

Interviewing **GUIDE**



EASTERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY
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THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

Interviewing can be a daunting task for any job seeker, but with thoughtful and thorough preparation, you can make a positive impression on your interviewer for any position. The process begins with creating a well written resume and is followed by identifying employment options through a strategic search. The Center for Internships and Career Development has helpful guides to help you with these activities as well.

This guide is intended to help you prepare to make the best possible impression at your interview. However, it is only a guide, and you will need to take time to practice your interview skills before embarking on your job hunt. Be sure to make use of all resources available to you, including our office, which provides:

- **Individual Counseling:** Our staff is available to answer questions, help you prepare for, and discuss your reactions to interviews.
- **Interview Workshops:** Check the schedule or stop by our office.
- **Mock Interviews:** Our staff is available to conduct mock interviews to help you prepare for a “real” interview. Inquire about this service by stopping by or calling our office.
- **Interview Stream™:** With this exciting interactive software product, you can select from thousands of challenging questions presented by a “real,” on-screen interviewer; record and review video of your answers; re-record and practice until you are satisfied. Interview Stream™ is currently available for use, in the privacy of a fully enclosed kiosk, in The Center for Internships and Career Development, or from the comfort of your own home, simply connect to the link on our website.

Stop by, or call us at 860-465-4559, for additional information or to schedule an appointment.

TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

There are many different types of interviews you may experience throughout your career, and they will vary from position to position or employer to employer. Below is a list of eight different types of interviews you could experience. This information was pulled directly from <http://www.timesunion.com/> and the article “The 8 Major Types of Interviews” by Dr. Tom Denham. The most common interview types are: the screening or telephone interview, the individual interview, and the small group or committee interview.

1. Informational Interview

The objective of this interview is to ask for advice and learn more about a particular career field, employer or particular job. Interviewing experts in their field is one more way to become more occupationally literate. The knowledge that you gain here will make you a sharper and more informed. You will also make a contact and further develop your network.

2. Screening or Telephone Interview

A phone interview is a very cost effective way to screen candidates. These can last anywhere from 10 to 30 minutes. You should prepare for it like an open book exam. It is recommended that you have in front of you your resume, the job description, a list of references, some prepared answers to challenging questions and perhaps something about the company. The vast majority of communication is non-verbal. Because they can't see your body language, it is critically important to have positive and polished answers with energetic tone and inflection. Be sure to ask what the next step is.

3. Individual Interview

This is the most common type and often called a "personal interview." It is typically a one-on-one exchange at the organizations offices. In order to best prepare you will want to know the length of the interview which can usually range from 30 to 90 minutes. If the interview is 30 minutes you have to be concise and have a high impact with your answers. If it is 60 or 90 minutes you will want to go into much more depth and use specific examples to support your generalizations.

4. Small Group or Committee Interview

This is where you will be meeting with several decision-makers at once. This can be an intimidating experience if you are not prepared. It's an efficient way to interview candidates and allows for different interpretations or perceptions of the same answer. Be sure to make eye contact with everyone, no matter who asked the question. It's important to establish rapport with each member of the interview team. Try to find out the names and job titles of the participants.

5. The Second or On-Site Interview

After your first interview, you may be asked back again for a "second date." They like you enough that you made the first round of cuts, but they would like to know more about you before making their final decision. Second Interviews can last either a half or full-day so it is best to check again and get an agenda. You may be meeting with three to five individuals. This may include a representative from Human Resources, the department head, the office staff and the department head's supervisor. Be alert and enthusiastic at all times! The more you know about the structure of the process, the less anxious you are going to feel and the better you will perform. This is the last step before an offer is made.

6. Behavioral-Based Interview

The theory behind Critical Behavioral Interviewing (CBI) is that past performance in a similar situation is the best predictor of future performance. CBI probes much deeper than traditional interviewing techniques. You should prepare by thinking of specific examples that demonstrate your competence in core behaviors such as teamwork, problem-solving, communication, creativity, flexibility and organizational skills. You will want to tell your story and structure it by stating your answers in terms of the situation, the task, what action you took, and what was the result or outcome.

7. Task Oriented or Testing Interview

This is a problem-solving interview where you will be given some exercises to demonstrate your creative and analytical abilities. A company may ask you to take a short test to evaluate your technical knowledge and skills. Sometimes a presentation to a group is necessary to determine your communication skills. Try to relax as much as possible.

