

Interviewing

Prepare and Practice! A great interview can help you get hired!

An interview is a mutual exchange of information between the employer and the applicant. Employers seek to determine if your education and experience are a good match with the specific position and if you will “fit” into the work environment. As an applicant, this is an opportunity to emphasize your abilities and interest in the job, as well as, learn more about the position and the organization.

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Interview Types

- Informational– Conducted by an applicant to learn about the organization or a specific career. This is not an interview for a job but a networking opportunity.
- Screening – A first round interview to reduce the number of candidates, typically conducted over phone/video.
- Series – Consecutive interviews with different people within the same company or organization.
- Group – Involves the organization interviewing of several candidates simultaneously.
- Panel – Interview conducted by two or more people at the same time.
- Behavioral – Asks questions to see how you typically respond to work situations.

Interview Preparation

The Office of Career Education provides practice interviews. Request a practice interview with a Career Educator through Handshake at <https://arcadia.joinhandshake.com/appointments>. Practice and receive feedback on video interviews through Quinnica at <https://quinnica.io/>. You may also request a practice interview with an industry expert (offered select days/semester) at https://arcadia.joinhandshake.com/interview_schedules.

Be sure to:

- Research the organization and the position.
- Practice answering common and behavioral interview questions aloud.
- Think of situations where you demonstrated many relevant skills – it’s easy to determine the skills the employer will ask you about, because they are typically included in the job description. Situations can come from academics, work experience, activities, sports, community service, leadership roles, internships, summer jobs, etc.
- Plan your professional attire. See the professional attire section of this document.
- Research parking location and travel time. Leave early to account for traffic and plan to arrive 5-10 minutes early.

Interview Dos

- Bring the necessary items, such as copies of your résumé/reference lists, portfolio or folder with paper, and a pen.
- Know the name and title of the person you are meeting; ask for the interviewer’s business card.
- Greet the employer with a firm handshake and refer to the interviewer by his or her name.
- Maintain eye contact with your interviewer(s) and smile appropriately.
- Give specific examples that provide evidence for your skills/strengths and how they connect to the position.
- Be alert and attentive. Show enthusiasm for the position and the organization.
- If you do not understand the question, ask for clarification.
- Answer all questions - if a series of questions are asked.
- Emphasize your strong points, showing a match between yourself and the position.
- Know your résumé and be able to discuss every experience on it in detail, demonstrating accomplishments/skills.
- Watch your grammar, avoiding slang or fillers like “um,” “uh,” “like”, “ya know,” or “yeah.”
- Control awkward mannerisms, such as toe-tapping, knee bouncing, or fidgeting with jewelry.
- Prepare 2-3 questions to ask the interviewer. Always ask what the next step is in the hiring process.
- Send follow-up thank you email within 24 hours of the interview to each person with whom you interviewed.
- **Be yourself! The organization will ultimately be hiring you, so be honest and genuine throughout the process.**

Interview Don'ts

- Not being prepared for the interview; no research has been conducted on the employer.
- Unable to express self and ideas clearly; poor communication skills.
- Failure to provide examples to back up skills and experiences. Did not market self well in the interview.
- Use of clichés or providing ambiguous, general answers.
- Poorly defined career goals; little or no sense of direction.
- Lack of enthusiasm and energy. No real interest in the employer.
- Unprofessional or inappropriately dressed.
- Asking too few or poor questions about the job or employer.
- Poor match for position and organization.
- Discussing former employers, supervisors, schools, teachers, and/or activities negatively.
- Making excuses during the interview; Evasive.
- Only interested in salary or benefits; Unrealistic expectations of the job responsibilities or salary.
- Lack of confidence or poise – fails to look interviewer in the eye; weak handshake.

Professional Attire

Generally, conservative and professional dress is the key! See our *Dress for Success* career guide for more information.

For Women:	For Men:
navy, black, brown or grey suit (pants or skirt)	navy, black, brown or grey suit
single colored, non low-cut blouse	single colored, white or light tone dress shirt
polished shoes with low heels	conservative tie of proper length and correctly tied
little or no perfume	either no facial hair or well-groomed facial hair
simple jewelry & make-up	little or no cologne
neutral skin tone pantyhose	polished black or brown shoes
socks and belt to match shoes	watch or wedding band are acceptable jewelry item

Commonly Asked Interview Questions

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why are you interested in this position?
- Why should I hire you?
- What can you offer us?
- Do your grades accurately reflect your abilities?
- Where do you want to be in five years?
- What do you consider to be your greatest strengths?
- Describe your major weakness.
- What sets you apart from other qualified candidates?
- How might a friend or co-worker describe you?
- What do you know about our company?
- What is most important to you in a job?
- How do you work under pressure?
- What are you most proud of?
- Do you prefer to work independently or on a team?
- How did you become interested in this industry?
- How would a previous supervisor describe you?
- What experiences or skills qualify you for this position?

