INTERVIEW PREPARATION

The information in this guide is focused on assisting students with interview preparation.

You have your job interview scheduled - congratulations! In this guide, we provide an overview of how to succeed in an interview.

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1. Interview Process - Before, during, and after the interview
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**INTERVIEW PROCESS**

**BEFORE THE INTERVIEW**

a) Research the company.

It is crucial to understand key information about the company you are interviewing with. Use the company’s website, social media posts, and recent press releases to get a solid understanding of the company’s mission, vision, and goals.

“Why do you want to work here?” is one of the most common interview questions, it is crucial to be able to answer this effectively.

- Find information on this organization using CareerOneStop, Glassdoor, LinkedIn, and other websites
- Review the organization’s website
- Locate press releases, articles, and other publications
- Use LinkedIn to find and connect with alumni who work at this organization

b) Practice your interviewing skills

While questions may vary depending on the job and industry, most job interviews involve an exchange of common interview questions and answers, such as, “Tell me about yourself” and “Why are you interested in this position.” To prepare, you can write out potential answers and record yourself answering them. University Career Center is here for you to help you prepare. You can schedule a mock interview with a career consultant to get feedback.

Tip: Review Most Common Job Interview Questions and Answers

c) Review the job description

Make sure that you reread the job description and can communicate why you would be a good fit for the position.

You should use the job description as a guide. The job description is a list of the qualifications, qualities, and background the employer is looking for in an ideal candidate. You need to have an understanding of each responsibility and topic listed in a job description. The more you can align yourself with these details, the more the employer will be able to see that you are qualified. The job description may also give you ideas about questions the employer may ask throughout the interview.

Keep in mind:
- Be on time! Arrive at least 10–15 minutes early.
- Be friendly and polite to all staff members.
- Turn off all mobile devices/notifications.
- Bring several copies of your resume.
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**DURING THE INTERVIEW**
1. Consider what the interviewer needs to know about you. Provide specific examples, using the **STAR method**.
2. Ask thoughtful **questions**.
3. Speak the right body language. Dress appropriately, make eye contact, give a firm handshake, have good posture, and speak clearly.

**AFTER THE INTERVIEW**
1. Send a tailored thank you note (**example**) to the hiring manager and reaffirm your interest.
2. Express thanks and politely ask for feedback if you are not selected to move forward.
3. Get comfortable with waiting and don’t give up!

**INTERVIEW FORMATS**

**PHONE SCREEN/INITIAL INTERVIEW**
Typically, a 15-60 min one-on-one conversation to gauge interest, clarify qualifications, and occasionally discuss salary expectations.

**Tips for Success**
- Arrange for a quiet space at a table or desk with strong cell phone reception.
- Ensure your phone is fully charged.
- Know if the interviewer is calling you or if you will be calling in.
- Have a copy of your resume, questions to ask your interviewer, and paper and pen nearby.
- Dress like you would for an in-person interview to help project a confident voice.
- Listen carefully. It takes extra attention to focus on the call, avoid distractions, and gauge the length of responses.

**RECORDED VIDEO/TIMED TEST**
Typically, a 30-60 min self-directed assessment of interest, skills, or personality.

**Tips for Success**
- Get comfortable talking out loud and focusing on your laptop camera. Set your camera at eye level.
- Consider the lighting and background.
- Review instructions and listen to prompts carefully.
- Ensure your laptop is fully charged and your internet connection is strong and steady.

**VIDEO CHAT**
Often used to save employers time and expense, video chat interviews are typically 30-60 minutes in length. They may be one-on-one or multi-party.

**Tips for Success**
- Arrange for a quiet space at a table or desk.
- Use a laptop, tablet, or desktop, not a cell phone.
- Ensure your device is fully charged and your internet connection strong and steady.
- Review interview instructions and download/install necessary apps ahead of time.
- Consider your lighting and background.
- Position the computer and yourself so you are looking straight at the camera - not up or down at the screen.
- Get comfortable with talking out loud and focusing on your computer’s camera.
- Have your resume and questions out of camera sight.
- Maintain your focus - your every move can be seen.
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In-Person
Used for on-campus recruiting and later rounds on site. Can range from 30 mins. to a full day, involving multiple interviews, group activities, meals, and tours.