8. Stress Interview

During this rare type, the interviewer tries to bait you, to see how you will respond. The objective is to find your weaknesses and test how you hold up to pressure. Such tactics as weird silences, constant interruptions and challenging interrogation with antagonistic questions are designed to push your boundaries. The question you have to ask yourself is: Do I want to work for a company that treats me this way even before the offer is made? Rethink the corporate culture.

One additional type of interview which is gaining in popularity is the **video interview**, more specifically, a Skype interview. While the basic premise of an in-person interview will apply to a skype or video interview, you may find reading the following on-line article helpful in preparing for a video interview:

<http://jobsearch.about.com/od/jobinterviewtypes/a/skypevideo.htm>

THE TELEPHONE INTERVIEW

Employers will very often screen job candidates over the phone because it costs less and it is less time consuming than a face-to-face interview. A telephone interview can be like an open-book test. You may have the answers in front of you, but you need to know the material thoroughly to do well on the test—or in this case, the interview.

Here are some tips to do ahead of time for a successful telephone interview.

1. Eliminate ALL distractions. Have your phone in a quiet room—away from radio, television, family, roommates, or anything else that may make noise or take your attention away from your task.
2. Gather your tools by the phone.
 - Resume
 - Pen and paper to jot the interviewer(s) name(s) and to take notes during the interview
 - Company research (with relevant information highlighted)
 - Questions to ask about the company and position
 - A loosely written outline of points to make or items to cover as you talk about the position
 - Comfort items: tissues, a glass of water

Do these things at interview time:

1. If the employer sets up an appointment in advance, dress the part for the interview. Experts say if you are dressed in a professional manner, you will speak that way.

2. If an employer calls and wants to do the interview right away (instead of setting up an appointment), excuse yourself politely and offer to call back in five minutes. This will give you time to make the psychological switch from whatever you are doing to your professional demeanor.
3. If you have call waiting, turn it off.
4. Sit in a straight back chair with your feet firmly planted on the ground. Your position affects the quality of your voice. If you are sitting in a relaxed position, you do not project the same readiness and intensity as you do when you sit more formally.
5. Talk only when necessary. Since you lack the visual cues of body language to assess whether you've said enough, mark the end of your response with a question, such as "Would you like more details of my experience as an intern with XYZ Company?"
6. Let the employer end the interview. Then you should say "Thank you for your time," and reiterate your interest in the position.

If you perform well on the telephone, you'll probably be invited to an interview on-site with a hiring manager.

THE IN-PERSON INTERVIEW

BE PREPARED

The most important part of your interview occurs before you even arrive for your appointment. Employers expect today's applicants to be well-prepared, and to be knowledgeable of industry trends. Research and preparation are the keys to getting a job.

In today's world of technology, you have no excuse for not knowing about the company or employer you are interviewing with. Use this to your advantage and **do your homework** in advance of your interview.

Research the Company and the Job

- ✓ Make sure you have thoroughly read the position description and you understand the responsibilities of the job.
- ✓ Look for information on reporting lines; if hired, who will you report to?
- ✓ Spend time on the company website; familiarize yourself with their mission statement, goals and objectives.
- ✓ Do a web search of the company to read any recent articles or posts.
- ✓ Do a web search on the industry (e.g. green energy, education, information technology) and make sure you are up on current trends.
- ✓ Search social media sites for additional information on the company, including LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook and Google+. If the company is on LinkedIn, considering adding them to businesses you are following.

- ✓ Talk with faculty, friends and other contacts who know about the industry and who may also know about the company/employer.

Equally important to knowing your potential employer is knowing yourself. Be sure to do a self-evaluation and consider the following points. By answering these questions, you will be better prepared to answer similar questions in your interview.

- ✓ What do you want to do, both immediate, short-term and long term?
- ✓ Why are you considering this company/employer and this position?
- ✓ What you have to offer you future employer?
- ✓ What are your skills and accomplishments?

PREPPING FOR THE QUESTIONS

We cannot emphasize enough the importance of preparing answers to some of the more commonly asked questions. While you may believe the questions are simple and easily answered, the stress related with an interview will often make it difficult to provide an answer. Practicing, be it a mock interview or simply running your answers by your friends, will help you to retain and recall your responses in the actual interview. A list of commonly asked questions is provided at the end of this guide.

