

INTERVIEWS

Definition: A professional meeting to evaluate the qualifications of a prospective employee.

INTERVIEWING ESSENTIALS

- **Be professional**
Dress appropriately and arrive 10-15 minutes early.
Remember the interview starts the moment you arrive.
Come prepared with extra resumes and questions to ask the employer.
- **Research the company**
Take the time to research the company before your interview. Also, be able to tell the recruiter why you want the particular job or how you fit the job description.
- **Use the star method**
Use specific examples when responding, using Situation/Task, Action, Result.
- **Make eye contact**
Establish eye contact with each member of the interview panel.
- **Be sure to follow-up**
Send a thank-you note to every member of the interview panel within 24 hours.

BEHAVIOR-BASED INTERVIEW

Behavior-based interviewing is the most popular format among HR professionals. This style of interview focuses on past behavior to determine how an applicant will respond to similar situations in the future. Most questions are designed to elicit specific responses and detailed descriptions. Behavior-based interview questions will challenge the applicant to recall in detail what they did and how they felt. By doing this, the interviewer is able to see the big picture – the applicant’s thought process, decision-making abilities, communication skills and the results he or she achieved.

Applicants should answer behavior-based interview questions using the following format: Situation/Task; Action; Result (STAR)

Situation/Task

- Describe the situation you were in or the task you needed to accomplish. (Describe a specific event or situation, not a generalized description of what you have done in the past.)
- Be sure to give enough detail for the interviewer to fully understand the situation/task.

Action

- Keep the focus on you even if you are discussing a group project or effort.
- Describe what your role was – not the efforts of the team.
- Don’t tell what you might do; tell what you did.

Result

- Finish your answer by telling the interviewer what happened, how the event ended and/or what you accomplished.

SUCCESSFUL PHONE INTERVIEWING

- Treat the phone interview with as much preparation as you would an on-site interview.
- Stand and look into a mirror when answering their questions – this will remind you to smile.
- Ensure you are in a private location and will not be interrupted or disturbed.
- Have important documents (resume, portfolio), a note pad and several pens/pencils nearby.
- Dress up – it may be easier for you to think and sound more professional if you are dressed professionally.
- Keep the pace of your speech slow, as rapid speech is magnified over the phone.
- Be sure to enunciate your words very carefully.
- Do not use a cell phone, unless necessary.
- Record the names of each interviewer for a thank-you letter.
- Thank the interviewers. Let them know they can contact you with further questions.
- Make sure your outgoing voicemail message is professional.

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Common interview Q and A: Always finish your answer with the result/outcome.

Tell me about yourself.

- Almost always the first question an interviewer will ask.
- Companies are not looking for family history, hometown or hobbies.
- Keep your response related to the job you are applying for.
- Discuss education, work experience and skills, but do not ramble.

Tell me about a difficult decision you have made.

- Employers are looking for the process you used to make a decision.

Describe a time when you worked as part of a team.

- Draw on examples from past work experiences, class projects or athletics.
- Emphasize your role and how you contributed to the team.

Do you have any questions for me?

- Always have five questions prepared; ask three.
- Ensure they are not questions you can find the answers to on your own.
- Have questions written in a pad-folio notebook, and refer to that during your interview when appropriate.
- Never initiate questions about salary, vacation, break time or benefits during a first/screening interview.

Questions you can ask:

- How would you describe a typical day on the job?
- How will this position be evaluated?
- What do you enjoy about working at XYZ company? (Gives insight into company culture)
- When are you planning to make your decision? (Always ask.)

ADDITIONAL SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- Give me an example of a time when you motivated others.
- Tell me about a time when you were forced to make an unpopular decision.
- When working within a group, what role do you typically take?
- Why do you want to work here?
- Assuming all candidates are similar on paper, why should we hire you?
- What experience do you have working with a diverse group of people?
- 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 when you had to use your presentation skills to influence someone's opinion.
- Tell me about a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty to get a job done.
- Tell me about a time when you had too many things to do and you were required to prioritize your tasks.
- Give me an example of a time when you had to make a split-second decision.
- Tell me about a difficult decision you've made in the last year.
- Give me an example of a time when you tried to accomplish something and failed.
- Give me an example of when you showed initiative and took the lead.

THANK-YOU ETIQUETTE

A thank-you note will remind the interviewer how interested you are in the position and show appreciation for the interview. Here are some tips:

- Send a thank-you note to every person in your interview.
- Send as soon as possible, preferably within 24 hours.
- Note should be professional and brief.
- Thank-you emails are preferred by employers. An email is more timely and can be forwarded on as needed.
- Handwritten on a business professional note card (similar to graduate thank-you card) is also an option.

EMPLOYER EXPECTATIONS OF YOUR JOB SEARCH

- Present yourself well in writing on resumes, cover letters and thank-you notes/letters.
- Articulate your career goals.
- Define your motivation.
- Display maturity – good manners.
- Take seriously your transition from student to professional.
- Know your uniqueness, strengths and areas for improvement.
- Understand what talents you have to offer an employer.
- Present yourself well verbally.
- Project a professional image.

INTERVIEW PREP WORKSHEET

STAR INTERVIEWING Using a specific example or response is the best way to answer a behavioral-style interview question. This approach allows you to demonstrate a necessary skill by providing examples of a time you successfully used the skill in an academic, work or related setting.

Choose a question from the list of examples, or write your own and use the space below to plan your answer.

QUESTION #1

SITUATION/TASK

ACTION

RESULT

QUESTION #2

SITUATION/TASK

ACTION

RESULT

PRACTICE YOUR ANSWERS OUT LOUD

*Did you successfully paint a mental picture for the listener/employer? Are there enough details to answer the question, but not so many that they are lost? Did you focus on the action that you took to help the employer better understand your skills, knowledge and behaviors?

RESEARCH THE COMPANY OR ORGANIZATION AND LIST 3-5 IMPORTANT THINGS YOU LEARNED

TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF AND WHY YOU ARE INTERESTED IN THIS POSITION?

PRACTICE THIS ANSWER OUT LOUD AT LEAST 3 TIMES.

USING THE SPACE BELOW, DEVELOP 3-5 QUESTIONS TO ASK THE EMPLOYER AT THE END OF THE INTERVIEW.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

PROFESSIONALISM – ATTIRE
WHAT DO YOU PLAN TO WEAR?