

# The Interview Guide Workbook

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A Step-By-Step Guide to  
Preparing for Interviews.  
Things to consider, tips, etc.



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## Why is it important to prepare for an interview?

**1. To ensure you give the best interview performance possible**

- Practice makes perfect! Preparation for an interview helps you gather courage, identify your weak points, address them, and impress the interviewer. You'll also be able to answer questions quickly, confidently, and comprehensively.

**2. Minimize stress and nervousness**

- Nervousness happens due to being in unfamiliar territory, surrounded by new faces. While a little nervousness is common before and during an interview, practicing and thinking through any possible questions can help you feel calm and bold.

**3. It sets you apart from other candidates**

- There is a high chance that you will be competing for a position with candidates who will have better qualities than you, and it's up to you to set yourself apart. Prepare and show the interviewers what unique values you bring to the company! This is what you should focus on:
  - Look at ways your personality and other skills match the job specifications
  - Think through and bring out any experience relevant to the job
  - Prepare to ask relevant questions as it shows you're interested

**4. It helps you be and appear confident**

- Confidence is key to a successful interview. It helps you approach the interview with ease and answer all questions convincingly. With preparations, you can craft answers for questions you think the interviewer might ask. Also, If you also have answers beforehand, you will be able to answer all questions boldly.

**5. It helps you take control**

- Job interviews can be intimidating. And if you're scared, you are bound to flop as you'll not compose. However, you can take charge of the interview if you are prepared. As you practice, you'll be training your mind to anticipate any question.

# 1

# PREPARING FOR INTERVIEWS

## What do employers look for during interviews?

- Can you do the job? (Competencies: knowledge, skills, and personal attributes)
- Will you do the job? (Motivation)
- Will you fit in with the organization?
- Are you sincerely interested in this job?

## Interviewers/employers also look for these competencies and qualities in potential candidates:

Communication	Motivation / Initiation	Critical Thinking
Strong Work Ethic	Flexibility / Adaptability	Interpersonal/Teamwork Skills
	Leadership	

## What should you look for during an interview?

It is important that you can demonstrate a clear understanding of yourself.

This means that you should be able to communicate your competencies, values, interests, and goals, and be able to relate them back to the employer/organization.

Here are some important questions to consider:

- How does the organization's mission match with my interests?
- Does the nature of the job sound interesting?
- How does the organization run? Do you like this style of operation?
- How do the employees interact with each other? What is their overall dynamic?
- Does this job match my career interests?
- Are you excited about the possibility of obtaining this position?

The above questions are important considerations when preparing for your interview because they can reveal how well you may fit in with an organization.

It is important that you can articulate to an employer that you can fit in/are a good match to their organization.

What questions can you ask the interview (that are not on the website) that can help you answer these?

## Research the Organization

You will want to research the organization that you're applying to. How much should you know before the interview? As much as possible.

Be aware of any industry or organization news that could come up in the interview. Know their **competitors**, their **history**, and **mission**. Check the organization's website, newsletters, and social media to be sure you're knowledgeable of current events. Consider talking to your network to get valuable insight and tips. Researching the organization can also be helpful when thinking of questions to ask the employer.

# 2

## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

### Opener/ Self- descriptive

Opening questions are generally similar, and because of this they are easy to be prepared for. Your answer should address your experiences, qualifications, and goals.

#### Examples

- Tell me about yourself.
- Can you describe your background?
- How would you describe yourself?

Interviewers like to hear stories about candidates. Make sure your story has a great beginning, a riveting middle, and an end that makes the interviewer root for you to win the job.

### Behavioral

Behavioral questions are designed to see how you've handled challenges in the past and what you've learned from it. Though a past example is preferable, you may provide a theoretical case and the way you'd handle it to show your critical thinking competency.

#### Examples

- Tell me about a time when you worked on a team.
- When was a time when you had to work under pressure?
- Describe the most innovative or creative thing you have done in your work experience

To answer these questions convincingly, you will need to demonstrate how a specific skill or knowledge helped you in a work-relation situation.

## Negative

Negative questions address one of your weaknesses or failures in order to determine if you have some level of self-awareness.

### Examples

- So what are you doing to strengthen your weakness or prevent failure?
- What is your greatest weakness?
- Tell me about a time when you failed.
- Tell me about a time when you had a conflict with a co-worker. How did you handle it?

Your answer should explain how you overcame/overcome the negative aspect and, most importantly, what you learned from the situation. The key is to **always end on a positive note**. A good answer will be structured like, “**My weakness is X. I overcome it by doing Y.**”

## Situational

Situational questions are designed to see how you make decisions and solve problems in complex situations you will likely find yourself if employed.

### Examples

- What would do if you found out a co-worker wasn't contributing to a project?
- If you were to put together a team, what qualities would you look for in teammates?
- What would you do if you faced resistance or opposition when introducing a new idea or policy to a team or work group?

You may be given a situation or case and asked to describe how you would handle it. Your answers can help the interviewer gauge your self-confidence, decision-making skills, communication skills, and level of experience.

## Discipline/Department Specific

Questions that are specific towards the organization or position you are applying for.

### Examples

- Why have you chosen to pursue this degree at our university?
- What are some challenges faced by professionals in this field?
- How are you staying up to date with news in this area?
- What characteristics/habits do you believe are important for success in this program?

This is a great chance for you to demonstrate your knowledge of the organization or in your field and to better clarify why you are a good fit for the position.

## Closing

How the interviewer will wrap up the interview

### Examples

- Why should we hire you?
- Why do you believe that you are a good candidate for this position?
- Is there anything else that you would like to add?