What to Wear
- A business suit is the most common attire.
- Depending on industry/site, you might wear business casual attire or need special clothing (e.g., lab coat, closed-toe shoes).

What to Bring
- A padfolio with printed copies of your resume, a notepad, pen, and questions to ask.
- The name/contact info of the person(s) you are meeting.
- Your prox or other photo ID.

What to Do
- Arrive early and anticipate a security screening.
- Turn off your phone.
- Greet everyone politely and professionally.
- Stay energized, especially in back-to-back interviews.
- Observe workspace setup, the demeanor of staff, and demographics/diversity of the workforce.

* Source: Center for Career Development – Princeton University

AI-POWERED INTERVIEWS

AI-powered interviews are quickly growing in popularity due to their ability to save employers time and money during the recruiting process. The good news is you don’t need to learn all the ins and outs about artificial intelligence to succeed in your next AI-powered interview and reduce your anxiety. You just need to follow the below five tips.

1. Find a suitable backdrop for your interview. Keep your interview background clear of objects and distractions.

2. Speak succinctly and include essential keywords. To find keywords, check out the job description and the company’s career page on its website.

3. Don’t forget about non-verbal cues. Since AI software can draw conclusions by analyzing your body language and posture, it’s important to observe body language etiquette like you would in an in-person human interview.

4. Do a trial run by recording yourself. Practice makes perfect, and the only way to know what mistakes you would make in an AI-powered interview is by conducting a mock interview. You can do that by recording yourself and playing back the recording to see what you’re doing right or wrong.

5. Dress the part for your interview. The general rule of thumb for dressing up for an AI-powered interview entails going business casual, with plain-colored clothes.

* Source: 5 Tips for AI-Powered Interview Success
HOW TO DRESS FOR A JOB INTERVIEW

First impressions matter. Regardless of how you identify, the key to appropriate dress is to find clothing that fits you properly and looks polished and professional. You should choose clothes that make you feel comfortable and confident.

Research the office dress code. Before choosing an interview outfit, research the company to determine how formal their workplace is.

Formal business environment - generally, a job interview calls for you to wear professional, or business, attire.

Casual business environment - if you have a job interview in a more informal work environment, you might wear a business casual outfit.

Casual environment - if a company does have a standard uniform try mimicking the uniform in your choice of interview attire. It is important to make a good impression and show that you have put effort into your interview preparation.

Review How to Dress for a Job Interview for more information and examples.

TYPES OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

TRADITIONAL QUESTIONS

Traditional interview questions are those that employers are most likely to ask. Those are common questions about your experience, background, and skills. Practicing the answers to these questions will help you be more confident during the interview. Since these interview questions are so common, hiring managers will expect you to be able to answer them smoothly.

Examples:
• Tell me about yourself.
• Why did you choose this career?
• Why Are You the Best Person for the Job?
• Why Do You Want This Job?
• How Has Your Experience Prepared You for This Role?
• What do you consider to be your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
• How Do You Handle Stress and Pressure?

Tips
• Review most frequently asked interview questions and sample answers, and then prepare your responses. Remember that it’s crucial to demonstrate that you are the best candidate for the job.
• Take time beforehand to thoroughly research the company, its products, services, culture, and mission.
• Be specific about what makes you a good fit for this role, and mention aspects of the company and position that appeal to you most.
• Explain how your experience will help the employer if you were to be hired.
• Review: Top 10 Job Interview Questions and Best Answers

BEHAVIORAL QUESTIONS

Behavioral questions are designed to learn how you would respond to a specific workplace situation, and how you solve problems to achieve a successful outcome. It is very important to prepare for behavioral interview questions in advance.

