, the first may be conducted by phone. Seriously considered candidates will be invited to a subsequent on-site interview.

If you are not ready for an interview when called, politely request that the interviewer call back at another, mutually convenient, time. This request will allow you to refresh your memory on the organization and consider what points you want to make.

All of the advice about interview skills still applies. Your attire is your choice, but you may find that dressing professionally increases your confidence and allows you to perform better. Keep your resume, company research, points that you want to highlight, and list of questions handy; in fact, keep these in front of you during the interview for easy reference. Have a pen and paper available to note any comments or questions that may occur to you during the interview.

Choose your words carefully and be succinct. It is also important to vary your voice tone, tempo, and pitch to keep the employer's attention. Ensure that you are in a private setting to eliminate distractions and background noise.

## VIRTUAL INTERVIEWS

In this type of interview, recruiters use video technology such as ZOOM to conduct interviews at a distance. Use the same strategies you would if you were meeting in person; clothing, body language, and dialogue are important. Depending on the sophistication of the technology, you may experience short transmission delays. Make sure to prepare your technology in advance, and address any potential issues.

Make eye contact with the camera, which, to the employer, appears as direct "eye contact." Remember to check the monitor periodically to observe the interviewer's body language and show you are connecting with the interviewer(s).

If speaking on camera makes you nervous, try to practice in front of a video camera or mirror before your interview.

*\*Note-When an organization offers to pay your expenses to travel to the interview, be prudent in submitting costs. Your choice of moderate rather than luxurious accommodation, food, and transportation will reflect your good judgment.*

## AFTER THE INTERVIEW

- Send a Thank You note within 48 hours! Make sure you express your continued interest in the position.
- Follow-up with the employer regarding the position. One of the questions you should always ask at the end of an interview is “What is the next step in the hiring process?” If you were given permission during the interview to follow-up in two weeks, you do not have to worry about contacting them too soon or too late.
- Conduct research on potential salary offerings for the position. If you need help with salary negotiating, please schedule an appointment with a Career Counselor after the interview ASAP.



## SECOND INTERVIEW

When interviewing you for a long-term position, a prospective employer may invite you and other finalists to visit the organization. The visit can take from one hour to an entire day. One purpose is to allow you to meet other staff. The second is to give more people an opportunity to interview you in greater depth to determine whether a good match is developing.

Do not assume that a second interview will lead to a job offer; ensure you actively listen, ask relevant questions, and collect specific information about the company so you can elaborate on how your strengths match the organization's requirements. Use the opportunity to observe the work environment (physical space, relations between employees, work pace) to determine if the setting matches what you are seeking.

## APPROACHES TO INTERVIEWING

### Structured Interview

The goal of this approach is to reduce bias and assist the employer in making an objective decision. Typically, each candidate is asked the same set of questions, responses are recorded, and ratings are assigned to each response.

### Unstructured Interview

In this format of interview, questions are based on the applicant's resume, so different questions will be posed to each applicant. Without structured guidelines, the conversation can be free flowing, thus making this method of interviewing the most prone to bias. Although this type of interview may seem more casual, you must still be well prepared and know the points you want to make. Be careful not to provide information you would not have communicated if the interview was more structured.

### Ending the Interview

When it appears that the interviewer is about to end the interview, you should make sure you have covered certain points before you leave the room. Make sure you understand the process that will occur before a candidate is selected for the job (another interview, meetings with other individuals in the organization, etc.). Ask the interviewer when you can expect to hear about a decision or ask when you should make an inquiry as a follow-up.

Enthusiastically express your interest in the position (unless you are sure that you are not interested) and thank the interviewer for interviewing you. Ask for a business card or ensure that you have the interviewer's name, title, and address so that you can send a thank you letter. Make sure your letter is sent within 48 hours of the interview. In addition to being a standard business courtesy, a thank you letter may tip the scales in your favor if you are in close contention for the job.

## Interview Reflection & Evaluation

If you do not receive a job offer and you felt you did well and/or the organization was a great match for you, consider contacting the interviewer for feedback on your performance. Did the interviewer hire someone more qualified for the position? If so, what additional qualifications might you need to be hired for a similar position? Did you adequately present your qualifications? If not, stay motivated but learn from any feedback and make necessary changes for your next interview.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

### Career Development & Alumni Engagement



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### [CDAE WEBSITE](#)

Meet with a Career Counselor...

[Click here to schedule an appointment](#)

Monday through Friday-9:00 am to 5:00 pm

