

Interviewing Guide

Your resume gets you in the door, your interview gets you the job. It's natural to feel nervous for a job interview. Preparing early will help you feel confident and (somewhat) relaxed as you walk in the door.

Step 1: RESEARCH

How well you have researched the company demonstrates your interest and enthusiasm and is a critical factor in the interview process. Make certain you understand what the company does and how your job would impact the company. Look at the job description again. Analyze the position, what are the key words and phrases that stand out to you? Be prepared to talk about those important aspects of the job and how YOU can make a positive impact in those areas.

What to research:

- Recent press releases and news articles
- History/growth of employer and industry
- Company mission/vision
- Annual sales compared to industry trends
- Company products, services, clients
- Organizational structure
- Location(s)
- Employers' major competitors
- Use of technology
- Annual reports

Where to research:

- Company organization website
- Internet search engines
- Handshake
- Professors
- Your personal network
- Newspaper articles/industry journals
- LinkedIn
- Twitter
- Facebook

Step 2: PREPARE

It is essential to understand and articulate what skills and qualifications you have to offer, as they relate to the position and organization.

- Know your skills and talents
- Understand areas of improvement
- Create your "Elevator Pitch"
- Know your resume and the job you are applying for inside and out
- Create a list of 5-10 "selling points" related to the position and the organization
- Understand and practice using the **S.T.A.R** method
- Dress for success by planning your interview attire
- Map out your interview destination, know where you're going, and how long it will take to get there
- Items to bring to an interview: parking instructions, pad folio, name(s) and title(s) of interviewer(s), extra copies of your resume, references, portfolio (if applicable), a writing utensil, copy of position description, business cards, and bottle of water
- Prepare questions to ask the employer to show your interest in the position or organization

Step 3: PRACTICE

- Call the Office of Career and Professional Development at 920-403-3040 or use Handshake to make an appointment for a mock interview
- Rehearse your Elevator Pitch
- Practice in front of a mirror or with a friend
- Practice your handshake with a friend
- Practice answering Behavioral-Based Questions

Example Interview Questions

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS/SKILLS/STRENGTHS

- Tell me about yourself.
- How would you be able to contribute to our company/organization?
- Name 3 strengths that you have and why you consider these strengths.
- What would one of your friends/professors/supervisors say about you?
- Why should we hire you instead of several other equally qualified candidates?

WEAKNESSES/NEGATIVITY

- What would you say is an area in which you need improvement?
- What has been one of your biggest challenges you've had to overcome?
- How do you handle negative emotions?

INITIATIVE/TEAMWORK/LEADERSHIP

- What motivates you?
- Tell me about a group in which you are/were involved. How did you contribute to make this group achieve a goal?

PROBLEM-SOLVING/CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

- How do you handle stress?
- If you had a problem or situation at work, who would you talk to in order to find a resolution?
- Have you ever been burned out? When? What did you do about it?
- What's the worst problem you've ever had to deal with at work or school?

EDUCATION RELATED

- What led you to this major and what courses did you like the most/least?
- How has your education prepared you for this job?
- How will you prepare for the transition from college to the workplace?
- What have you gained from your extracurricular activities?
- If you couldn't be in your current major, what major would you be in?
- If you couldn't go to college, what would you be doing right now?

WORK RELATED

- What was your relationship like with your last supervisor?
- How has your experience prepared you for a job with our organization?
- What did you enjoy most about your last job? Least?
- How would you be an asset to this company and/or position?
- What characteristics give you a competitive edge over other students/candidates in the job market?
- Why are you interested in this position?
- If you were hiring for this position, what would you look for in a candidate?
- How would your co-workers describe you?

GOALS/DIRECTION/OTHER

- What are your short-term and long-term goals?
- Where do you see yourself in five years?
- How do you see this position fitting into your career goals?
- What do you believe to be the major trends in your career field at this time?

ORGANIZATION

- Tell me what you know about our organization.
- In what ways do you think you can contribute to our organization?
- Describe what you believe to be an ideal work environment.
- How will you know that you are contributing to our success?

Situational/Behavioral Questions

Answering situational or behavioral questions requires a bit more practice. An employer is seeking insight into your past behavior in situations to predict future outcomes. Many times, a situational or behavioral question will begin like this, "Tell me about a time/situation when..." or "Give me an example of a goal/experience...". The S.T.A.R. Method of answering questions will focus your answers and provide information employers seek.

S.T.A.R Method

Situation: Think of a *specific* situation in which you were involved (try to keep it as specific yet brief as possible).

Task: Identify the tasks at hand which help to define the situation (what did you have to think about, what were the issues you were facing at the time?).

Action: Specify what identifiable actions you took in the situation to complete the tasks and achieve your results.

Results: What positive results or actions followed due to your actions, words, or behaviors?

Examples of S.T.A.R. Questions and Answers

ABILITY TO WORK WELL UNDER PRESSURE

- **Question**: Tell me a time where you worked effectively under pressure? What was the situation? How did you deal with it?
- **Answer**: In my freshman year of college I had two big projects and two papers that were due the same week. As soon as I received the instructions for the projects and papers I prioritized the items that needed to be done and began working on them immediately. It really helped to reduce my workload when that week of the semester came around.