Behavioral interview questions ask candidates to share real-life examples of specific situations from their experience. By answering behavioral questions, you are able to show what you are capable of accomplishing based on your past work performance, use certain skills or navigate certain types of scenarios.
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Examples:

• Tell me about a time when you had to work closely with someone whose personality was very different from yours.
• Give me an example of a time you faced a conflict with a coworker. How did you handle that?
• Describe a time when you had to step up and demonstrate leadership skills.
• Give me an example of a time when you didn’t meet a client’s expectations.
• Give me an example of a time when you had to think on your feet.
• Tell me about a time you failed. How did you deal with the situation?

Tips

• Review: Everything You Need to Know About Answering Behavioral Interview Questions
• It is very important to keep your answer concise and relevant to the question. Using the STAR (Situation-Task-Action-Result) interview method can help you to craft job-landing responses to many interview questions that require a well-structured example story. The STAR interview method is a technique you can use to prepare for behavioral interview questions. Review: How To Use the STAR Interview Response Technique
• Prepare stories based on the job description in advance.
• Practice articulating the answers before your real interview, record yourself.
• Improve your interview skills by scheduling a mock interview with a Career Consultant.

CASE QUESTIONS

If you are applying for a position as a management consultant or a related job, you will likely be required to participate in a case interview. A case interview is a type of interview in which the candidate is presented with a business situation and asked to provide a solution for managing the situation. These types of interviews are used to determine a candidate's analytical ability and problem-solving capabilities. While preparing for a job interview is often an important step in the job search process, case interviews often require extra preparation time to be successfully completed.

Examples:

1. A client of a company is a hotel located in New York City, New York. Their primary customer base is made up of mostly foreign tourists. What are some factors that these customers would seek out in a hotel? What influences may affect their decision to stay at the client's hotel?
2. How many automobiles are sold in New York each year?
3. XYZ Firm is considering purchasing a competitor's company. Would this be a wise business decision for XYZ Firm?
4. A business owner has recently opened their offices to the public and is currently making a decision as to what type of product to put in the restroom for customers to dry their hands with. Three options have been presented: hot air dryers, paper towels and roller towels. If the owner has to make a decision this week, what questions should she consider during the decision-making process?
5. How would you redesign the Bank of America mobile app to make it more user-friendly?

Tips

1. Take notes. Taking notes while receiving the information relevant to the case interview question is important to ensure you don’t miss any valuable information. You should also try to rephrase the question to make sure that you fully understand what is being asked and take any notes on issues that you feel you will need to ask more questions about.
2. Ask questions. Many interviewers expect candidates to ask several questions when solving a case interview question. Don’t be afraid to ask questions to help you determine the most appropriate solution to the problem presented. In fact, asking educated and well thought out questions helps to demonstrate your ability to think critically.
3. Structure your answer. Having a well-structured answer is almost as important as providing a correct answer. Structuring your answer in a way that is easily understandable shows that you can communicate your ideas. It also can show the interviewer how you came to your conclusion, which is an important component in case interviews.

* Source: 10 Case Interview Question Examples
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**TECHNICAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

A technical interview is a job interview for any position that relates to the tech industry. During the technical interview, the interviewer will assess your technical knowledge, skills, and abilities as they relate to the needs of the specific job you are applying to. In addition to assessing your technical knowledge and skills, the interviewer will also be looking for what your thought process is when solving problems and how you will fit into the company’s culture.

**Examples:**

1. What coding language are you most comfortable with?
2. What is a SAN, and how is it used?
3. When is it appropriate to denormalize database design?
4. What is the role of continuous integration systems in the automated-build process?