Questions to Ask Your Interviewer

- What is the next step in the hiring process?
- Who does the position report to?
- How did this position become available?
- What are the specific responsibilities in this role?
- Would you describe a typical day in this role?
- What personal qualities or skills are important for success in this position?
- How is training, evaluation, and feedback handed?
- What are some of the organization's long-term goals?
- What challenges might I face in this position?
- What characteristics are you seeking in your hire?
- When do you hope to make your decision?
- What are your expectations for success in this role during the first ____ (30 days, 60 days, year)?
- Can you describe the organizational culture?
- (If interviewing with the hiring manager) What is your leadership style?

Vault offers additional interview prep resources. Access Vault's premium content by registering with your Arcadia email address
<https://www.arcadia.edu/academics/academic-support/career-education/students-alumni/career-search-tools>

Behavioral Interview Questions

Many employers will supplement standard questions with behavioral interview questions. These questions assess your past experience as a predictor of your future success. Read these tips on how to answer behavioral questions effectively.

- Recall recent situations (typically no further back than 2 years) showing behaviors or actions relevant to the job/ field.
- Prepare short descriptions of each situation focusing on your role in the situation. Be ready to give explicit details.
- Be sure each story has a beginning, a middle, and an end.
- Remember that the outcome or result should reflect positively on you.
- Be honest. Do not embellish or omit any part of the story.
- Be specific. Do not generalize about several events; give a detailed accounting of one event.
- Divide stories into four parts using the acronym **STAR** to keep your answers focused while conveying relevant details.

SITUATION: What was the situation? What problems or challenges did I face? When and where did this situation occur?

TASK: What needed to be done? How did I need to be involved?

ACTION: What did I do specifically? When part of a team, what was my role? Where did I put my energy?

RESULTS: What were the intended and unintended outcomes? What did I learn? What would I do differently next time?

Sample Behavioral Interview Questions

- Tell me about a time when you had to persuade others to understand and appreciate your point of view.
- Give me a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.
- Describe a time when you faced problems or stresses that tested your coping skills.
- Give me an example of an important goal that you set in the past and tell me about your success in reaching it.
- Tell me about a time when you had to go beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.
- Tell me about a challenge you faced in one of your leadership roles and how you overcame that challenge.
- Describe a time when you failed to live up to your expectations for yourself.

When preparing for a behavioral interview, it can be helpful to focus on the transferable skills that are desired by many employers. Write in examples below. **Be sure to give a specific result!**

	SITUATION	TASK	ACTION	RESULT
TEAMWORK: Tell me about a successful team experience.				
COMMUNICATION: Tell me about a recent miscommunication you had with someone. What did you do to correct the situation?				
PROBLEM SOLVING: Describe a recent work or school problem you solved.				
ATTENTION TO DETAIL: Describe a task or project that required strong attention to detail.				

Phone/Video Interviews

Employers are increasingly using video and phone interviews rather than in person interviews, especially for first round interviews. While you may be very comfortable with technology, it is important that you think about how to make a great impression by phone or video since it is often harder to create rapport with the interview over video/phone.

- Confirm the pre-interview details (date and time). Is the interviewer calling you or are you placing the call?
- Know the interviewer's name, including the correct pronunciation & spelling.
- Obtain the interviewer's e-mail address for follow up.
- Carefully review the job posting and make a list of how your qualifications match the hiring criteria.
- Have the job description near you so to glance at it during the interview to ensure you are conveying relevant skills.
- Have your résumé in front of you to remind you of relevant details of your work experience.
- Be careful to not read directly from your documents as you want the interview to feel conversational not scripted.
- Prepare to interview in a private and quiet space. Tell your friends and family you are on a business call.
- Have a glass of water nearby in case of a tickle in your throat or a cough starting.
- Do not schedule an interview when you have other responsibilities. Give the interviewer your complete attention.
- Take notes, as long as it doesn't distract you. Some notes may help you later when writing your thank you emails.
- Focus, listen carefully, and enunciate. Speak slowly, carefully, and clearly when you respond.
- Listen to the question. Ask for clarification if you are not sure what the interviewer is asking.
- Write down your questions for the interviewer. Ask 2-3 questions to convey your further interest in the position.
- For phone interviews, unless your cell phone service is 100% all the time, use a landline.
- Turn off all appliances or devices that may create ambient noise or disrupt your interview.

