

# INTERVIEW INFORMATION

## 1. PREPARE!!

- a. Know yourself and how you will add value to the employer.
- b. Know the employer and what they do. Where are they located? What is their history?
- c. Mock Interviews: call Career Center to schedule
- d. *Interview Stream*: either at Career Center or using your own computer camera
- e. Quiet Room: for phone or Skype interviews. Call Career Center to reserve.

## 2. TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

### a. Behavioral

- i. Screening; usually first interview; often by HR department
- ii. Keep answers to 2-3 minutes—keep “tell us about yourself” answer to 30-60 seconds, though (elevator)
- iii. Think of specific examples (“last semester, in my thesis project, I encountered this problem...”); focus on results/outcomes (“Previously, it would have taken 2 days to run this type of data, but I rewrote the method and reduced the time to 2 hours.”)
- iv. Prepare by thinking of stories from your life that demonstrate a strength, knowledge, or a skill (see Career Center brochure—STAR method)

### b. Technical

- i. Sometimes the first interview is technical, the second is often technical
- ii. By manager/engineer, usually; may ask you to solve particular technical problem
- iii. Prepare by looking at resume and refreshing memory about every skill and research experience you listed. If it's on the resume, it's fair game!

### c. Case/Situational

- i. Companies beginning to use these more
- ii. May incorporate situational question into behavioral interview: “Here is an example of a problem we recently confronted in our XX project. How would you have solved this?”
- iii. Employer trying to see how you think and solve problems. Right answer not necessarily the issue—they are seeking the *process*.
- iv. To prepare: Read books on Case Interviewing (e.g., *Case in Point*, by Marc Cosentino), see Career Center website: WetFeet, Vault (online resources)

### d. Phone Interview

- i. No non-verbal cues—must use verbal clarification (Did I answer your question fully?)
- ii. May be group interview; ask who is there and write down their names (ask how to spell them, too)
- iii. Technical problems may arise; use land line if possible (make appt to use one in CC if necessary)
- iv. Speak slowly if you have a tendency to talk faster when nervous
- v. Be sure to keep answers concise; ask if they want more details before going on
- vi. Hint: make a “cheat sheet” of company info and common interview questions/your answers

### e. Skype Interview

- i. Dress for an in-person interview (yes, even your lower half)
- ii. Make sure you have a CLEAN and QUIET space; limit distractions (roommates, pets, etc.)
- iii. Ask a friend to help you conduct a “dress rehearsal” to check light and sound
- iv. It's tempting to look at the interviewers' faces, but remember to look at your camera!
- v. Prepare for technical difficulties. Ask interviewers to repeat questions or adjust volume if necessary.
- vi. Hint: tape your resume and list of company info to the wall just behind your computer's camera.

## 3. GENERAL TIPS

- a. Firm handshake, eye contact, SMILE ☺
- b. Ask questions that demonstrate sincere enthusiasm and knowledge of company/position; take notes.
- c. Remember: you are *ALWAYS* being evaluated
- d. Send individual thank-you emails immediately following interview (which also reiterate interest in position)
- e. They must answer 2 questions about you:
  - i. Does this person have the skills necessary to do this job?
  - ii. Is this someone the people at my company would like to work with?







## Questions to Expect During the Interview

1. Why are you here?
2. If you had only one word to describe yourself, what would it be?
3. When have you failed? Describe what happened and what you learned from it.
4. What's the one accomplishment you're most proud of? Why?
5. What qualities in your co-workers bother you most? Do you appreciate most?
6. How do you take advantage of your strengths? How do you compensate for your weaknesses?
7. If I were to ask your current boss what your greatest strength is, what would he or she tell me?
8. If I were to ask your current boss to tell me one thing you do that drives him crazy, what would he tell me?
9. What's one thing you would like to do better? What's your plan for improving?
10. What changes have you made in working with others to be more effective at work?
11. What do you think are the most important attributes of successful people? How do you rate yourself in those areas?
12. How do you make decisions?
13. If you were limited to just one person to get advice and help from, which person would you choose? Why?
14. Tell me about a work incident in which you were totally honest, despite a potential risk or downside.
15. What would you do if you made an important business decision and a co-worker challenged it?