**Tips**

1. Explain your reasoning. Many technical interview questions have a specific correct answer. This means you need to find a way to make your answer stand out from the answers provided by other candidates. Explaining your problem-solving process and the logic you used to arrive at your answer can help you stand out as a stronger candidate.
2. Know different methods for solving a problem. Some technical interview questions have several answers that could be correct. When answering a question that has several possible scenarios for arriving at a solution, explain your problem-solving process and make it clear that you know how to use each method to find a solution.
3. Ask for clarification, if needed. If the interviewer asks you a question and you need additional information to properly answer it, it is ok to ask the interviewer for clarification. This will show the interviewer that you have the ability to identify when additional information is needed and that you aren’t afraid to ask for clarification when you need it.
4. Elaborate on answers you don’t know. If you are asked a question during a technical interview that you don’t know the answer to, it is ok to tell the interviewer you don’t know the answer. However, you should elaborate on your answer and explain how you would go about finding the information for the answer if this were a problem you faced on the job. This will show the interviewer you have the ability to search for information to solve problems when you don’t know how to do something.
5. Be prepared to prove your skills. Many technical interviews include an aspect where you are asked to prove your skills through a series of brainteasers, whiteboard coding challenges, or remote coding assignments. While this phase typically occurs during the second or third interview, it is important to be prepared for at least one brainteaser question or whiteboard challenge during your first technical interview. With these questions, it is important to remember to talk through your reasoning process and explain the steps you are taking to answer the question.

* Source: 13 Common Technical Interview Questions Plus Example Answers

**BRAIN TEASER QUESTIONS**

For analytical and technical roles, interviewers seek to assess an applicant’s logic, math, critical thinking and creativity, as well as the ability to perform under pressure. And many times, your answer is not as important as how you reached that answer.

There are different types of brain teaser questions and several websites that provide examples of each.

- Visualization: How many tennis balls fit in an airplane?
- Quick math: What is the sum of the numbers from 1 to 100?
- Why things are the way they are: Why are manhole covers round?
- Explain a concept: Explain the internet to someone who has just come out of a 30-year coma.
- Solve a mystery: You have a 3-cup jug and a 5-cup jug. How do you measure one cup of water?
- Manage an unlikely problem: How would you test a calculator?

**Tips**

1. Remember that the correct answer is not the main reason for asking this question. The purpose is to learn how you think and handle pressure.
2. Take a moment to carefully consider the question.
3. Ask any clarifying questions. Make sure you understand the question.
4. Show that you are capable of solving problems creatively. Walk interviewers through your thinking process.

Review: 7 Insane Brain Teasers You Could Actually Encounter in an Interview
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### DECODING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

