

# LAGRANGE

C O L L E G E

Center for Leadership and Career  
Development

# Interview Guidebook

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## Interviewing

### **Purpose of an Interview:**

- To provide information about yourself that is not written within your résumé
- To highlight information about yourself that is on your résumé
- To allow the employer to evaluate your skills and personality based on the demands of the position and the organization
- To allow you to gain information about the position and the company
- To give you and the employer information to determine whether enough mutual interest exists

### **Take Pro-Active Approach:**

- Play an active role in the interview by asking questions and communicating your skills, experiences, and accomplishments
- Interviewing techniques and interviewers vary greatly:
  - Some do a lot of talking; others talk very little
  - Some are casual, relaxed and humorous; others are more reserved
  - Some ask all the right questions; others have no clue what to ask
- Take responsibility for the aspects of the interview you can control. Provide the most valuable information about yourself, even if the interviewer is not asking the right questions.

### **Forming Impressions:**

- Interviewers tend to develop favorable or unfavorable opinions of a candidate within the first few minutes of the interview.
- Interviewers tend to be subjective; therefore, an interviewer will frequently form an opinion of you based on your interaction and not specifically on your skills and your qualifications.
- When you interview, keep an open mind about the company. Find out whether the individual who is interviewing you will actually be your supervisor.

### **Day of:**

- Business/Professional dress
- On the day of your interview **arrive 10-15 minutes** prior to your scheduled interview

### **You will be evaluated on the following...**

Your interview experience begins the moment you enter the building. The administrative assistants, employees, interns, etc. all play a part on who gets hired. When you meet with the interviewer, you should start with a firm handshake and appropriate greeting of the interviewer, using his or her name. Be prepared to be interviewed by more than one person.

- ✓ **Appearance:** Dress appropriately for the interview.
- ✓ **Greeting/Introduction:** We recommend that you stand to greet your interviewer with a handshake, using his/her name. Also, make good eye contact with the interviewer, smile, and be professional.
- ✓ **Body Language:** During the interview, be aware of your eye contact, subtle use of hands while speaking, good posture, etc.
- ✓ **Attitude:** Your attitude toward work and working with others is crucial in the hiring process. Be sure to convey an attitude that is enthusiastic, sincere, and genuine.
- ✓ **Responses to the Interview Questions:** Do your research and practice, practice, practice! Know your goals and be able to express them to the interviewer.
- ✓ **Oral Communication:** Speak clearly and concisely. Try to think out your response before answering a question.
- ✓ **Preparation:** Prepare questions for your interviewer and research the position and/or company/organization/agency for which you are interviewing. If applying to graduate school, it is important to have knowledge on the particular program and be able to articulate why you want to further your education in that field.

**Remember:**

- Interviews can be a very intimidating task if you are unprepared.
- Preparation and practice are key ingredients to a successful interview!
- You must be able to talk about yourself with confidence.
- Exploring and understanding yourself allows you to answer interview questions as effectively as possible.
- It is vital to understand your attributes and personality so that you can convey those positive qualities to the interviewer.
- Do your homework! Be prepared for an interviewer to ask questions about his/her organization.
- The internet will have a lot of information to offer and is a good place to start your research.

**Know the Facts!**

Be sure you are fully prepared for interviews by completing the following worksheets! They will help you understand yourself and the employer!

**Important to know:**

A survey revealed that the following factors were most important when interviewing a candidate:

- **Skills & experience 10%**
- **Education 10%**
- **First impression 40%**
- **Personal characteristics 40%**

**Interviewers tend to cover these five main areas:**

- Education
- Work Experience
- Career Goals
- Personal Qualities
- Knowledge of the Organization

Before each interview, think about each of these main areas and list (on paper) five points for each area that you want to say about yourself within the interview. Think of these areas as the five chapters of a course book, and then identify the main areas of the chapter that you need to study for the test. When preparing for a test, you do not know what the questions will be, so you study the main concepts and ideas. Preparing for an interview is very similar to studying for a test, except an interview requires you to study yourself, not just facts.

**Be Prepared: Know Yourself:**

When answering the questions, be sure to also analyze the information on your résumé and ask others who know you well.

**Prepare yourself**

1. Personality traits or skills I have that are job related:

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2. Examples of experiences I have had that demonstrate the above traits/skills:

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3. List 3-5 accomplishments that would be of interest to the person interviewing me:

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4. What are the 3 most important things I want the interviewer to know about me? (Remember, you should never talk about your family, personal life, etc. in an interview, you want to focus on your skills and experiences.)

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5. What would I consider a weakness? (Only include positive weaknesses.) For Example, Positive weakness: "I have a hard time saying no, but I am learning to pace myself and set deadlines for myself to ensure that I meet deadlines." Example, Negative Weakness: "I never seem to meet deadlines, so I tend to give up." **NEVER SAY THAT YOU DO NOT HAVE A WEAKNESS!**

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**Know the Position/Know the Employer:**

- Know the requirements and responsibilities of the position for which you are applying. It will give you the opportunity to highlight your related skills and experience.
- Research the company, its purpose and functions, as much background information as you can find, and for whom you will work.

