

## **WHAT IS THE INTERVIEW?**

The interview is the final stage in most job/internship searches. Employers place a great deal of importance on the interview because it is their best chance to get to know you. Each interviewer you encounter will have his or her own style of conducting an interview. Your goal is to convince them that you would be an excellent fit for the job. Spend time on clearly demonstrating why you are well suited for the position and then support your answer with **specific behavioral examples** of achievements, accomplishments and skills.

### **INTERVIEW APPROACHES**

Typically, the interviewer asks specific questions that are directly related to the job requirements and your ability to fulfill them. They will ask questions as a prompt to seek clarification or more information. Most interviews you have will probably involve a combination of three basic interviewing techniques.

**The structured interview:** This type of interview follows a previously prepared format or script. You are likely to experience a situation in which the interviewer has a **prepared list of questions**. The benefit of this process is that every candidate is asked to respond to the same questions, and the answers to each are written down for later review.

**The unstructured interview:** This type of interview is more **free-flowing**. The interviewer tries not to influence your remarks and allows maximum freedom in the response. Commonly asked questions in this type of interview are “Tell me about yourself” or “Please tell me more about why you ...” and will include many one word questions like “Why?”

**The stress interview:** In the stress interview, the questions are asked in **rapid-fire** order by interviewers who appear to be unfriendly. It is unlikely that you will ever be subjected to this type of interview. The only justification for its use is to determine how well you perform under pressure.

### **WHAT TO EXPECT IN THE FIRST AND SECOND INTERVIEWS**

#### **Preparation checklist for both**

- ☐ Have a strong sense of your assets, strengths, interests, and goals.
- ☐ Research the organization and position you are applying for prior to the interview.
- ☐ Be prepared to communicate how you fit with the organization.
- ☐ Be prepared to answer questions and to provide **specific examples**.
- ☐ Be prepared to ask questions about the organization.

- ❑ Be prepared to provide references and to release transcript information if requested.
- ❑ Dress appropriately (specific guidelines are later in this handout).
- ❑ **Arrive early** for all interviews.
- ❑ Practice initial greeting and handshake.
- ❑ Obtain a business card from each interviewer.
- ❑ Make sure you **express your interest** in the position and ask for the job!
- ❑ Write thank you letters and/or emails within 48 hours of your interviews.

### **Questions you can ask the interviewer in the first interview**

- What types of challenges does this position offer?
- Could you tell me briefly about the people I would be working with?
- What is a typical day like in this position?
- What are the most important characteristics for people in this position?
- Could you describe the typical career path for this position?
- How would you describe the culture of the organization?
- What trends do you see affecting your organization?
- What do you find satisfying about this job?
- What type of person succeeds in this position? Organization?
- What are the organization's strengths? Weaknesses?
- How much of the time will I work independently and how much will I work as part of a team?
- What is the next step in your hiring/interview process?

### **What is the second interview?**

The second interview is primarily to introduce you to other people to learn more about the organization and its culture. You should ask yourself at this point “can I see myself developing in this position with this organization?” This step is typical in most professional organizations.

Two or more people on-site may interview you for a few hours or up to an entire day. It is appropriate to ask what the agenda will be for your second interview beforehand, as this information will help you as you prepare. Treat each interview as if it were your first as far as professionalism.

You may be asked similar questions to the first interview. **Don't worry about repeating** some of the same information you presented in the first interview. The second interviewer may be looking for consistency.

Remember to express your interest in the position! Don't assume the interviewer knows that you want the job.

## Questions you can ask the interviewer in the second interview

- Has anything changed within the organization or department since we last talked?
- When will I hear from you regarding this position?
- What is the start date for this position?
- What do you think the most challenging aspects of the job would be for someone with my background?
- What type of performance reviews can I expect? Frequency?
- What do you find most satisfying about the job and the organization?
- What, if anything, do you dislike about the organization?
- What do you consider the most important day-to-day activities or responsibilities of this position?
- What are the organization's goals for the next five years?

In the interviewer's opinion, past performance usually determines future success. You may feel that you are repeating yourself at times during the interview, but it's important to realize that the same basic answer with different examples is perfectly acceptable. You want to demonstrate a consistent pattern of leadership ability, quantitative skills, interpersonal expertise and so on.

## What NOT to ask

Certain topic areas should be avoided. Do NOT ask about the salary or benefits. The interviewer will bring these topics up. Do your research prior to the interview so you can discuss salary when appropriate.

For a list of possible questions the interviewer may ask you, see the end of this handout.

## INTERVIEW MEDIUMS



### Telephone Interviews

Try to arrange to be in a **quiet place and eliminate all distractions**. Pay close attention to what the interviewer is saying. Make sure you **take good notes**. Telephone interviews can be quite challenging because the caller will most likely catch you at a time when you are not adequately prepared. You can ask the person if you can call them back if you are caught off guard or not in a suitable environment.