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<th><strong>WHAT THEY ASK</strong></th>
<th><strong>WHY THEY ASK IT</strong></th>
<th><strong>HOW TO RESPOND</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Tell me about yourself.”</td>
<td>It gives you chance to ease into the interview and provide context to the experiences outlined in your resume.</td>
<td>Briefly summarize the past few years in 2-3 themes related to the role and organization. Provide context around your work, like how much time went into a project or the level of autonomy and responsibility you had.</td>
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<td>“Why do you want to work for this organization?”</td>
<td>To listen for more than a quote from the firm’s website or generalities about the industry as a whole. Not being able to convey sentiments pertinent to the organization may signal you’re not really interested in working there.</td>
<td>Share what intrigues you from conversations you had with alumni or others who work there or from what you read. Note admiration for the organization’s growth or your desire to support its mission.</td>
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<td>“Tell me about a conflict you had with a supervisor or other person in a position of authority.”</td>
<td>Disagreements happen, so interviewers want to know how you handle them. Avoiding conflict may mean you lack the courage of your own convictions, but just blaming the other party doesn’t put you in the best light.</td>
<td>Be honest. Provide some detail and context but focus primarily on the resolution and lessons learned rather than belaboring the conflict itself.</td>
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<td>“What are your greatest strengths?”</td>
<td>A way to assess your familiarity with the nature of the job or organization by the strengths you highlight. It is also a test of your confidence – if you don’t believe in yourself, neither will your interviewer!</td>
<td>Reflect on what you’ve been recognized for by supervisors or peers. Provide examples: If you say you have strong time management skills, highlight how you plan out your day, week, and semester.</td>
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<td>“What is your greatest weakness?”</td>
<td>No candidate is perfect, but interviewers want employees who can honestly assess what they still need to learn and can demonstrate a plan to learn it.</td>
<td>For example, there may be a certain technology they use that you haven’t; demonstrate a situation in which you previously had to learn a new technology quickly to complete a project or task.</td>
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<td>“Describe how you handled a team or group project when one member wasn’t carrying their weight.”</td>
<td>Collaboration is essential in most work environments, but it doesn’t always go smoothly. Interviewers are looking for how you position yourself in the group, how you communicate with your peers, and how you embrace or resolve conflict.</td>
<td>Frame the story with the context of the group’s goals and your individual role in the group. Display empathy for the team member who held up the project or take ownership if it was you. Outline how the issue was resolved and the lessons you learned from the experience.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
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<td>“Where do you see yourself in 5 years?”</td>
<td>The interviewer wants a sense of how you view career progression and perhaps if you understand how advancing at their organization works. Be honest about future goals but be vague enough so as not to imply you’re already planning your exit. It’s also OK to say that you’re not quite sure what the future holds, but that you see this experience playing an important role in helping you make that decision.</td>
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<td>“Can you describe a time when your work was unfairly criticized?”</td>
<td>Describe the situation, the critique, and the circumstances around it. Demonstrate recognition of why the critique occurred and how it might have gone differently or what you learned. Avoid harsh criticisms or personal judgments of others.</td>
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<td>“What are your salary requirements?”</td>
<td>Prior to your interview, check O*NET, PayScale, Salary.com, or other sites to triangulate a salary range. Provide that range and your justification based on the value you’ll add to the organization with the experience, education, and skills you bring to the organization.</td>
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<td>“Do you have any questions for me?”</td>
<td>Ask questions to which you genuinely want an answer. Use your questions to convey your enthusiasm for the role/organization. Ask for your interviewer’s business card/contact information, what the next step in the hiring process is, and the expected recruitment timeline.</td>
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<td>“Is there anything else you’d like us to know?”</td>
<td>Ahead of time, think of 3-4 key points you want to get across about yourself during your interview. Use this question as the opportunity to convey key points that hadn’t yet come up or to recap your interest in and qualifications for this role.</td>
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* Source: Center for Career Development – Princeton University*
1. **Dressing Inappropriately**

When you interview for a job, it’s imperative to look professional and polished. Although your attire may vary based on the position you’re applying for — for example, you should wear business casual clothing to an interview for a non-professional job or startup casual garb to an interview at a small startup company — it’s important to look well-dressed and put together, no matter what the company.

2. **Arriving Late**

Everyone knows that first impressions are very important in landing a job, but did you know that you can make a bad first impression before you even arrive at your interview? Running late not only suggests poor time management skills, but shows a lack of respect for the company, the position, and even your interviewer.

Go the extra length to make sure that you aren’t late, and arrive on time, or even early. Budget your time so that you make it to the interview five to ten minutes early. That way, if something unforeseen comes up on your way over to your interview, you’ll have some cushion time.

3. **Bringing a Drink With You**

Ditch the coffee, soda, or water bottle before you enter your interview. If you need to fuel up, do it before you get to the interview. Not only is it unprofessional to enter with a drink, but during your interview, you should be focused on the task at hand: making a good impression, answering questions, maintaining eye contact with your potential employer, and paying attention throughout the entire interviewing process.

Having a drink in front of you creates the opportunity for distraction—fiddling with the cup, or missing a question while taking a sip, for example. And although it may be a relatively unlikely possibility, bringing a drink into your interview also gives way to other unsightly accidents—like spilling the drink on the desk, on you, or even your interviewer!

4. **Using Your Phone During the Interview**

Before you get to your interview, silence your phone. Texting during your interview is not only rude and disruptive, but it’s a clear message to your potential employer that getting the job is not your top priority.