Additional Tips for Video Interviews

- You will need a computer with a web camera and microphone. Most computers have these built in.
- Prepare your audio settings making sure that your computer's microphone works so the interviewer can hear you.
- You can practice using the camera and perfecting the audio settings by using Skype with a friend.
- Always ask for a phone number that the interviewer can be reached at in case your technology is doesn't work.
- Proper lighting is essential for high-quality video, so take time to adjust lights accordingly.
- The background light should be the brightest in the room; Make sure there is no glare on your monitor.
- Mind your background; Position yourself in front of a wall with a neutral color; avoid posters, wallpaper, and mirrors.
- Be sure your recording area is clean, as a tidy workspace conveys professionalism and organization.
- Do not look at the computer screen when answering questions – this places your line of sight below the webcam and you will appear to be looking down from the interviewer's point of view. Remember to look at the webcam.
- Be sure your voice and facial expressions convey enthusiasm.
- Practice, practice, practice – look into the camera as if you were having a conversation with someone.
- **Use Quinnica at <https://quinnica.io/>** to become skilled at video interviews. Quinnica is an online tool that allows students to practice and receive feedback on video interviews. Create your account with your school email address. Once you finish your interview, select "request feedback" to receive electronic feedback on your interview.

Illegal or Inappropriate Questions (Advice from Glassdoor.com)

Here are five illegal interview questions that you should never have to answer — and tips on how to respond.

1. How old are you? Job interviewers are welcome to dig into your work experience and education, but they shouldn't ask about your age. Plus, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 protects workers over the age of 40. If you sense an interviewer is trying to root out your age, steer the conversation back toward your relevant skills.

2. Do you have kids, or are you planning to? Inappropriate questions about family life and plans especially affect women. Employers could turn down an applicant they expect to take maternity leave in the future. Employers might


also assume someone with a family needs extra time off or cannot keep regular hours. If work schedule is a concern, an interviewer can ask about your time commitment or ability to travel.

3. Are you married? Inquiring about your relationship status is another job interview no-no. Interviewers may ask about your personal life as a way to get to know you. They could also be making assumptions about your level of commitment to the job. You could simply say the question does not affect your commitment to the position. Alternatively, you could say you do not feel comfortable sharing that information, but are happy to talk about other relevant experiences.

4. What country are you or your parents from? Although an employer can ask if you are a U.S. citizen, they should not pry into where exactly you or your ancestors are from. Your best answer for any of these questions is “Yes, I am legally authorized to work in the United States”.

5. What was your salary in your last job? Many employers ask about past salaries, but in some cities and states, this question is against the law. Philadelphia, New York City, and Massachusetts, for instance, all bar hiring managers from asking about past salaries. Before heading into an interview, prepare to talk about salary expectations. Even if it is not against the law for them to ask in your state, you do not have to tell them (and most times it’s in your best interest not to tell them). Instead, talk about the value you will bring to the position and what that’s worth.

Interview Evaluation

Remember that interviews are nerve-racking for many people. Your interview skills will improve with each interview experience. Use the rubric below to evaluate your skills interviewing and work toward an excellent score. 

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
General Appearance	Look un-kept, clothes wrinkled, improper dress or hygiene	Not dressed for position, hygiene needs improvement	Good hygiene, clean but not pressed and polished	Clean, pressed & dressed professionally
First Impression	Dull, unenthusiastic unimpressive	Lacks energy, not smiling, sharp looking, somewhat confident	Sharp, confident, somewhat enthusiastic and energetic	Enthusiastic, energetic, sharp, bright, smiling
Communication	Could hardly hear, shaky, So nervous they could hardly communicate	Spoke softly but could understand, voice shaky, very nervous	Spoke audibly but somewhat shaky, slightly nervous	Spoke clearly, confidently and little sign of nervousness
Eye Contact	Did not look up	Looked around constantly, obviously was not prepared	Kept eye contact most of the time, looked up or down when not sure what to say	Maintained eye contact throughout the interview.
Question Completion	Did not answer questions	Stammered, hesitated, not concise, short or rambling answers	Answered questions with some hesitation	Answered questions clearly and concisely, obviously prepared
Question Content	Did not convey appropriate skills or relevant experience for position. Made no connection to the position.	Provided limited relevant skills/examples related to the position.	Conveyed many relevant skills for position but did not provide illustrative examples and/or a connection to the position	Conveyed many relevant skills with illustrative examples-connected skills/experience to the position
Knowledge of Organization/Position	Did not research organization. Lacked understanding of position.	Read job description but did not share knowledge of organization.	Shared information on products/services/mission/job	Shared in-depth knowledge of products/services & mission-Thorough understanding of job & culture
Attitude	Unenergetic, arrogant, aggressive, or extremely quiet	Uncooperative, moody, unsure of self, self-focus	Cooperative, neutral--neither positive or negative, somewhat confident	Cooperative, positive attitude confident, helpful
Applicant Questions	Applicant had no questions	Questions appeared “off the cuff,” not prepared	Asked questions but not related to the job	Asked questions about the company, position, work environment, etc.
Closing	Left without saying anything	Applicant smiled	Applicant smiled and thanked interviewer Did not state he/she wanted the job or ask when they would be making a decision	Stated he/she wanted the job, asked when they would be making a decision, smiled, and thanked interviewer