1. How long has the organization been in operation?

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2. Where is the organization located? Are there other locations?

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3. Is it a public or private organization? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. Has the organization been in the news lately? For what reason(s)? (Only bring up positives.)

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5. What are the services/products/programs this organization provides?

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6. Who are its competitors?

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7. What are the organization's short-term goals? Long-term goals?

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8. What else is the organization known for (e.g., community involvement, supportive of families, relaxed atmosphere, etc.)?

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Notes:

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# Behavioral-Based Interviewing

## What exactly is behavioral-based interviewing?

Behavioral-based interviewing is a style of interviewing that many companies and organizations use in the hiring process. The basic premise behind behavioral interviewing is this: ***The most accurate predictor of future performance is past behavior in a similar situation.*** It provides a more objective set of facts to make employment decisions than other interviewing methods. Traditional interviewing may ask you to respond to general statements like, “tell me about yourself.” The process of behavioral interviewing is much more probing and works very differently.

## The “STAR” Technique: a good approach to responding to Behavioral-Based Questions

**S**-Situation (Describe the situation.)

**T**-Task (What needed to be done?)

**A**-Action (What did you do?)

**R**-Result (What happened?)

<b>Situation or Task</b>	Describe the situation that you were in or the task that you needed to accomplish. You must describe a specific event or situation, not a generalized description of what you have done in the past. Be sure to give enough detail for the interviewer to understand. This situation can be from a previous job, from a volunteer experience, or any relevant event.
<b>Action you took</b>	Describe the action <b>you</b> took and be sure to keep the focus on you. Even if you are discussing a group project or effort, describe what you did -- not the efforts of the team. Don't tell what you might do, tell what you did.
<b>Results you achieved</b>	What happened? How did the event end? What did you accomplish? What did you learn?

## Important Points: Behavioral-Based Interviewing

- In the interview, your response needs to be specific and detailed. Tell about a particular situation that relates to the question, not a general one. Tell briefly about the situation, the task at hand, what you did specifically, and the positive result or outcome.
- The interviewee tells a story for a few minutes; typically, the interviewer will pick apart the story to try to get at the specific behavior(s). The interviewer can probe further for more depth or detail such as “What were you thinking at that point?” or “Tell me more about your meeting with that person,” or “Lead me through your decision process.”
- Always listen carefully to the question, ask for clarification if necessary, and make sure you answer the question completely.
- Your interview preparation should include identifying examples of situations where you have demonstrated the behaviors desired by a given company/organization/agency.
- Prepare success stories. The stories should represent your skills, qualities, and characteristics. Always give examples of your strengths and successes.
- Your résumé will serve as a good guide when answering these questions. Refresh your memory regarding your achievements in the past couple of years. Demonstration of the desired behaviors may be given in many ways. Use examples from past internships, classes, activities, team involvement, community service, and work experience. In addition, you may use examples of which you may be especially proud of, such as: winning a marathon race, exhibiting paintings in an art show, running for student government, etc.

### **List of sample behavioral-based interview questions:**

1. Describe a situation in which you were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to see things your way.
2. Describe a time when you were faced with a stressful situation that demonstrated your coping skills.
3. Give me a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.
4. Give me an example of a time when you set a goal and were able to meet or achieve it.
5. Tell me about a time when you had to use your presentation skills to influence someone's opinion.
6. Give me a specific example of a time when you had to conform to a policy with which you did not agree.
7. Please discuss an important written document you were required to complete.
8. Tell me about a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.
9. Tell me about a time when you had too many things to do and you were required to prioritize your tasks.
10. Give me an example of a time when you had to make a split-second decision.
11. What is your typical way of dealing with conflict? Give me an example.
12. Tell me about a time you were able to successfully deal with another person even when that individual may not have personally liked you (or vice versa).
13. Tell me about a difficult decision you've made in the last year.
14. Give me an example of a time when something you tried to accomplish failed.
15. Give me an example of when you showed initiative and took the lead.
16. Tell me about a recent situation in which you had to deal with a very upset customer or co-worker.
17. Give me an example of a time when you motivated others.
18. Tell me about a time when you delegated a project effectively.
19. Give me an example of a time when you used your fact-finding skills to solve a problem.
20. Tell me about a time when you missed an obvious solution to a problem.
21. Describe a time when you anticipated potential problems and developed preventive measures.
22. Tell me about a time when you were forced to make an unpopular decision.
23. Please tell me about a time you had to fire a friend.
24. Describe a time when you set your sights too high (or too low).
25. Describe an instance when you had to think on your feet to extricate yourself from a difficult situation.
26. Give me a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.
27. By providing examples, convince me that you can adapt to a wide variety of people, situations, and environments.
28. Describe a time on any job that you held in which you were faced with problems or stress that tested your coping skills.
29. Describe the most significant or creative presentation which you have had to complete.