For the same reasons, don’t answer calls (and certainly don’t make them) during the interview. To resist the temptation to check your phone, stow your phone in your bag before the interview. If you accidentally forget to turn it off, resist the temptation to check it if you get a message or call.

5. **Not Knowing Anything About the Company**

Don’t let your potential employer stump you with the question, “What do you know about this company?” It’s one of the easiest questions to ace, if only you do some research before your interview.

Background information including company history, locations, divisions, and a mission statement are available in an “About Us” section on most company websites. Review it ahead of time, then print it out and read it over just before your interview to refresh your memory. Also check the company’s LinkedIn page, Facebook page, and Twitter feed, if they have one.

6. **Fuzzy Resume Facts**

Even if you have submitted a resume when you applied for the job, you may also be asked to fill out a job application. Make sure you know the information you will need to complete an application including dates of prior employment, graduation dates, and employer contact information.

It’s understandable that some of your older experiences may be hard to recall. Review the facts before your interview. If you need to, take the time to recreate your employment history, so your resume is accurate. It can be helpful to keep a copy of your resume for yourself to refer to during your interview, although certainly don’t use it as a crutch.

Of course, you should never “fudge” any facts on your resume. The more truthful you are on your resume, the better you will be able to discuss your past experience during your interview.
7. NOT PAYING ATTENTION

Don’t let yourself zone out during an interview. Make sure you are well-rested, alert, and prepared.

Getting distracted and missing a question looks bad on your part. If you zone out, your potential employer will wonder how you will be able to stay focused during a day on the job, if you can’t even focus during one interview.

If you feel your attention slipping away, make an effort to stay engaged. Maintain eye contact, lean forward slightly when talking to your interviewer, and make an active effort to listen effectively.

While you may have no problem paying attention in a one-on-one interview in a private office, it’s harder to stay in tune with the interviewer when you’re meeting in a public place.

8. TALKING TOO MUCH

There is nothing much worse than interviewing someone who goes on and on. The interviewer really doesn’t need to know your whole life story. Keep your answers succinct, to-the-point and focused and don’t ramble—simply answer the question. Don’t get sidetracked and start talking about your personal life—your spouse, your home life, or your children are not topics you should delve into. No matter how warm, welcoming, or genial your interviewer may be, an interview is a professional situation—not a personal one. Avoid this mistake by using nonverbal communication to impress your potential employer.

9. NOT BEING PREPARED TO ANSWER QUESTIONS

Be prepared to answer the most frequently asked interview questions. Your interviewer is probably going to ask you more than just the basics about where you worked, and when. To get a feel of your aptitude for a job, your interviewer is going to take advantage of the allotted time and flesh out everything he or she needs to know about you as an employee. Don’t let yourself be caught off guard. Prepare for your interview by reviewing questions to expect and how to answer them. Be prepared with a list of questions to ask the employer so you’re ready when you asked if you have questions for the interviewer. Review questions you should not ask during a job interview and the worst interview answers that you should avoid at all costs.

10. BADMOUTHING PAST EMPLOYERS

Don’t make the mistake of badmouthing your boss or coworkers. It’s sometimes a smaller world than you think, and you don’t know who your interviewer might know, including that boss who you think is an idiot. You also don’t want the interviewer to think that you might speak that way about his or her company if you leave on terms that aren’t the best.

When interviewing for a job, you want your employer to know that you can work well with other people and handle conflicts in a mature and effective way, rather than badmouthing your coworkers or talking about other people’s incompetence.

When you’re asked hard questions, like “Tell me about a time that you didn’t work well with a supervisor. What was the outcome and how would you have changed the outcome?” or “Have you worked with someone you didn’t like? If so, how did you handle it?” don’t fall back on badmouthing other people. Instead, review how to answer difficult questions.

* Source: 10 Easy-To-Make Job Interview Mistakes