### Zoom interviews

Prepare for a Zoom interview like you would a face-to-face interview. Dress appropriately and stay engaged in the conversation. Try to **eliminate distractions in the background** and ensure you have **reliable Internet connection**.



### Panel Interviewers

In this situation, **two or more individuals** will review you. Each person may ask questions, however, it is possible that only one person will ask while the other takes notes.



### Group Interview

This type of interview usually involves a presentation to many people at the same time. It typically includes situations where **two to thirty people are “interviewed” at the same time**. They are usually **general in format** and do not allow much, if any, time for questions. The recruiter will provide an overview of the company and the position and ask that those who are interested stay and interview on a more personal basis. This interview is most common in a larger organization where an emphasis is placed on teamwork.



### Interviews During a Meal

An interview during a meal **could range from a very informal gathering of employees to a formal occasion**. Whether you are told that you will be evaluated or not, be sure to stay in the “interview mode” throughout the meal. When it comes time to order, let the interviewer go first and follow his or her lead regarding price range, etc. Since you will be doing most of the talking, order something that is easy to eat. Try to avoid messy items such as spaghetti. Remember, you are there to impress the people you are with.

## COMPONENTS OF AN INTERVIEW

	Interviewer's role	Your role
<b>Warm up and Greeting</b>	An interview usually begins with a greeting and handshake. The interviewer is already starting to evaluate you.	Make sure you smile, and have a firm handshake. Show the interviewer that you are friendly and confident. Be prepared for a few minutes of small talk after the greeting.
<b>Overview</b>	In this stage the interviewer will typically provide some structure to the interview process. They will briefly tell you about the organization, and about the position you are interviewing for.	Show your interest through body language and active listening skills.
<b>Questions</b>	During this stage, the interviewer will ask you questions. They will be evaluating your answers and assessing your fit for the position.	Through your answers, you must provide the interviewer with information about yourself that will convince them that you have the skills and qualifications to be recommended for a second interview. You will also have the opportunity to ask questions about the position and the organization.
<b>Closing</b>	In this stage, the interviewer will provide you with a rough timeline for their hiring process. They will tell you what the next step in the process is, and when they anticipate making a final decision.	If the interviewer does not provide you with this information, ask for it.
<b>Wrap up</b>	They are continuing to assess you.	The wrap-up stage is your responsibility. You provide the interviewer with any information you didn't have a chance to discuss during the questioning stage and thank them for their time. Tell them that you are interested in the position! And remember to ask for a business card, or get their name and address for thank you notes.

## BEHAVIORAL BASED INTERVIEWING (STAR)

### SITUATION      TASK      ACTION      RESULT

The basis of Behavioral Based Interviewing is that your past performance will determine your future success. The interviewer is looking for examples and proof of a particular skill. Use the STAR format to provide good examples with outcomes. You will be asked to describe previous situations in which you used desired behaviors. To prepare for a Behavioral Interview, **prepare short descriptions of situations that demonstrate positive behaviors or actions.** Make sure every story has a beginning, middle, and an end. Be sure that the outcome reflects positively on you. Be specific and provide as much detail as possible.

#### STAR Example

	What you need to include	Interview Question Example “Can you give me an example of a time when you served as the leader of a group?”
<b>Situation</b>	Briefly describe the situation you were in.	“As part of a communication class, we were divided into groups of four and given a project to complete.”
<b>Task</b>	Describe what assignment you were given to complete. You might use examples from your education, work experience, or activities.	“We needed to develop a presentation for an organization in order to increase public awareness of the organization and its services. My group selected a small nonprofit organization that serves homebound seniors.”
<b>Action</b>	Actions are activities you engaged in to get the task accomplished.	“During our initial meeting, everyone just threw out ideas and talked a lot, but no one was taking charge to keep us focused. So, I stepped in and tried to provide some structure to the meeting and to keep us focused. The other members of the group responded favorably, so from then on I was looked at as the leader of the group. What we ended up doing was developing a multifaceted marketing campaign. Each of us was assigned a specific task each week. I made sure everyone knew what their responsibilities were and checked to make sure they were meeting the deadlines we agreed upon. Two people developed a radio spot; one person developed an ad that could be used in magazines, on billboards, etc., and I developed a computer presentation.”

<b>Results</b>	This is the outcome of the task and action. Whenever possible, stat the results in quantifiable terms.	“We had the opportunity to present our campaign to the managers of the organization. They ended up using parts of our presentation, which ultimately led to a 24% increase in the use of their services over a 3 month period. Also, their name recognition increased by 17% based on surveys completed. Our group also received an award from the marketing club for creativity.”
----------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Notice in this example the specificity used to describe each step of the process and the numbers used to quantify the results. These are simple ways to improve your responses to questions during an interview.