### **Other possible interview questions & statements for response**

#### **Education**

- Why did you choose your major?
- Why did you choose to attend your college or university?
- Do you think you received a good education? In what ways?
- In which campus activities did you participate?
- In what ways do your college education and work experience relate to this job?
- Do you plan to return to school for further education?

## **Experience**

- What job-related skills have you developed?
- What did you enjoy the most/least about your last employment?
- Have you ever done any volunteer work? What kind?
  
- How do you define leadership? In what capacity have you served as a leader?
- How do you think a former supervisor would describe your work?

## **In the Workplace**

- Do you prefer to work under supervision or on your own?
- What do you look for in a supervisor?
- Would you be successful working with a team?
- Are you able to work on multiple assignments at a time?
- What can your supervisor expect from you?

## **Personal**

- What do you consider to be your greatest strength?
- Can you name some weaknesses? How are you working to improve them?
- Define success.
- Have you had a time that you failed at something? What did you learn from that failure?
- Of which three accomplishments are you most proud?
- Who are your role models? Why?
- What motivates you most in a job?
- Tell me about yourself.
- Describe your ideal job.
- Where do you want to be in five years? (always say you want to be working for the company that you are applying with- even if that is not your plan. You can even say promoted within this company)

## **Tips on Answering Questions:**

- Make sure that you heard the question.
- Take time to formulate your answers before you speak.
- Avoid simple "yes" and "no" answers. Give responses that are clear and specific, with descriptive examples.
- Keep your answers between 30 seconds and 2 minutes in length. Avoid long rambling responses.
- When they ask a question needing a story to explain your skills, your story should be interesting and full of action. Give them something to remember about you, something that makes you stand out. Since they're your stories, that shouldn't be hard. Let your personality and your core character shine through. Make sure you let them hear the steps you took to solve the problem. The more details and skills you can add, the better.
- Relate your strengths and qualifications to the job in question.
- Help the interviewer envision how you would do the job.
- Practice! Practice! Practice! Practice answering typical interview questions. Participate in mock interviews with friends, a professional, or the Career Center.
- **Bottom line:** Spend some time well before your first interview to craft and polish several "short stories" about your past using some of the above examples. Take the best example you can and hone them to a fine edge. Practice them out loud, practice them in front of a mirror, and practice them often. These are your successes. Done right, they'll give your interviewer a clear picture of who you are so they can easily determine whether you're the right person for the job.



### **Common Concerns:**

#### ***What happens if I am not sure if I answered the question correctly or if I did not hear the question?***

Use clarification questions if you are unsure of the question or to determine if you have answered the question correctly. Then, listen very carefully to the answers. Types of questions to include:

- Could you repeat that?
- Would you like an example?
- Is that the kind of information you wanted?
- I'm not sure I understand the question. Do you mean...?

#### ***How much and how long to talk:***

Various books and articles direct you to talk anywhere from 0-100% of the time in an interview. In fact, there is no one right amount. Be sensitive to the preferences of your interviewer. Test this by beginning your responses at thirty seconds to one or two minutes long. Use assertive questions to help you determine your interviewer's expectations.

These questions include:

- Would you like me to describe further?
- Do we have time for me to give you another example?

#### ***Open Ended Questions:***

An open-ended question such as, "Tell me about yourself," is probably related to your education, work experience, career goals, or any of the other areas. Since the question could be focused in any of these directions, choose whichever one you like. Since you've thought about points, you'd like to highlight in advance, go ahead and utilize this chance to highlight one. Focus on the employer's needs; be ready to give examples.

#### ***Weakness Questions:***

First, remember that you are not necessarily "under attack." One approach that you can take to a question about a "weakness" is to offer an example of a weakness that can also be a strength, such as "I tend to work too hard." Another approach is to focus your answer toward the interviewer's underlying concern, which is often whether you have the ability to evaluate yourself or accept criticism. Give an example of an innocuous weakness and explanation of steps you have taken and plan to take to improve that weakness.

***STAR Practice Questions:***

For each of the following questions, please provide a specific experience you've had in the past. Explain the situation, the task at hand, the action you took, and the result of this action.

**1. Describe a time when you were faced with a deadline you could not meet.**

S: \_\_\_\_\_

T: \_\_\_\_\_

A: \_\_\_\_\_

R: \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Describe a time when you went above and beyond when serving a client.**

S: \_\_\_\_\_

T: \_\_\_\_\_

A: \_\_\_\_\_

R: \_\_\_\_\_

**3. Describe a time when you used your judgment to make a difficult decision.**

S: \_\_\_\_\_

T: \_\_\_\_\_

A: \_\_\_\_\_

R: \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Share a time when you handled conflict.**

