



Center for Student Experience & Career Development: Interview Guide

Interviews are an opportunity for you to highlight your skills, abilities, and enthusiasm for the position, and they give you a chance to see if the position is right for you. Interviews also help employers gather information about a candidate and determine if they are the right “fit” for a position and for the company.

TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

Phone/Video Interview—A phone or video interview is often the first step in the interview process. For a phone interview, the employer will call you. For video interviews, the employer will specify which platform to use (Zoom, Google Meet, etc.). First-round phone or video interviews typically last 20–45 minutes. Second-round video interviews can last 1–2+ hours.

Pre-Recorded Video Interview—A recorded interview is sometimes used as the first step in the interview process. The employer will send instructions, a link to the recording platform, and a due date to the candidate. Recorded interviews typically last 20–45 minutes. The questions will be presented on the screen, and then the candidate will be given 1–2 minutes to record their response.

In-Person/On-Site Interview—In-person interviews are usually a second- or third-round interview and typically last 1–2 hours. You may have a one-on-one meeting, meet with a panel, or have multiple rounds of meetings. The employer will often send an itinerary 1–2 days ahead of the interview.

PREPARATION

RESEARCH

- Visit the employer’s website and social media accounts. Learn the mission and values of the company, what the organization does, and any recent news or updates.
- Develop a clear understanding of the position. Read the entire job posting and learn about similar positions through research on Glassdoor (glassdoor.com) or O*Net (onetonline.org).
- Understand the industry of the organization. Follow industry leaders on LinkedIn and conduct industry research on O*Net.

REVIEW

Read over your resume and identify specific activities, experiences, and projects that demonstrate the skills, abilities, or specialized knowledge identified in the position description.

PRACTICE

- Interviewing only improves with practice. Use the job description to anticipate some questions that may be asked and practice your answers.
- Schedule a mock interview with Career Development.

WHAT TO WEAR

- If you are interviewing in an industry that adheres to formal business attire (i.e., finance, management, law), you can wear a suit in a dark color (navy, charcoal, or black) with a pressed shirt or blouse in white or blue and dress shoes.
- If you are interviewing in an industry that follows a business casual dress code, you can wear a suit, dress pants with a collared shirt or blouse, and a jacket, or a conservative dress or skirt with a jacket.

WHAT TO BRING

- Copies of your resume
- List of 3 references—you should ask references if it’s okay to list them prior to your interview
- Note pad and pen, folder, or portfolio
- An ID, in case there is building security

On the day of the interview—Plan your route to the interview and give yourself plenty of time so that you arrive 10–15 minutes early. When you arrive, turn your phone off or set it to airplane mode.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Be prepared with responses that demonstrate self-awareness and some advance preparation but that don’t seem as if they’ve been memorized. Below, find a sample of possible questions you may be asked.

QUESTIONS ABOUT YOU

- Tell us about yourself and why you are a good fit for the position.
- What are your long- and short-term career goals?
- Where do you see yourself in five years? Ten years?
- How does this job fit your career goals?
- How would you describe yourself? How do you think a friend or professor would describe you?
- What are your greatest strengths and weaknesses?

- What motivates you to put forth your best effort?
- Tell us about your leadership experience. What lessons have you learned from being a leader?
- How do you work under pressure?

QUESTIONS ABOUT EXPERIENCE

- Tell us about your work experience relevant to this position.
- How has your college experience prepared you for this particular career?
- What qualities do you feel a successful _____ should have?
- What is the most important thing you learned at a previous job?

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE JOB

- What does it take to be successful in this job?
- Why do you want to work in the _____ industry?
- Why are you interested in our company?
- How can you make an impact in our organization?
- How do your skills relate to our needs?

BEHAVIORAL QUESTIONS

Behavioral questions are designed to assess your work-related skills and abilities by asking how you behaved in the past. Many behavioral questions focus on skills such as leadership, interpersonal skills, communication, prioritizing tasks, and commitment. Read the position description carefully to get an idea of the top qualities the employer may be looking for.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

- Give an example of when you had to make an important decision. How did you go about making your decision?
- Give a recent example of a conflict you had with a coworker or supervisor. How did you resolve the conflict?
- Give an example of a time when you worked on a team. What was the team goal and your individual role on the team?
- Give an example of a time you made a mistake. What happened and what did you do to resolve the issue?
- Tell us about a time when you had to deal with an unhappy customer/client. How did you handle the situation?

STAR TECHNIQUE

The STAR Technique helps you format effective responses to behavioral questions. This framework provides a structure to arrange your thoughts so that you can give a detailed response that fully addresses the question.

Situation: What was the setting you were in? Give the context, using details.

Task: What needed to be done or accomplished?

Action: What steps did you take? Keep the focus on what you did, even when discussing a group project. Talk about how you contributed to the success of the team.

Result: What happened? What did you accomplish? What did you learn?

WHAT TO ASK?

At the end of the interview, you will be asked, “What questions do you have for us?” You should prepare 3–5 questions that demonstrate your preparation and help you learn if the position is a good fit for you.

You may wish to ask about:

- Information gained from your research
- The training process
- The department’s long-term goals and goals for this position
- Timeframe for hiring

Do not ask questions that are answered on the organization’s website. Save questions about salary, benefits, and vacation time for after an offer has been extended.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

- Within 24 hours of your interview, send a brief thank you note or email to the individual(s) who interviewed you. If you had a panel interview, send individual thank you notes to all interviewers.
- Thank the interviewer for their time and highlight or comment on topics discussed in the interview to reinforce your interest in the position. Each note should differ by referring to something specific you discussed in the interview.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- Be aware of body language—your eye contact, handshake, smile, and posture all convey your interest in the position.
- Take a breath and try to speak calmly and slowly, especially if you are nervous.
- Keep it positive—don’t criticize or speak negatively of past employers/managers.
- Be honest. Don’t exaggerate what is on your resume.
- Answer the questions asked. If you feel like you need clarification, ask for it!
- If you are asked a tricky question, feel free to ask for a minute to collect your thoughts.
- Speak confidently!