16. Describe a crisis you faced at work. What was your role? How did you resolve it? What were the results?
17. Describe a time when you were asked to do something you weren't trained to do. How did you handle it?
18. Describe the boss who would get the very best work from you.
19. What will make you love coming to work here everyday?
20. What would you do if management made a decision you didn't agree with?
21. What is there about this opportunity that most excites you?
22. What's your greatest fear about this opportunity?
23. If you get the job, how could you lose money for me?
24. Assume that you come to work here. One year from now you go home one Friday evening thinking that accepting this job was the best thing you ever did. What happened during the year for you to feel that way?
25. Is there any question I haven't asked you that I should?

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## Questions to Expect

- 1. Relax and tell me a little about yourself.** Talk about your experience, qualifications, and accomplishments – not your childhood, family, or hobbies.
- 2. Why do you want to work as a...?** Talk about the interesting details of the job and why they fascinate you.
- 3. What skills does this job require?** Use your fingers and count the skills – 1... 2... 3... .
- 4. What qualifications do you have?** Using your fingers, name a skill, list your qualifications. Move to the next skill.
- 5. Tell me about my company.** Call the Chamber of Commerce. Get information on the company size, its key products or services, the markets where it competes, and its overall reputation.
- 6. Why do you want to work for us?** You're on your own.
- 7. How did you learn about us?** Friend, relative, newspaper story, advertisements – anything to show that they are not a random choice.
- 8. How many other companies have you approached?** "Several for back-up, but this is where I really want to work."
- 9. How many employers have you worked for during the last five years?** Tell the truth.
- 10. You seem to switch jobs a lot. Why?** Job stagnation, demotions due to down-sizing, career exploration, a short-lived personal problem, or having made a bad choice are all good reasons.
- 11. How long do you plan to work here?** "A long time. This is the job I've been hoping for."
- 12. Tell me about your current (or last) job.** List your duties and responsibilities. Explain your accomplishments.
- 13. Why are you leaving that job?** Job stagnation, demotions due to down-sizing, career exploration, or simply having made a bad choice are all good reasons.
- 14. Are you planning to give notice that you're leaving for another job?** Explain that you don't want to leave them short-handed. A two-week notice is customary.
- 15. What will your manager say when you give notice that you're leaving?** Explain why you'll be missed. Don't give the impression that they'll be glad to be rid of you.
- 16. What did you like most about that job?** Talk about your responsibilities, challenges, accomplishments, and the people.
- 17. What would you change about that job?** Don't bad-mouth the job. Explain that you'd want more responsibilities. It shows initiative.
- 18. Did you ever have a disagreement with a boss? Why? Why not?** Answer, "yes" and you're a troublemaker, "no" and you're a wimp. Find the middle ground – "sure we disagreed, but we worked well together. For example..."
- 19. Tell me about your education or training.** Explain your education or training and tell how it helped you prepare for this job.
- 20. Did you enjoy school? Why?** The manager may want to know if you enjoy learning and whether you might benefit from a training program.
- 21. Which course did you find most difficult? Why?** The manager wants to know if you have perseverance: "I got a D in my first term in algebra. My study skills were all wrong. I joined a study group. By third term I pulled it up to a B and kept it there."
- 22. Did you join any school activities? Why?** School activities show that you're sociable, that you enjoy being part of a group, and that you can work with other people. This is important in the workplace.
- 23. How were your grades in math?** The job may require certain math skills like addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, and percentages. "I had a problem with calculus, but my basic math skills are good."

