

# Interview Guide

An interview is used to assess your fit with a position and organization, and it is a mutual assessment. You want to secure a position that matches your interests, abilities, and values. Be honest. Be yourself. And yet, spend many hours preparing to ensure you are conveying your interests and abilities to the interviewer to the best of your ability. Some interviews are structured with pre-determined questions while others are more informal and discussion-oriented. It is not wise to take a real job interview just for practice. The Career Planning Office offers mock interviews and Interview Stream, an online interviewing tool, to help you practice and become more confident with the interviewing process.

## Types of Interviews

- **Telephone or Video Interview:** This may be a quick screening or a typical first interview prior to an on site interview. Most video interviews are conducted on Skype or with video conference technology.
- **Screening Interview:** Quick interview most typically on the phone or video to identify your skills, abilities, experience, and employment preferences (such as job location and position). The purpose is to reduce the number of candidates to a manageable number to be interviewed by the hiring manager.
- **Group or Committee Interview:** You and other candidates are interviewed as a group; you may all be asked the same questions and respond separately, or you may be observed as you interact with the group.
- **Case Interview:** You may be provided with a scenario and asked to identify and solve a problem. These are popular among consulting firms. See [glassdoor.com](http://glassdoor.com) for more specific tips.
- **On Site Interview:** This is the more traditional face-to-face interview at the company with various members of the team and Human Resources. This is your opportunity to observe the company culture and assess your fit with the company and your potential colleagues.

## Before the Interview:

- Learn as much as possible about the employer, including company size, services or products, competitors, annual sales, top clients, and more. Review the company website and social media sites, including following the company on LinkedIn to read articles posted. Check out [glassdoor.com](http://glassdoor.com), which includes reviews, salary, and benefit information from employees. You will stand out from other candidates if you can demonstrate your knowledge and curiosity for the position and organization!
- Study yourself! The interview is about you. Create a list of stories and examples that you can use to respond to questions. Know your experience, abilities, and what you bring to this specific employer.
- Bring extra copies of your resume and supporting documents, along with a notepad, pen, transcripts, and references (just in case they ask). A portfolio can be a helpful tool to organize and carry these materials.
- Decide on your outfit and get feedback from friends and professional mentors. Guidelines recommend to dress one level above the interviewers. Business suits are typically the safest, unless you know the organizational culture is more casual. Professional attire creates a positive first impression that will carry over in the interview and it gives the impression you want the job.
- Know where and when the interview will be held. Check out the route and available parking. If you have time, take a practice drive to the interview site. Arrive 10-15 minutes early.

## Quick Video Interviewing Tips

- Find a quiet place with a professional background
- Dress in professional attire
- Smile and look at the camera
- Address and speak to each person directly
- Double check setting; practice with a friend
- Expect minor miscommunication incidents

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## During the interview:

- Enter the room for an interview with a friendly, positive attitude. It is okay to be nervous, but try to breathe and relax so you can focus on the questions and answer them confidently.
- Introduce yourself to everyone in the room; shake their hands firmly, maintain eye contact throughout the interview, and sit slightly upward and toward the interview(s).
- Small talk is a powerful rapport builder. Small talk topics may include the weather, news, films, weekend plans, and/or observations from the surroundings. Ask open questions and genuinely listen.
- Answer questions in 60-90 seconds. If responses are too short, rich details that conveys experience are missing. If responses are too long, they appear as ramblings and you lose the attention of the interviewers.
- Silence is okay. Take time to give a response and/or ask to repeat an interview question, if needed.

Interview questions often come in the form of behavioral / open-ended questions. The goal of these questions is to assess past performance as a means to predict future performance. Use the STAR technique to answer these questions, as well as questions that do not necessarily fit the behavioral question format. We remember stories and examples more frequently than simple (often generic) responses.

### STAR TECHNIQUE:

Situation: Sets the stage. Provide an overview, being specific and succinct.

Task: Describe the goal you were working towards.

Action: Describe *your* actions, the steps you took.

Result: Describe the outcome, if possible. This is your time to take credit.

## Example of Behavioral Interview Questions

- Give an example of a time you demonstrated leadership.
- Tell me about a time when you had a conflict with a team member. How did you resolve it.
- Give an example of a time when you had to be relatively quick in coming to a decision.
- Tell me about a time when you had to use your presentation skills to influence someone's opinion.
- Describe a time when you used your fact-finding skills to gain information needed to solve a problem. Then tell me how you analyzed the information and came to a decision.
- Give me an example of a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty to get the job done.

## Other Common Interview Questions

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why are you interested in this position? What do you know about our organization?
- Why did you choose your major? How has what you learned in school prepared you for this position?
- What are your top 3 strengths? What is your greatest weakness?
- How do you think a friend, classmate, or professor who knows you well would describe you?
- How has your experience prepared you for this career?
- What is your preferred work environment?
- What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction? Why?
- What characteristics do you look for in a supervisor (or fellow employees)?
- Where do you see yourself in 5 years (or 10 years)?
- What are your interests outside of work?
- Why should I hire you?

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**NOTE:** Be aware of illegal interview questions (which include questions about your race, creed, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, marital status, and arrest records) unless the employer can show this is a bona fide occupational qualification (such as a woman for a female actress). If you are asked an illegal question, you have the option to answer the question, refuse to answer, and/or answer the legitimate concern that likely lies behind the illegal question.

## After the Interview:

- Ask genuine questions of the interviewers to learn more about the organization, team, and culture. Prepare questions ahead of time based on your research and personal questions, and also, add questions to your list as you learn more through the interview. See some examples below.
- Wait until the employer brings up salary or benefits before discussing. Do not ask! You can try to avoid answering the question by suggesting you are sure they will offer a fair amount for a person with my qualifications or you can tell the employer you need more information about the job before discussing salary. However, do prepare a desired salary range in case the interviewer insists on a response. Use [glassdoor.com](https://www.glassdoor.com), [payscale.com](https://www.payscale.com), and/or speak with the Career Planning Office to assist you.
- Reinforce your excitement for the position by telling the interviewer you want the job and asking about next steps.
- Get business cards of each interviewer and send a thank you note/email within 24 hours. Address why you are a good fit, any concerns/hesitations that arose, and state that you are still interested in the position.

## Example Questions to Ask

- What do the day-to-day responsibilities of the role look like?
- What does success look like in this position, and how do you measure it?
- What other departments/divisions do you interact with the most?
- What makes you different from your competition?
- To manager: What is your management style?
- What do you see as the most challenging aspect of this job?
- What would be your expectations for me in the first 60/90 days?
- What was your best moment so far at the company? Or, what do you enjoy most about working at this company?
- Is there anything about my background or resume that makes you question whether I am a good fit for this role? (displays commitment to the job, and allows you the opportunity to respond to any potential concerns)

**NOTE:** Find a quiet space for both the phone and video interview. The Career Planning office can provide an office for you to conduct your interview. Call 315.244.2344 to schedule an office for a phone or video interview.

**Use an online interviewing tool, Interview Stream:** <https://sunypotsdam.interviewstream.com/account/login>

This tool is advanced mock interviewing technology which allows you practice your interviewing skills with thousands of potential questions, including those specific to your industry of choice.