You should summarize your competencies, directly addressing why you are a good candidate.

# 3 RESPONDING TO INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

When answering interview questions, your answers should typically be 30-90 seconds. Think of your responses to those questions as opportunities to share who you are and what you could bring to the organization, as it relates to the job.

### When responding to questions:

- Touch upon aspects of your skill-set, education, and experience that are relevant to the position you are applying for. In addition, offer examples.
- Understand that everything on your resume is fair game. Be able to talk in-depth about those experiences.
- If a weakness or an area of development comes up during the interview, explain how you are improving and developing that skill set.
- When outlining your career goals be sure they align with the position and organization you are applying to.

## S.T.A.R METHOD

The S.T.A.R. Method is a technique for answering questions that helps you structure your answers in a way that gives the interviewer all of the relevant information about a specific qualification for a job.

Consider using the STAR method for situational questions, behavioral questions, or questions that prompt you to recall a problem.

- **Situation**- Tell the interviewer about a specific challenge or situation. Give your audience context and enough detail to understand the story.
- **Task**- What were you trying to achieve? What was the assignment? Tell the interviewer what you were trying to get accomplished in this situation
- **Action**- What did you do? If there was a problem or challenge, how did you handle it? Tell your interviewer what you did and why.
- **Results/Reflection**- What was the outcome of this situation? Did you meet your objective? Don't forget to tell your interviewer what you learned from this experience, and how have you applied that knowledge since.

## ASKING THE INTERVIEWER QUESTIONS

Asking the interviewer questions is an opportunity to demonstrate your knowledge and enthusiasm in the organization. Interviewers appreciate and expect questions. Also, think about what you wish you knew in past positions. Here are some tips regarding questions for the interviewer:

- Ask open ended and intentional questions to determine if a job is a good fit for you.
- Ask questions that help you align your values with the organization's values.
- Review the website to generate ideas, but do not ask questions explicitly answered on website.
- Avoid asking about salary. It is the interviewer's job to initiate conversations regarding salary. It may not even be discussed during the first interview.
- Ask about supervision style and how they measure success.
- As a final question, ask for the interviewer's contact information, such as a business card, if you do not already have it. This will allow you to send a thank you email after your interview.

## PRACTICE

The best way to feel more comfortable during an interview is through intentional practice. Fortunately, the Career Center can help! Here are some resources to help you practice your interviewing skills:

- Stop by/ call the center to set up an appointment.
- Make an appointment with a Career Coach to practice a Mock Interview

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## OTHER TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

### PHONE INTERVIEWS

Phone interviews are short interviews designed to serve as a first round interview before bringing the candidate onsite. To help you maintain your focus during a phone interview:

- If possible, perform the interview in a quiet room to minimize distractions.
- Turn off call-waiting to avoid any interruptions.
- Minimize background noise, e.g., avoid typing, playing music in the background, or taking the call on speakerphone.
- Answer the phone by stating your name. "Hello, this is \_\_\_\_."
- Have your resume and a short list of accomplishments nearby to remind you of things to mention during the interview.
- Smile. Even though your interviewers cannot see it, smiling brings energy and excitement to your voice.
- Be concise. You will not have non-verbal cues from the interviewer about when to stop speaking.

### VIRTUAL INTERVIEWS

Virtual interviews help companies save resources while still seeing your personality and mannerisms. Here are some tips to make your virtual interview a success:

- Be sure that your username or handle is professional.
- Make sure your profile picture is appropriate.
- Ensure that you are in a quiet, well-lit location with a solid internet connection.
- Close other applications on your computer, they might make noise during the call.
- If you are using a laptop, be sure that you are plugged into an outlet.
- Address any technology problems immediately. It's better to stop the interview than to give an inaccurate answer, because you didn't understand the question.
- Dress like you would for an in-person interview.
- Be sure your background is not cluttered or distracting to the interviewers.
- Avoid wearing patterns like stripes, hounds tooth or gingham. They have an odd effect on the camera that can be distracting.
- Look directly into the camera, not the screen. It gives the impression of making eye contact.
- Be sure that the camera frames your face, shoulders, and hands. Body language and non-verbal cues are important, so you want to be sure that the upper half of your body is visible.
- Smile and try to keep a pleasant facial expression for the duration.
- Use your notes sparingly. The interviewer can see your eyes, so it is important that you are not obviously reading from your notes.

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## FOLLOWING UP AFTER AN INTERVIEW

Follow-up with a thank you email or card within 24 hours of an interview. After an interview, you may not hear right away as to whether or not you've been hired. You can email either the HR Representative or Hiring Manager a week after an interview to see if they have any additional questions or need further information.

After that, only initiate contact via email or phone once a week. The hiring process can be lengthy, so be patient.

If you are given an employment offer, ask the employer how much time you have to respond to the offer if you have not already been told. Be sure to respond within that time frame. If you need an extension in response time, politely ask the employer. Be sure to give a good reason as to why you need an extension. The employer is not obligated to give you an extension so be sure to be professional and polite when making any requests with the employer.

### WHAT IF THE INTERVIEW DOES NOT GO WELL?

Reflect on the experience and learn from it. Examine what went well, then identify and reflect on what you would have changed and note it for the future. The interview experience may have felt worse for you than how it actually happened, so try to not be so hard on yourself but also learn to accept mistakes and move forward into determination and positive actions.

If you did not receive the position, let them know you are sorry to not get the offer, but enjoyed meeting them and would love to be considered for other positions in the future and remind them of your key strengths. Sometimes it simply comes down to best fit for the position, and you will find the right one.