24. **How were your grades in English?** The job may require reading. It may also require you to write reports.
25. **Do you plan to continue your education?** Continuing education courses suggest growth ambition, promotability – and may qualify for tuition assistance.
26. **What do you do to relax after work?** Don't brag about car racing, sky diving, scuba diving, or any other sport that might be dangerous. They suggest a likelihood of injury and absence from work.
27. **What do you plan to be doing for work five years from today?** Figure the promotions you should get if you work hard for the company over the next five years. Tell the manager you plan to be working for him or her in that position.
28. **What salary do you expect to be earning five years from today?** Avoid salary questions by stating, "A fair salary", or "A salary equal to my work contributions."
29. **When do you hope to retire?** "Certainly not before I'm 65."
30. **Give an example of any major problem you faced and how you solved it.** Think of something related to work, school, civic, or leisure activities. Tell it as a story. Give details. The manager wants to see how you define problems, identify options, decide on a solution, handle obstacles, and solve the problem.
31. **In your lifetime, what was your greatest accomplishment? What did you learn from it?** A personal touch works well here, such as your marriage, birth of a child, or helping someone in need.
32. **What was your greatest failure? What did you learn from it?** Fessing up to a failure shows maturity. Avoid examples that might reflect on your ability to do the job.
33. **What is your greatest weakness?** Focus on work, not character weaknesses. Turn it into a positive, "I'm accused of being a workaholic. I like to stay and get caught up on the odds and ends before I go home."
34. **Have you ever been convicted of a crime?** It's not illegal to ask this question if it has a bearing on the job you are seeking. A bank, for example, wouldn't want a convicted embezzler working in the vault. If you have a conviction, admit it. Explain what happened. Admit that you made a stupid mistake. Tell what you've done to make amends. Ask for a second chance.
35. **Do you have a drug or alcohol problem?** If you do, get some help. Enroll in a program.
36. **Last year, how many days of work (or school) did you miss? How many days were you late?** This will tell the manager whether you're going to show up to work on time every day. If you've missed more than a couple of days, have some good explanations ready.
37. **What motivates you to do a good job?** Money is not a good answer. A good answer is something like, "having responsibilities and being acknowledged when the job is done right."
38. **Are you your best when working alone or in a group?** "Both. I enjoy working as a part of a team and I can work independently to get my share of the work done."
39. **Would you rather be in charge of a project or work as part of the team? Why?** "Either. I'm not afraid to take responsibility and I'm not afraid to roll up my sleeves and pitch in."
40. **As a youngster, what did you do to earn your own spending money?** Baby-sitting, lemonade stand, newspaper route, shoveling snow, mowing lawns, and other jobs show early signs of ambition and respect for work.
41. **What would you do if one supervisor told you to do something now and another supervisor told you to do it later?** The manager wants to see how you would handle conflict. How would you handle it?
42. **Give me two reasons why I should NOT hire you.** You're on your own.
43. **Who are your heroes? Why?** Think about it.
44. **What do you like most about yourself? Least?** See #33. Stress positives.
45. **If you were told to report to a supervisor who was a woman, a minority, or handicapped, what problems would this cause for you?** You're on your own.
46. **What salary were you paid on your last job?** Tell the truth.
47. **What kind of salary are you looking for today?** "I have no set salary. What salary is usually offered to someone with my qualifications?" If the manager persists, give a general answer like, "somewhere in the teens," or "somewhere in the thirties."
48. **In your last job, how much overtime did you average each week?** The manager wants to know if you can be counted on when the work mounts. Explain that you can be counted on to work late whenever the need arises.
49. **Have you ever been fired from a job? Why?** Explain that you usually get along really well with everyone. But, you and your ex-manager just couldn't seem to make things work.
50. **Do you have any questions for me?** "Yes, thank you. I do have a few questions..."



## Questions Asked by Employers

1. Why did you choose to interview with our company?
2. Describe your ideal job.
3. What can you offer us?
4. Where do you want to be in five years? Ten years?
5. Do you plan to return to school for further education?
6. What skills have you developed?
7. Did you work while going to school? In what positions?
8. What did you enjoy most about your last employment?
9. What did you enjoy least about your last employment?
10. What did you learn from these college/work experiences?
11. Have you ever quit a job? Why?
12. Why should we hire you rather than another candidate?
13. Why did you choose your major?
14. What do you consider to be your greatest strengths?
15. Can you name some weaknesses?
16. Do you prefer to work under supervision or on your own?
17. Would you be successful working on a team?
18. Of which three accomplishments are you most proud?
19. In which campus activities did you participate?
20. Have you ever dropped a class? Why?
21. Why did you select your college or university?
22. What do you know about our company (product or service)?
23. Which college classes did you like the best? Why?
24. Which college classes did you like the least? Why?
25. Who are your role models?
26. Do you think you received a good education at \_\_\_\_\_?
27. What is your overall GPA? What is your major GPA?
28. Do your grades accurately reflect your ability?
29. Were you financially responsible for any portion of your college education?
30. Have you worked under deadline pressure? When?
31. Are you able to work on several assignments at once?
32. Do you prefer large or small companies? Why?
33. How do you feel about working in a structured environment?
34. How do you feel about working overtime?
35. How do you feel about travel?
36. How do you feel about the possibility of relocation?
37. Do you have any hobbies?
38. What problems have you solved in your previous positions?
39. Are you willing to work flextime?
40. Have you ever done any volunteer work? What?
41. Define success. Failure.
42. Have you ever had any failures?
43. How does your college education or work experience relate to this job?
44. How did you get along with your former professors (supervisors and co-workers)?
45. How many classes did you miss because of illness or personal business?
46. What are your ideas on salary?
47. Tell me about yourself.
48. Do you have any computer experience?
49. Have you ever spoken to a group of people? How large?
50. Would you be willing to take a drug test?