Understand in preparing to answer questions asked of you, you should also have a list of questions of your own to ask of your future employer. By doing so, you affirm your interest in the company and the position. A list of potential questions to ask at the end of your interview are also included at the end of this guide.

THE DAY OF THE INTERVIEW

Below are some general guidelines for putting your best foot forward on the day of your interview.

- ✓ Do not be late; plan to arrive 15 minutes prior to your scheduled interview time.
- ✓ Dress conservatively in a well-fitting suit, with polished shoes and modest accessories. (Select your outfit the night prior to your interview.)
- ✓ Limit the amount of jewelry you wear, as it should not be distracting.
- ✓ Make sure you are well groomed (hair, nails, etc.).
- ✓ Limit the amount of perfume or aftershave you wear.
- ✓ Take extra copies of your resume and letters of recommendation.
- ✓ Be sure to have a writing pad and pen for taking down any notes or information you may need. It's also good to have your own pen in case there is paperwork you need to sign.
- ✓ Limit how much "stuff" you bring to the interview. If you have a briefcase/attaché, pack it lightly with only the items you will need for the interview.
- ✓ Be mindful of all your electronics. Be sure everything is powered down before entering for your interview, or consider leaving them behind.

- ✓ Try and relax; research some easy relaxation tips you can practice in the car before entering for your interview.
- ✓ Speak clearly, giving concise and thoughtful responses.
- ✓ Use positive body language, making good eye contact, good posture and limited facial and hand gestures.

FOLLOW-UP THANK YOU LETTER/NOTE

Thank you letters remain an essential part of the interview process and should be sent within 24 hours of your interview. You should always send a thank you note, even if you don't anticipate receiving a job offer, or if you have determined you are no longer interested in the position. **Even in this age of technology, your thank you letter/note should be hand written.** Don't forget, this is another opportunity for you restate your interest in the position and company.

In order to address your letters to the appropriate individual, ask for a business card at your interview. This will assure you have proper spellings of the individual's name, and will provide a proper title. [A sample thank you letter appears at the end of this guide.]

In the letter:

- Express appreciation for their time and consideration.
- State the position for which you interviewed, the interview date and include some specific reference to your conversation.
- Reaffirm your interest in the position and eagerness for an additional interview.
- Mention any important items that you forgot to mention in the interview, and include any additional qualifications or work experience not mentioned on the resume.
- Close with a feeling of enthusiasm for the position and the organization.
- If you interviewed with more than one person, you must send a separate thank you note to each person. Make sure they are unique – recipients frequently share.
- If you are no longer interested in the position, thank the employer for their time and ask that your application be withdrawn from consideration.

“Follow-up” Letters

- You should send a follow-up letter to acknowledge a job offer, accept or decline an offer, restate interest in the organization after you are not offered a position, or to send a new resume for consideration because of a change in qualifications or address. Use the guidelines above.

COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. What are your long range and short-range goals and objectives, when and why, did you establish these goals and how are you preparing yourself to achieve them?
3. What led you to choose your field or major of study?
4. How would you describe your ideal job?
5. Describe a situation in which you were successful.
6. Describe a situation in which you did not achieve expected goals.
7. What do you think it takes to be successful in this career? in a company like ours?
8. Tell me about some of your recent goals and what you did to achieve them.
9. Are you a team player?
10. What motivates you?
11. Why should I hire you?
12. How would you describe yourself?
13. How do you think a friend or professor who knows you well would describe you?
14. What do you see yourself doing five years from now?
15. Where do you want to be ten years from now?
16. Do you handle conflict well?
17. How do you determine or evaluate success?
18. What major problem have you had to deal with recently?
19. In what ways do you think you can make a contribution to our company?
20. Do you handle pressure well?
21. How much training do you think you'll need to become a productive employee?
22. What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction? Why?
23. Describe your most rewarding college experience.
24. What qualities do you feel a successful manager should have?
25. What is your greatest strength?
26. What is a weakness you have?
27. What college subjects did you like least? Why?
28. Why did you choose to attend your college?
29. How has your education prepared you for your career?
30. Do you have plans for continued study? An advanced degree?
31. Do you think that your grades are a good indication of your academic achievement?
32. What have you learned from participation in extra-curricular activities?
33. Why is your GPA not higher?

