

PREPARING FOR AN INTERVIEW

The interview, whether in person, online, or over the phone, is the instance in which you communicate your full spectrum of skills as a candidate to an employer. Interviews give you the chance to describe how your talents and personality fit the needs of the position. Hiring managers and selection committees rely heavily on interview outcomes when deciding whether or not to extend an offer.

The keys to a successful interview are preparation, practice and presentation.

Preparation:

Research your employer thoroughly, refine your resume, select appropriate attire, create a list of questions to ask the employer, and get a good night's sleep (it's more important than you might think). Also be sure to familiarize yourself with the interview's location.

Practice:

Set up a "mock interview" with Career Services, a friend, family member, or colleague, and browse our selection of [interview questions](#). Rehearsing your responses is a great way to boost your confidence and craft how you communicate your talents and personality.

Presentation:

When answering questions, remember the "3 P's"

- **Ponder:** take a moment to reflect on why the employer has asked a question. This will help with framing your response and speak to the skill set, value, or ability being measured.
- **Prove:** if you say that you have developed excellent organizational skills, give specific examples of situations where you demonstrated a high level of organization.
- **Project:** always be genuine and confident in responding to questions, asking questions, and meeting new people during the interview.

Common Interview Questions

- Please tell me about yourself.
- What makes you interested in this position?
- What do you know about our organization?
- What do you consider your greatest strengths?
- What would former coworkers/professors/supervisors say about you if we called them as a reference?
- Why did you choose this field?
- How did your college experience prepare you for a career in this field?
- Describe the work environment that makes you thrive.
- If you have ever dealt with difficult people, how did you manage conflict?
- What are your proven coping mechanisms in challenging times?
- If you are creative, where do you get your inspiration?
- Convince me you are the perfect match for our opening.
- What sort of pay do you expect to receive?
- How does your previous experience relate to the job we have open?
- How did you get along with your last boss?
- What is the hardest position you've ever held?
- Do you have any questions for us?

Check out this video for the most common job interview questions AND how to sufficiently answer them





Top 10 Things To Consider For The Interview

- An interview is a conversation about what you can do for them; research the company and tailor your responses towards substantiating how your talents and personality match the position.
- Rehearse interview questions out loud with a friend, family member, or your Career Advisor.
- Arrive at least 15 minutes early, but enter the premises 8-10 minutes early.
- Bring copies of your resume and reference sheet with you to offer.
- Use professional language and avoid slang words such as “uh,” “um,” “you know,” and “like.”
- Body language should be professional: good posture, not slouched, good eye contact but not staring. Watch the nervous habits of twirling hair, tapping a foot, or drumming fingers.
- Smile. It’ll help you --and them-- relax!
- Be prepared to offer evidence through detailed examples of times, ways, and situations you used certain technical applications, characteristics, or skills.
- Collect their business cards so you can follow up with a thank you card or e-mail.
- After the interview, take notes on everything you can remember and use the experience to further develop your interview techniques.

Questions To Consider Asking The Interviewer

Adapted from this great resource: [“Three Questions to Ask”](#) by Toni Bowers, 2009

So many people are concerned with making a good impression during a job interview that they forget it’s a two-way street. You’re there not only to market yourself but to find out if the job and the company are a good fit for you. You should use the interview to ask questions for yourself. So what type of questions should you be asking? Here are a few:

What’s An Average Day Like Here?

This question might prompt the interviewer to go into great detail about the day-to-day workings of the company, which is great information to have. If you deem it appropriate, respond to their answer with an example of how their work environment suits your style of operation.

How Would You Describe The Culture Here?

The interviewer may answer that “It’s pretty laid-back,” or “It’s all business,” or “There’s a good mixture of gender and cultures.” Of course, he may also lie through his teeth. If you’re any good at reading people, though, even that might be valuable.

What Qualities Are You Looking For In The Person Who Fills This Position?

You’re looking for answers like “Someone who is good with details” or “Someone who can communicate technical issues to end-users,” etc. If the answer is “Someone who doesn’t mind skipping lunch or always being on call,” then you have some solid information on which to base your decision about the job.



Other Questions to Consider Asking:

- What is the next step in the hiring process? Or, when might you make a hiring decision?
- What tools/applications/languages do you use?
- What is your history with student interns/employees?
- What typical projects or tasks do student interns work on?
- What makes a student intern successful? What traits are best suited for your company?
- How do the various members of the team work together—who is in charge? etc.
- How would successful performance in this position be measured?
- Is there much turn over in your company?
- What's the management style?
- Do entry-level employees get to travel to conferences? Is that a perk or are they on their own?
- What makes new college grads attractive; what should students be working on?

Top 10 Personal Values Employers Seek In Employees:

- Honesty/Integrity
- Adaptability/Flexibility
- Dedication/Tenacity
- Reliability/Responsibility
- Loyalty
- Positive Attitude/Motivation
- Professionalism
- Self-Confidence
- Self-Motivated
- Willingness to Learn

Adapted from this great [resource](#); R.S.Hansen et al, 2010

How To Handle The Hardest Questions

Now and then we find ourselves completely stumped in an interview or mentally 'kicking' ourselves for how we responded to a particular question after the interview. These things happen. We're just people being people in a socially-awkward experience. So how do we make the most of responding to the hardest questions?

We Practice. Make a commitment to treat the interview process with the respect it deserves and you will find that after enough "on and off camera" attempts:

- Your confidence grows
- Your responses gain clarity and charm
- Your questions for the interviewer mature
- You experience the awesome "feel good" moment after a successful interview

Q And A: Tough Questions And Great Answers

Adapted from: "[Ten Tough Interview Questions and Ten Great Answers.](#)" 2010 CollegeGrad.com

1. Tell Me About Yourself.

What the hiring manager really wants is a quick, two- to three-minute snapshot of who you are and why you're the best candidate for this position. Talk about what you've done to prepare yourself to be the very best candidate for the position. Use an example or two to back it up. "Tell me about yourself" does not mean tell me everything. Just tell me what makes you the best.



2. Have You Ever Had A Conflict With A Boss Or Professor? How Was It Resolved?

Note that if you say no, most interviewers will keep drilling deeper to find a conflict. Focus your answer on the behavioral process for resolving the conflict and working collaboratively.

For example: “Yes, I have had conflicts in the past. Never major ones, but there have been disagreements that needed to be resolved. I’ve found that when conflict occurs, it helps to fully understand the other person’s perspective, so I take time to listen to their point of view, then I seek to work out a collaborative solution. For example, “...”

3. What Is Your Greatest Weakness?

Most career books tell you to select a strength and present it as a weakness. Such as: I work too much. I just work and work and work. Wrong. First of all, using a strength and presenting it as a weakness is deceiving. Second, it misses the point of the question.

You should select a weakness that you have been actively working to overcome. For example: “I have had trouble in the past with planning and prioritization. However, I’m now taking steps to correct this. I just started using a pocket planner; then show them your planner and how you are using it.”

Talk about a true weakness and show what you are doing to overcome it.

In reviewing these responses, please remember that they are only to be as viewed samples. Please do not rehearse them verbatim or adopt them as your own. They are meant to stir your creative juices and get you thinking about how to properly answer the broader range of questions that you may face.

Check out these videos for sample interview answers to the “tough” questions:



How to use past behavior to answer a question: (Behavioral Interviewing)



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Lastly, How Can You Follow Up After An Interview?