## **10 QUESTIONS TO ASK**

1. How would you describe a typical day on the job?
2. When was my predecessor promoted?
3. What kind of training can I expect in the first three months?
4. What specific skills or experience would help someone do well in this job?
5. Do most managers have advanced degrees? If so, which ones?
6. When will the first job performance evaluation take place?
7. To whom should I report?
8. Will I have a chance to meet people who would be my co-workers?
9. Would I be assigned to a specific department or rotate throughout the organization?
10. Does the company anticipate changing the current structure soon?





## Questions to Ask the Interviewer

Job candidates often forget the interview is a two-way process. Both you and the employer need to learn more about each other. Before going into an interview, sit down and think of the questions you may ask. One expert advises asking one fairly early in the conversation, to establish the fact that you also have questions.

Here are examples of the kinds of things which might be asked. In addition, base one or two questions on the research you've done on the employing organization – to reflect your interest through the fact that you did your homework.

**“Could you describe the ‘ideal candidate’ for this position?”**

This is a great way to learn what the employer is really looking for and, once you learn, you may tailor your presentation to show how well you meet their goals.

**“Is this a new position, or would I be replacing someone?”**

This is another good way to learn about the job, its duties, and how it fits into the organization. Also, any extraneous comments made by the employer about the last to hold the position may provide clues to help you present your qualifications.

**“Can you describe your management style?”**

This may put the interviewer slightly on the defensive, but should help you evaluate the pluses and minuses in the organization. Once again, when you learn about the working environment, you are better able to tailor your qualifications.

**“Is there a career path for this position?”**

This is a good way to measure the potential for advancement. Also to learn what happened to others who held that position.

**“It may be a bit early, but could you give me a general salary range for positions of this type?”**

Always try to get the employer to be the first to mention a specific salary figure. If it doesn't come up, this is a good thing to ask near the end of the interview.

**“May I provide any additional information?”**

This is polite and shows you want to help, and the interviewer may just ask for supplementary details about an area in which he or she may have rated you low.

**“I've enjoyed this conversation. Do you think we will have another meeting soon?”**

This is a good way to (1) show your interest in the job and (2) to get some feel for how you stand. If the employer indicates that another meeting is likely, you'll know that you are being seriously considered for the job.

## Examples of Behavioral Interviewing Questions

### **Judgment/Problem-Solving**

- Recall a time when your education and experience did not prepare you for a task. What did you do?
- Describe a problem you've recently been asked to solve.
- Give me an example of a good decision you have made recently.

### **Teamwork/Collaboration**

- Interacting with others can be challenging at times. Describe a situation when you wish you had acted differently with someone.
- Describe a situation when you were able to help a team member or peer.
- Describe the best/worst team of which you have been a member.

### **Initiative**

- Have you found any ways to make your job easier?
- Give me an example of doing more than is required in your current job/class.
- Can you think of some projects or ideas (not necessarily your own) that were sold, implemented, or carried out successfully because of your efforts?

### **Adjustment/Flexibility**

- Tell me about a difficult situation you recently had to manage.
- Jobs differ in the extent to which unexpected changes can disrupt daily responsibilities. How do you feel when this happens? Why? Tell me about a time when this happened recently.
- Describe a situation that required several things to be done at the same time.

## **Leadership**

- Tell me about a time when you were a leader.
- Describe a situation in which your efforts influenced the actions of others.

## **Planning & Organizing/Work Management**

- Walk me through yesterday (or last week) and tell me how you planned the day's (or week's) activities.
- Tell me about a time when your course load was heaviest. How did you get all of your work done?
- How were you able to balance your school work with extracurricular activities/work?

## **Technical/Professional Knowledge**

- Sometimes complex projects require additional expertise. Describe a situation when you had to request help or assistance with one of your projects or assignments.
- Describe how you've gone about learning a new technical skill.
- Describe a time when you solved a technical problem.

## **Customer Focus**

- When you think of companies who serve their customers well, which companies do you think of? Why?
- Can you describe a situation in which you were able to "win over" a difficult customer?
- What is good customer service? How have you given good customer service?

## **Motivational Fit**

- When were you most satisfied/dissatisfied in your work (school)? What was most satisfying/dissatisfying about that?
- (Achievement) Tell me about a time when you had a lot of challenge in your work. How satisfied were you with that and why?
- Jobs differ in the extent to which people work independently or as part of a team. Which do you prefer? Why? Tell me about a time when you enjoyed working this way.