ABILITY TO PLAN TASKS

- **Question**: Give me an example where you had to meet a tight deadline for school or work.
- **Answer**: In school I had a big project I had to complete for one of my classes. I made sure I worked on the assignment everyday even if it was something small. By doing this I was able to lessen my work load and complete the project on time.

ABILITY TO SET PRIORITIES

- **Question**: What would you do if you were completely overwhelmed with work and knew you couldn't meet the deadline?
- **Answer**: If I saw that I wouldn't be able to meet the deadline, I would immediately speak to my boss, outline the problems, and see how we might work together to minimize the delay.

Examples of Behavioral-Based Questions

- Tell me about a time you assumed a leadership role.
- Tell me about a time you had a number of assignments due, and How you completed them on time.
- Tell me about a time you effectively resolved a conflict with a fellow student, co-worker, or a supervisor.
- Tell me about a mistake you made and how you handled it.
- Tell me about a professor or supervisor that you didn't like and why.
- Describe a situation where your reliability benefited the team.
- Tell me about a time when you put your own work aside to help someone else.
- Tell me about a time when you had to make an unpopular decision based on your beliefs and values.
- What was the most difficult communication challenge you have faced? How did you overcome it?

- Give an example of an occasion when you used logic to solve a problem.
- Give an example of a goal you reached and tell me how you achieved it.
- When have you gone above and beyond the call of duty?
- What do you do when your schedule is interrupted? Give an example of how you handle it.
- Have you had to convince a team to work on a project they were not thrilled about? How did you do it?
- Have you handled a difficult situation with a coworker? How?
- Tell me about how you worked effectively under pressure.
- Describe a time when you saw a problem and took the initiative to correct it rather than waiting for someone else to do it.
- Describe a difficult team environment you have been a part of. What did you learn from that experience?
- Tell me about a past job in which you demonstrated a satisfactory customer experience.
- In your past experiences, how have you let others know that you listened and understood their needs?

STEP 4: BEFORE & DURING THE INTERVIEW

- Be 10 minutes early
- Give a firm handshake
- Show enthusiasm and confidence
- Keep a positive attitude about former employers, supervisors, and co-workers
- Remember to use the STAR method to answer questions
- Be aware of your body language
- Avoid slang, profanity, lying, and filler words such as “um”, “like”, “ah”, “you know”
- Do not inquire about salary, bonuses, or benefits in your first interview
- **Remember to ask questions** to show your interest! This tells the employer you are engaged in the interview process and are legitimately interested in the position, company, and culture. Here are some examples (try to ask 3-5 questions as appropriate):

Example Questions to the Employer

- What are the organization’s plans for future growth?
 - Why do you enjoy working for the organization?
 - How is the job performance evaluated?
 - How would you describe the culture of your organization?
 - Does your organization encourage employees to pursue additional education?
 - What other positions/departments will I interact with the most?
 - How did this position open up?
 - What are some of the skills and abilities necessary for someone to succeed in this job?
 - What is the company’s policy on providing seminars, workshops, and training so employees can keep up their skills or acquire new ones?
 - What do you enjoy most about being in your current role?
 - How does the organization celebrate success?
 - What kind of training is given to new employees?
 - What is one of the biggest challenges someone tends to face when taking on this type of role?
 - What are the top 3 values of the company? What characteristics do employees who share these values have?
 - What would my primary goals be within the first 30, 60, or 90 days of employment?
 - What makes you stay here?
 - What was your biggest challenge when you started here?
 - What is your hiring timeline and when could I expect to hear back from you?
- Express your interest in the position and thank the interviewer for their time
 - Ask for a business card from each interviewer to ensure you have their name and address so you can send a thank you note

STEP 5: AFTER THE INTERVIEW

- Send a thank you note or email within 2 business days; send a separate, individualized note to each person who interviewed you
- Evaluate your performance to address areas for improvement
- If 1-2 weeks has elapsed since the date of the interviewer said they would make contact, it is appropriate to make a follow-up to express your interests in the position

Thank You Note/Email

Following an interview, ALWAYS write the interviewer(s) a thank you note or email. This should be sent within 2 business days.

PURPOSE

- Show appreciation for the employer's interest in you and the opportunity to interview
- Reiterate your enthusiasm/interest in the position and in the employer/organization
- Remind the employer about your qualifications for the position; include something you forgot to mention in the interview
- Demonstrate you have written communication skills by writing a professional thank-you note
- Follow up with any information the employer may have asked you to provide after the interview

FORMAT

- Thank-you notes can be typed, handwritten or emailed
- Typed notes are the most formal, whereas handwritten are more personal
- Email is great when that has been your means of contact with the person you want to thank, if your contact has expressed a preference for email, or if there is a tight timeline in which the interviewer will make the hiring decision

Sample Thank You Note/Email

Dear Mr. Aspen,

Thank you so much for the opportunity to interview for the Management Trainee program at the Classical Company. After meeting with you, I am even more excited about this potential opportunity. In addition to my qualifications and experience, I will bring a strong work ethic and high level of initiative to this position.

I meant to mention during the interview that last summer I attended a three week intensive seminar on SPSS, the foremost marketing research software package. The job description mentions an ability to use SPSS, and I wanted to make sure you knew that I am extremely well-versed in the use of this software.

I look forward to hearing from you soon about the position, and I again thank you for meeting with me.

Sincerely,

Name