S: \_\_\_\_\_

T: \_\_\_\_\_

A: \_\_\_\_\_

R: \_\_\_\_\_

**5. Describe a time when you had to deal with an irate customer.**

S: \_\_\_\_\_

T: \_\_\_\_\_

A: \_\_\_\_\_

R: \_\_\_\_\_

**6. Share a time when you had to follow a policy that you did not agree with.**

S: \_\_\_\_\_

T: \_\_\_\_\_

A: \_\_\_\_\_

R: \_\_\_\_\_

**7. Tell me about a time when you had to use persuasion to make someone else see things your way.**

S: \_\_\_\_\_

T: \_\_\_\_\_

A: \_\_\_\_\_

R: \_\_\_\_\_

**8. Share a time when you were part of a successful team.**

S: \_\_\_\_\_

T: \_\_\_\_\_

A: \_\_\_\_\_

R: \_\_\_\_\_

**9. Give an example of a time when you led a team.**

S: \_\_\_\_\_

T: \_\_\_\_\_

A: \_\_\_\_\_

R: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Share a time when you motivated others to meet a goal.**

S: \_\_\_\_\_

T: \_\_\_\_\_

A: \_\_\_\_\_

R: \_\_\_\_\_

**11. Tell me about a time when you failed to meet a goal.**

S: \_\_\_\_\_

T: \_\_\_\_\_

A: \_\_\_\_\_

R: \_\_\_\_\_

**12. Explain a situation when you were under enormous stress.**

S: \_\_\_\_\_  
T: \_\_\_\_\_  
A: \_\_\_\_\_  
R: \_\_\_\_\_

**13. Tell me about a time when you had more tasks than you could complete and had to prioritize.**

S: \_\_\_\_\_  
T: \_\_\_\_\_  
A: \_\_\_\_\_  
R: \_\_\_\_\_

**14. Describe a time when you had to solve a complicated problem.**

S: \_\_\_\_\_  
T: \_\_\_\_\_  
A: \_\_\_\_\_  
R: \_\_\_\_\_

**15. Share a time when you had to explain a complicated concept.**

S: \_\_\_\_\_  
T: \_\_\_\_\_  
A: \_\_\_\_\_  
R: \_\_\_\_\_

**16. Share a time when you had to make a decision that was unpopular.**

S: \_\_\_\_\_  
T: \_\_\_\_\_  
A: \_\_\_\_\_  
R: \_\_\_\_\_

**17. Describe a time when you had to face a co-worker who wasn't pulling their weight.**

S: \_\_\_\_\_  
T: \_\_\_\_\_  
A: \_\_\_\_\_  
R: \_\_\_\_\_

**18. Tell me about a decision you made that you later regretted.**

S: \_\_\_\_\_  
T: \_\_\_\_\_  
A: \_\_\_\_\_  
R: \_\_\_\_\_

**19. Describe a time when you used your creativity to problem solve.**

S: \_\_\_\_\_  
T: \_\_\_\_\_  
A: \_\_\_\_\_  
R: \_\_\_\_\_

**20. Describe a time when you had to tell your boss something they didn't want to hear.**

S: \_\_\_\_\_  
T: \_\_\_\_\_  
A: \_\_\_\_\_  
R: \_\_\_\_\_

**21. Tell me about a time when you identified a problem before it got out of control.**

S: \_\_\_\_\_  
T: \_\_\_\_\_  
A: \_\_\_\_\_  
R: \_\_\_\_\_

**22. Share a time when you had to work on a team with someone you didn't like personally.**

S: \_\_\_\_\_  
T: \_\_\_\_\_  
A: \_\_\_\_\_  
R: \_\_\_\_\_

**23. Describe a time when you had to make a split-second decision.**

S: \_\_\_\_\_  
T: \_\_\_\_\_  
A: \_\_\_\_\_  
R: \_\_\_\_\_

**24. Share a time when you experienced significant change.**

S: \_\_\_\_\_  
T: \_\_\_\_\_  
A: \_\_\_\_\_  
R: \_\_\_\_\_

**SKILL DEFINITIONS**

Skill Definitions help define what to look for in a candidate and can be used exactly as written. To increase accuracy, skill definitions should be edited based on the exact requirements of the job.

**Attention to Detail:** Able to be alert in a high-risk environment; follow detailed procedures and ensure accuracy in documentation and data; carefully monitor gauges, instruments, or processes; concentrate on routine work details and organize and maintain a system of records.

**Commitment to Task:** Able to take responsibility for actions and outcomes and persist despite obstacles; be available around the clock in case of emergency; give long hours to the job; demonstrate dependability in difficult circumstances and show a sense of urgency about getting results.

**Communication:** Able to clearly present information through the spoken or written work; read and interpret complex information; talk with customers or clients; listen well.

**Conflict Management:** Able to use a win-win approach to resolve controversy; stay objective and fair when dealing with sensitive situations; maintain constructive working relationships despite disagreement.

**Continuous Learning:** Able to stay informed of current industry trends; learn and apply new concepts and demonstrate career self-reliance; identify own areas of opportunity and set and monitor self-development goals.

**Coping:** Able to maintain a solution-oriented approach while dealing with interpersonal conflict, hazardous conditions, personal rejection, or time demands.

**Customer Focus:** Able to demonstrate a high level of service delivery; do what is necessary to ensure customer satisfaction; deal with service failures and prioritize customer needs.

**Decision Making & Problem Solving:** Able to take action in solving problems while exhibiting judgment and a realistic understanding of issues; able to use reason, even when dealing with emotional topics; review facts and weigh options.