34. How familiar are you with the community that we are located in?
35. Are you willing to travel? How much?
36. Why did you decide to seek a position with our company?
37. What do you know about our company?
38. Is money important to you?
39. What criteria are you using to evaluate the company for which you hope to work?
40. Do you have a geographical preference? Why?
41. Will you relocate? Does relocation bother you?
42. What kind of salary are you looking for?
43. What have you learned from your mistakes?

BEHAVIORAL STYLE 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 logic and good judgment 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 a 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 you tried to accomplish something and 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 (or group member).
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 missed an obvious solution to a problem.
20. Describe a time when you anticipated potential problems and developed preventative measures.
21. Tell me about a time when you were forced to make an unpopular decision.
22. Describe a time when you set your sights too high (or too low).

POTENTIAL QUESTIONS TO ASK AT YOUR INTERVIEW

About The Position

1. What are the main objectives and responsibilities of the position?
2. How does the organization expect these objectives to be met?
3. Can you tell me about the primary people with whom I would be dealing?
4. Can you describe a typical day?
5. Is this a newly created position? If not, how long did the previous person hold it? Was the previous person promoted? What is the potential for promotion?
6. How many and whom would I supervise? To whom would I report?
7. How and when would my performance be evaluated?
8. Is regular travel a part of this position?
9. Where does this position fit into the company's organizational structure?
10. What results would you expect from my efforts and on what timetable? What improvements need to be made on how the job has been done until now?

About The Company

1. What the organization's strengths, and what major problems/challenges does it face?
2. What significant changes do you foresee in the near future for the organization?
3. What do you see ahead for the company in the next five years?
4. What do you see in the future for this industry?
5. How does the organization stand in comparison with its main competitors?
6. Can you describe the company's culture?
7. How does the company recognize diversity in its workplace and with its customers?

About Education and Training

1. What additional training might be necessary for this position?
2. Is training done in a classroom/group session or is it handled on an individual basis?
3. Are there training and development programs offered within the organization so that I can learn and grow professionally?
4. Does the organization support further education for its employees?
5. Does advancement to upper management usually require an advanced degree?

About The Interviewer

1. Can you please tell me how your career has developed at the organization? Would someone entering the organization today have similar opportunities?
2. How would you describe your management style/philosophy?
3. What do you enjoy most about working for this organization?
4. If you could change one thing about your position or the organization, what would it be?
5. How long have you worked for this organization?
6. What qualities are you looking for in a new hire?

Your Closing Questions

1. Do you have any questions about my qualifications that might further clarify my fit for this position?
2. What is the next step in the process?
3. When do you expect to make a hiring decision for this position?

****Always state you want the job (if you sincerely do) and why!**

AVOIDING THE CLICHÉ ANSWER

To set yourself apart from other applicants, avoid giving the cliché answer to some of the more common questions. Being a perfectionist is not likely your biggest weakness, but your IT skills or inability to delegate might be. Be prepared to share an honest answer, followed with a plan on how to address your weakness. Check out the following two online resources for additional information on avoiding cliché answers:

<http://www.glassdoor.com/blog/give-original-answers-7-clich-interview-questions/>
<http://www.youblawg.com/legal-careers/4-cliche-job-interview-answers-to-avoid>

SAMPLE THANK YOU LETTER

September 10, 2015

Ms. Carolyn Plourde
Director of Staffing
ABC Corporation
One Industry Plaza
Cromwell, CT 13502

Dear Ms. Plourde:

Thank you for the opportunity to interview for the Management Training position yesterday at ABC Corporation. I enjoyed meeting you, and learning more about your corporate organization. ABC's plans to expand to the international market is of great interest to me and parallels my career goals.

As we discussed, I believe my education and background have provided me with an understanding of business operations that will prove to be an asset to your organization. My prior experience as an intern in the business office of The Home Depot will enable me to progress steadily through your Management Training Program and become a productive member of ABC's Field Implementation team. Additionally, I have always been considered a hard worker and a dependable, loyal employee. I am confident that I will make a valuable contribution to the ABC Corporation.

Again, thank you for your consideration of my application. Should you need any additional information, please feel free to contact me at 860. 555.1212. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Emily Smith