
Interviewing Guide

STEP 1: RESEARCH

How well you have researched the company demonstrates your interest and enthusiasm and is a critical factor in the interview process.

What to research:

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

Where to research:

- Company organization website
- Internet search engines
- [Hire a Knight](#)
- Professors
- Your 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
- Know your [resume](#) and the job description inside and out
- Create a list of 5-10 "selling points" related to the position and the organization
- Understand and practice using the **Problem Action Result (PAR)** technique
- Dress for success by planning your interviewing 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: directions to the interview site, 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.

Example Questions to the Employer

- What are the organization's plans for future growth?
- Why do you enjoy working for the organization?
- How is 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 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 are the next steps of the hiring process?

STEP 3: PRACTICE

- Call The Office of Career & Professional Development at 920-403-3040 to make an appointment for a mock interview
- Rehearse your [60 second commercial](#)
- Practice in front of a mirror or with a friend
- Practice your handshake with a friend
- Practice answering Behavioral-Based Questions:

These types of questions predict future performances by examining past behavior. Think about how you have dealt with specific situations in the past and how those experiences enhanced your leadership, initiative, and problem-solving abilities. Utilizing the PAR technique is the key to answering behavior-based questions.

Problem

Explain the situation or problem.

Action

What action did you take?

Result

What was the outcome?

Example PAR Question & Answer

Question: Describe a time when you took initiative to do something when it wasn't your responsibility.

Answer: (Problem) The past two years, I have been in a mentor program. During the course of the program, I noticed there were many other student and alumni matches in our area, but we didn't have a formal way to connect with each other. **(Action)** When I became aware of this, I scheduled a time to meet with the mentor program coordinator to talk about ways to increase our networks. We developed a plan to start a blog for participants to talk about their experiences and share insights from the program. **(Result)** As a result of our thoughtful approach we increased networking opportunities among the members in the program. It was a huge success!

Example Behavioral-Based Questions

- 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.
- Have you gone above and beyond the call of duty? If so, how?
- 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 weren't thrilled about? How did you do it?
- Have you handled a difficult situation with a co-worker? How?
- Tell me about how you worked effectively under pressure.
- Tell me about a time you took initiative to do something that needed to be done, even though it wasn't really your responsibility.
- Tell me about a time when you worked with a team you felt was difficult, how you handled it and what you learned from that experience.
- Tell me about a situation where you had to manage your time wisely to keep yourself on track and be successful.
- Tell me about a past job in which you demonstrated a very satisfactory customer experience.
- In your past experiences, how have you let others know that you listened and understood their needs?

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

- What would you say is an area in which you need improvement?
- What has been one of the biggest challenges you've had to overcome?

INITIATIVE/TEAMWORK/LEADERSHIP

- Tell me about a situation in which you showed initiative.
- What motivates you?
- Tell me about a group in which you were involved. How did you contribute to make this group achieve a goal?
- Tell me about a time you assumed a leadership role.

Example Interview Questions Continued

PROBLEM-SOLVING/CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

- Tell me how you handle stress.
- Tell me about a time you had a number of assignments due. How did you make sure you completed all of them on time and did a good job?
- Tell me about a time when you had a conflict with a fellow student, co-worker, or a supervisor. How did you handle it to resolve the conflict?
- 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.
- If you had a problem or situation at work, who would you talk to in order to find a resolution?

EDUCATION RELATED

- What led you to this major and what courses did you like 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?

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?

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.

STEP 4: DURING THE INTERVIEW

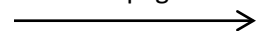
- Be 10 minutes early
- Give a firm handshake
- Show enthusiasm and confidence
- Keep a positive attitude about former employers, supervisors, and co-workers
- Remember to use the Problem, Action, Result technique to answer questions
- Be aware of your body language
- Avoid slang, profanity, lying, and 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, see Example Questions to the Employer
- Ask the interviewer when you can expect to hear back from them
- 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 e-mail 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 the interviewer said they would make contact, it is appropriate to make a follow-up call to express your interest in the position

Writing Your Thank You Note

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Writing Your Thank You Note

Following an interview, **ALWAYS** write the interviewer(s) a thank you note. This note 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 e-mailed
- Typed notes are the most formal, whereas handwritten are more personal
- E-mail is acceptable when that has been your means of contact with the person you want to thank, if your contact has expressed a preference for e-mail or if there is a tight timeline in which the interviewer will make the hiring decision

SAMPLE THANK YOU NOTE

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