**Decisiveness:** Able to stand by a decision, despite second guessing or disagreement from others; take quick action in a high-risk crisis; make difficult decisions and follow through; assess a situation and make an optimal and speedy decision despite limited information.

**Energizing Others:** Able to exhibit a “can-do” approach and inspire associates to excel; use competition to encourage others; develop performance standards and confront negative attitudes; develop a team spirit.

**Flexibility:** Able to remain open-minded and change opinions on the basis of new information; perform a wide variety of tasks and change focus quickly as demands changes; manage transitions effectively from task to task; adapt to varying customer needs.

**Influence & Persuasion:** Able to convince others in both positive and negative circumstances; use tact when expressing ideas or opinions; present new ideas to authority figures; adapt presentations to suit particular audience; respond to objections successfully.

**Initiative:** Able to bring about great results from ordinary circumstances; prepare for problems or opportunities in advance; transform leads into productive business outcomes;

undertake additional responsibilities and respond to situations as they arise without supervision.

**Innovation:** Able to challenge conventional practices; adapt established methods for new uses; pursue ongoing system improvement; play with concepts and ideas to create novel solutions to problems; evaluate new technology as potential solutions to existing problems.

**Integrity:** Able to be tactful, maintain confidences, and foster an ethical work environment; prevent inappropriate behavior by coworkers; give proper credit to others; handle all situations honestly.

**Leadership:** Able to assume a role of authority as necessary; advocate new ideas, even when risk is involved; set an example for coworkers; delegate responsibility and empower associates to make decisions; provide constructive feedback to others.

**Negotiating:** Able to obtain agreement from multiple parties; earn trust while working out a deal: use good timing and carefully calculated strategies when bargaining; communicate high value of services; identify hidden agendas that might interfere with resolution of terms.

**Planning, Prioritizing, & Goal Setting:** Able to prepare for emerging customer needs; manage multiple projects; determine project urgency in a meaningful and practical way; use goals to guide actions and create detailed action plans; organize and schedule people and tasks.

**Policies, Process, & Procedures:** Able to act in accordance with established guidelines; follow standard procedures in crisis situations; communicate and enforce organizational policies and procedures; recognize and constructively conform to unwritten rules or practices.

**Quality:** Able to maintain high standards despite pressing deadlines; establish high standards and measures; do work right the first time and inspect material for flaws; test new methods thoroughly; reinforce excellence as a fundamental priority.

**Reading the System:** Able to use common sense to get things done; identify key people to bring about change and understand underlying political dynamics of work; develop a network of contacts and target specific influential people to reach goals; be aware of significant contributing factors to manage change.

**Relationship Management:** Able to develop rapport with others and recognize their concerns and feelings; build and maintain long-term associations based on trust; help others.

**Resource Management:** Able to control one's own time and time of direct reports; prepare budgets and spend money wisely; ensure that people have needed equipment; identify and fulfill staffing needs.

**Respecting Diversity:** Able to adapt behavior to others' styles; interact with people who have different values, cultures, or backgrounds; be of service to difficult people; optimize the benefits of having a diverse workforce.

**Systematic Problem Solving:** Able to apply systems thinking to generate solutions; focus on process rather than isolated events; obtain multiple assessments of a situation and be systematic in identifying trouble spots, use tolls to define problems; evaluate alternative solutions.

**Teamwork:** Able to share due credit with coworkers; display enthusiasm and promote a friendly group working environment; work closely with other departments as necessary; support group decisions and solicit opinions from coworkers; display team spirit.

**Tolerance of Ambiguity:** Able to withhold actions or speech in the absence of important information; deal with unresolved situations, frequent change, delays, or unexpected events.

**Vision:** Able to pursue potential expansion opportunities for the organization; champion radically different ideas and be a leader in the market; identify long-term goals and invest appropriate resources as needed; communicate vision in a way that inspires others.

## **Prepare: Questions for the Interviewer- You are also interviewing the employer, work environment, etc.**

At some point during the interview, the interviewer may ask if you have any questions. Based on your research, you will most likely have areas about which you would like more information. You should have several questions in mind to ask, but also listen during the interview for points about which you may need more information. Asking pertinent questions shows that you have prepared for the interview and are knowledgeable, interested and evaluating the employer.

The following list will help you generate ideas to prepare your own list of questions. It is also appropriate to have the questions written down in a small notebook and at your fingertips during the actual interview:

1. What are some of the qualifications you expect the ideal candidate for this position to have?
2. What characteristics do the individuals who are successful in this position possess?
3. Could you describe the normal daily routine for this position?
4. Is there a training period? What does it involve? Are there opportunities for professional development?
5. How would my performance be evaluated? How often? By whom?

Brainstorm your own questions:

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Notes:

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## **Phone Interview**

Use these tips not only for phone interviews but when you are conducting follow-up phone calls. Many employers use an initial telephone interview as an efficient way to screen candidates before choosing which ones to interview in person. Since this is probably your first opportunity to market yourself with the organization and to be selected to interview in person, keep the following tips in mind:

1. **Be prepared:** Prepare for a phone interview just as you would for a regular interview. Have your résumé, job description, and questions to ask the employer in front of you during the interview. Be ready to give examples of your accomplishments and previous work experiences. Write down the names of the people who are interviewing you so you can refer to them by name and also write a follow-up thank you note. Have notes about the company on hand so you can refer to them quickly if needed. Have your calendar ready.
2. **Be present:** Stand up! Your voice will project better. Be enthusiastic and smile—it will come through in your voice. Conduct your telephone interview in a quiet place. Be sure children, roommates, and pets are not in the room. Do not answer another phone or the doorbell or have any other distractions. Speak directly into the telephone. Land telephones are better than cell phones for clearer connections and less chance of being disconnected. Speak slowly and clearly. Remember your voice is all the interviewer has to distinguish you from other candidates. Ask for clarification when needed, especially if you are unsure of the question and need time to think or process the question and forthcoming answer.
3. **Practice:** Talking on the phone isn't as easy as it seems. Have a friend or family member conduct a mock interview and tape record it so you can see how you sound over the phone.



Any cassette recorder will work. You'll be able to hear your "ums" and "uhs" and "okays" and you can practice reducing them from your conversational speech. Also rehearse answers to those typical questions you'll be asked.

#### **Before the interview Checklist:**

- Your résumé, cover letter, and job description
- Research you have conducted about the organization with questions to ask the employer
- Have a pen and paper handy for note taking
- Turn the call-waiting off so your call is not interrupted
- Find an area without distractions, indoors
- Unless you are sure your cell phone service is going to be perfect, consider using a landline rather than your cell phone to avoid a dropped call or static on the line. Highly recommend using a land line.

#### **During the Phone Interview**

- Do not smoke, chew gum, eat, or drink
- Do keep a glass of water handy, in case you need to wet your mouth
- Smile. Smiling will project a positive image to the listener and will change the tone of your voice
- Speak slowly and enunciate clearly
- Use the person's title (Mr. or Ms. and their last name.) Only use a first name if they ask you to
- Do not interrupt the interviewer
- Take your time – it's perfectly acceptable to take a moment or two to collect your thoughts
- Give short answers
- Remember your goal is to set-up a face-to-face interview. After you thank the interviewer ask if it would be possible to meet in person
- Avoid the simple “yes” or “no” response; add selling points at every opportunity by backing up your answers with specific examples from previous work and/or education experience
- Do not mention compensation. This conversation typically comes at the end of the interviewing cycle and not during the telephone interview stage.
- Thank them for interviewing you
- **DO NOT hang up without asking for the next step**

#### **After the Interview:**

- Send a thank you note!

#### **What happens if they call you to set up the interview?**

- If the time isn't convenient, ask if you could talk at another time and suggest some alternatives.
- Clear the room - evict the kids and the pets. Turn off the stereo and the TV. Close the door.

#### **COLD CALLING A POTENTIAL EMPLOYER:**

Develop a Script for when you are cold calling an employer or following up on an application. Make sure that you do your research, so you are not caught off guard. This phone call could turn into a mini phone interview.

#### **Examples:**

- “Good afternoon, my name is John Doe. The LaGrange College Center for Leadership and Career Development gave me your information for setting up an internship at your organization.”
- “Good afternoon, my name is Jane Doe. I am checking on the status of my application for the position of Production Manager..... I submitted my application January 4, 2020 which included the cover letter, résumé, and application.”

- “Good morning, my name is Jane Doe. I would like to speak with Mr. Jones.”
- “Good morning, my name is Jane Doe. I’d like to know the name of the Sales Manager. Could you connect me with him/her please?”
  
- “Good morning Mr. Jones, my name is Jane Doe. I have an extensive background in territory sales, where I was consistently able to increase market shares and sales in a declining market. I am a loyal, dedicated salesperson who enjoys developing and maintaining good client and staff relations. Could I meet with you to discuss employment opportunities with Jones Company?”
  
- “Although there are no openings at present, I would like to provide you with my résumé in case an opening comes up in the future. Would you prefer that I drop it off in person or send it to your attention?”
  
- “Thank you for your time Mr. Jones. I would like to call you back in 2 or 3 weeks to see if any openings have become available.”

Develop your own script:

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### **Virtual/Zoom Interviewing Etiquette**

For most people, interviewing is the biggest challenge in the job search process. Using video to interview can be an even bigger challenge. There is no way to predict exactly what will happen throughout the course of the interview, but you can do several things to prepare and make the most out of a video interviewing experience.

#### **Video Interview Preparation**

In order to convey yourself in the most professional manner, it is important to consider the following points:

- Download the program ahead of time, and become familiar with the features
- Select a quiet, clean interview space to avoid distracting the interviewer
- Clarify time zone for the scheduled interview time
- Have a copy of your résumé ready to send as an attachment
- If your webcam is detached from your screen, be sure to center the camera in order to easily look at the screen and monitor at the same time
- Close all other applications on the computer to avoid distractions

#### **Interview Attire**

Dress in full attire as you would for an interview in a professional setting. Select a professional, appropriate outfit such as a tailored suit or pressed pants/skirt with a collared, button-down shirt. It is better to be over-dressed than under-dressed for this occasion. Accessorize appropriately and simply. You should not look like you are ready for a night on the town. Cover any visible tattoos.

#### **During the Interview**

Before signing on, go to the restroom, check your appearance, and take a few deep breaths. Sign on a few minutes early and be prepared for the video call at any time. While you wait, review your materials as you would before any in-person interview. Smile and greet the interviewer and be sure to make eye contact (practice this...it can be difficult with a camera).

Be yourself! Employers want to get to know the best of you and your abilities. Focus on the responses you prepared without sounding rehearsed. Allow the conversation to flow and be prepared for a few moments of awkward silence. Ask questions and listen actively. Learn what you can about the position and the company. You are interviewing them as well. After the interview is complete, ask about the timeline for following up. **This is not the time to bring up salary negotiations or benefits.** After the interview is finished, take some time to reflect on what went well and what you can improve upon. Do not beat yourself up if the interview did not go perfectly. Learn from the experience and take those lessons to the next interview. Just getting an interview is a compliment.

Here are a few additional tips:

- **Look into The Camera** – It can be confusing, but when you're looking at your monitor it makes the interviewer feel as if you're looking away. Instead, look directly at the video camera you're using for your interview. And although you're not making eye contact in the traditional sense, this is the way that the interviewer perceives that you're looking straight ahead. For some, it may help to move the video screen closer to the camera location. This may help with perceived eye contact while allowing you to see more of the interviewer(s).
- **Clear Your Space** – Your surroundings can say a lot about how you've prepared for the interview, so it's important to put your best foot forward. Have a neutral background with bright lighting set up behind the camera. Lighting behind you will cast a shadow over your face. Remove any clutter from your desk or surrounding area and have only awards and certificates in the background. This includes clearing your space of any distractions. Close any unnecessary programs on your computer. Tell those with whom you live what you are doing and ask them to avoid your space. Children and pets should be in another room as well.
- **Practice in a Mirror** - During the interview, you can see yourself in the video camera, which can be startling if you've never seen yourself speak.
- **Put Your Hands Where They Can See Them** – *"Make sure that the camera on your computer gives a good shot of your head and shoulders, as well as of your hands. Remember that a good portion of understanding comes from body language and other non-verbal cues, so you want to make sure that the upper half of your body is showing."*--John Heckers, MA, CPC, BCPC, Heckers Development Group, LTD, Cherry Creek,
- **Avoid Technical Difficulties** – Just because your laptop has a built-in video camera and microphone doesn't mean the quality is up to par. Instead, test out the video and audio capabilities on your computer and decide whether you need to buy a headset with a microphone or an attachable video camera. Use headphones, if necessary, to avoid playback from the speakers.
- **Dress for Success** – While you may be tempted to dress professional only from the waist up, don't risk the possibility of a wardrobe malfunction. Dress the part 100%. As in any on-camera scenario, don't wear stripes or tightly woven patterns such as houndstooth. They'll come across like strobe lights to your interviewer. Instead, wear a darker color suit with accents of jewel tones in a tie or ladies' blouse, to bring a little color.
- **Sound Strong** – Be sure that your voice comes through clear and strong.
- **Slow It Down** – There can be a delay between question and answer on a virtual interview. For that reason, it can be easy to talk over people. Slow down; wait for the interviewer to stop speaking before you answer. As a plus, this gives you a few seconds to think about what you want to say before you speak.

- **Know Proper Web Cam Etiquette** – Knowing proper web cam etiquette is crucial. Some web cam etiquette includes, sitting up straight, sitting on a surface that allows you to look the interviewer face-to-face and not down or up, and not sitting too close to the camera.
- **Be Enthusiastic** - Any news announcer will tell that your reactions translate differently when on-screen, so it's important to compensate with extra enthusiasm and concise answers. Additionally, speak succinctly and remember that speed is important. Use the same etiquette as you would if you were speaking to a business associate in real life.

## **Interview Questions: What is *inappropriate*?**

### **1. Personal Questions:**

*How many children do you have? What is your maiden name? What is your height? What is your weight? Are you dating anyone right now? Do you own your own home?*

There is no legitimate business purpose for these questions and can be considered an indirect inquiry as to an applicant's sexual orientation, checking on marital status, children, and this question is an inappropriate way of asking about an otherwise appropriate subject: availability to work. Questions asked about availability to work should be job-related. For example: What hours can you work? What shift(s) can you work? Can you work on weekends and/or holidays? Are there specific times that you cannot work? Do you have responsibilities other than work that will interfere with specific job requirements such as traveling? (Height and weight questions are applicable for an acting position.) Questions about a person's living status is protected under the Fair Credit Reporting Act of 1970 and the Consumer Credit Reporting Reform Act of 1996.

### **2. Nationality/Religion:**

*What country are your parents from? What is your native language? Are you a United States citizen? What is your race? What church do you go to? What religion are you?*

Inquiries that either directly or indirectly disclose such information, unless otherwise explained, may constitute evidence of discrimination because of national origin. However, if the job requires additional languages, an employer may legitimately inquire into languages the applicant speaks and writes fluently.

### **3. Personal History Questions:**

*Have you ever been arrested? Did you serve in the military? What type of discharge did you receive?*

Questions relating to an applicant's arrest record are improper, while questions of an applicant's conviction record may be asked if job-related. Employers cannot ask what type of discharge the applicant received from a military service.

### **4. Age:**

*How old are you? When did you graduate from high school?*

Permissible purposes are limited to when age requirement or limit is a bona fide job application or is based on reasonable factors other than age.

### **5. Do you have any disabilities? (inappropriate- The Americans with Disabilities Act)**

## **Interview Tips and Suggestions**

- Have a positive attitude. Keep all your answers as positive as possible.
- Pay attention to your non-verbal cues (i.e. eye contact, voice projection, posture, nervous habits).
- Express your qualifications. Come up with a list of six to eight adjectives that you use to describe yourself. Think of examples that demonstrate these adjectives. When you are asked to tell the employer about yourself, use these adjectives and examples to do just that.
- The first few minutes of the interview are the most important. It is at this time that you really want to sell yourself and get the interviewer interested in you. That is why it is important to package yourself and your qualifications. Having a set agenda of what you want to get across during the interview will help (i.e. education, background, experience, strengths, goals, accomplishments, challenges).
- Always try to relate what you are saying and how it can benefit the company/organization/agency with which you are interviewing. It is important to be familiar with the employer prior to the interview so you can know what type of person they seek, as well as what the position requires.

- If you get stuck on a question, it is okay to pause. Often, you can simply say, “That’s a very good question; let me take a minute to think about that.” Although a short pause is okay, try to avoid a lengthy one. Employers can tell if you are just buying time to make something up.
- It is important to end the interview on a positive note, either reiterating your interest in the position or telling the recruiter you look forward to hearing from him/her soon. Don’t forget to thank the employer for his/her time and interest.
- In addition to knowing information about the company/organization/agency, always have questions prepared to ask the interviewer.
- Grades may be a topic. If your grades are low, be prepared to have an explanation.

## **Don’t Leave Home Without Reading This Advice!**

### **Dos and Don’ts**

- DO answer questions honestly, thoroughly, and sincerely. If you don’t know the answer, indicate that.
- DO NOT try to tell the interviewer what you think he/she wants to hear.
- DO be careful about saying negative things about past experiences (i.e. insult a company with whom you interned).
- DO NOT display a negative or arrogant attitude.
- DO be polite, tactful, and sincere – eye contact is also important.
- DO dress neatly and appropriately (conservative, not trendy).
- DO NOT be late unless there is an emergency.
- DO practice the questions suggested in this guide.
- DO have a small portfolio to keep pens, extra copies of résumés, and a reference sheet.

### **Checklist**

- ✓ Confirm the date, time, and location for your interview.
- ✓ Review the company’s or graduate school’s website and any other literature you’ve obtained.
- ✓ Generate quality questions to ask based on what you’ve read and heard – don’t just ask questions for the sake of asking them (make them count!).
- ✓ Review your résumé again to make sure everything is accurate and that you’re prepared to answer any questions pertaining to it.
- ✓ If for any reason you must cancel your interview, contact the employer promptly. Don’t be a “no-show.”
- ✓ Make sure your clothes are ironed, your hair is neat, and your shoes are polished!

# ALWAYS BUSINESS DRESS! DRESS FOR SUCCESS!



Type	Appropriate Attire	Inappropriate Attire
<b>Business Dress (MEN)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conservatively cut business suit in navy, black or gray. Subtle pinstripes or plaid fabrics are acceptable. <b>(Required for presentations)</b></li> <li>• Long-sleeved shirt in conservative, coordinating color</li> <li>• Conservatively patterned tie in coordinating colors.</li> <li>• In less formal situations (e.g., Boeing visit, Dean's Global Business Round table), slacks, sport coat, and tie are acceptable.</li> <li>• Dress shoes with dark socks.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Casual or business casual attire.</li> <li>• Bright or neon colors.</li> <li>• Casual loafers, boots, suede shoes, or any other casual style of footwear.</li> <li>• Hats or caps of any kind.</li> </ul>
<b>Business Dress (WOMEN)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conservative business suit or tailored dress with jacket <b>(required for presentations)</b>.</li> <li>• In less formal situations (e.g. Boeing visit, Dean's Global Business Round Table), a professionally cut pantsuit or slacks and a blazer.</li> <li>• Hose and low- to mid-heeled pumps or dress shoes.</li> <li>• Makeup and appropriate accessories.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Casual or business casual attire.</li> <li>• Sheer fabrics, neon colors, very short skirts (more than 3" above the knee), tight blouses, low necklines, any kind of glitter.</li> <li>• Open-toed shoes</li> <li>• Evening makeup or jewelry.</li> <li>• Hats or caps of any kind.</li> </ul>