## DRESSING FOR THE INTERVIEW

When selecting clothes for an interview, keep your target audience in mind. Always be aware of what is considered **appropriate for the industry** you are trying to get into. You should notice what is considered acceptable in specific organizations you are interested in and **dress at or slightly above that level for your interview**. If possible, visit a similar workplace ahead of time and note what employers there wear. Hair should always be kept neat. Keep hands and nails well groomed. Avoid chewing gum, twisting your hair, or playing with your jewelry or a pen!

Get some ideas online! There are lots of resources for what different styles of dress look like in real life. Below is an example that illustrates the ‘Business’ versus ‘Classic’ look from a LinkedIn article titled “Dress to Impress for an Interview” by Robin Huggins (2014), Head of Business Development at MBN Solutions:





## **LIST OF POSSIBLE INTERVIEWERS' QUESTIONS**

### **Background/Educational Questions**

- Tell me about yourself.
- Tell me about your liberal arts education.
- How did you decide on your career path?
- Describe the key events that led to your decision to get a BA degree.
- How did you decide to go to Lewis & Clark College?
- Why did you pick your major?
- What courses did you like best/least and why?
- How does your education in \_\_\_\_\_ relate specifically to this position?

### **Previous Experience or Employment**

- Describe your best job and your worst.
- If I were to call your last employer what would they tell me?
- What is the most rewarding assignment you have completed?
- How have you motivated others to work with or for you?
- How did your position at \_\_\_\_\_ prepare you for this position?
- What did you learn in your last position that will help you in this job?

### **Skills**

- Describe three skills you have that would benefit our organization.
- Give an example that demonstrates your ability to organize.
- Give an example of a time when you were the leader of a group.

### **Work Goals**

- Where do you plan to be in three to five years?
- What are your short-term goals?
- What are your long-term goals?

### **Aspects of the Position**

- Would you relocate?
- Are you able to work nights?
- Is travel a problem for you?
- What qualifies you for this position?
- If I'd never heard of this organization, what could you tell me about it?
- Why should I hire you?
- Why are you interested in joining us?

- How would you use your skill in sports on this job?
- What do you find most compelling about this position? Least compelling?
- In what kind of work environment are you most comfortable?
- What can you do for us that another candidate can't?

#### Communication Skills

- What kind of communication are you best at: formal presentation, informal presentation, written or interpersonal? Give an example. Which is your weakest area?
- What have you done to enhance your communication skills?
- Describe the correspondence you are experienced producing.

#### Working in Groups

- When working in a group, what factors do you think must be present for a group to accomplish its goal?
- Can you describe for me a group situation that you thought worked very well? Why did it work well? What role did you play?
- Can you describe a group situation that you thought did not work well? Why was it not successful? What was your role in the group? What did you do to try to keep the group on track? What would you do today in a similar situation?

#### Personal Traits, Character, Values

- At this time in your life, what do you value most?
- What characteristics or qualities do you value most in people?
- What is the most important lesson you have learned in life?
- Describe your personality to me.
- Give me an example that demonstrates your assertiveness.
- What one characteristic best describes you?
- How do you motivate people? Give me an example.
- Give me an example of a time that you demonstrated creativity.
- What motivates you?
- How do you handle pressure? Criticism?

#### Outside Interests, Hobbies

- How do you relax? What do you do in your leisure time?
- Are you active in any outside groups or organizations? What is your role in the group? What have you contributed to the organization?

#### Challenges, Strengths, Weaknesses

- Describe the most difficult situation you have been in and how you coped.
- Describe a goal you set for yourself and what you did to meet it.

- Can you give me an example where you successfully dealt with conflict?
- What has been your greatest accomplishment?
- Cite an example of a situation where you had to convince someone to do something.
- Tell me what you consider to be your greatest assets. Weaknesses?
- Can you describe for me a situation in which you failed to accomplish your objective? Why do you think you failed? What did you learn about yourself, or the situation, from this failure? Would you do anything differently?
- What was the biggest mistake you made?
- How will your major strengths help you in this position?
- What was your most satisfying success?

#### Questions for Teaching Candidates

- What is your philosophy of education?
- Describe your student teaching experiences.
- What are the qualities of an excellent teacher? Which of these qualities do you have?
- Describe your style of teaching.
- What three words would your students use to describe you as a teacher?
- How and when do you discipline a student?

### **CLOSE WITH YOUR OWN QUESTIONS**

Show that you have prepared for the interview and are sincerely interested by asking questions specific to the organization. This will set you apart from the people who haven't taken the time to prepare.

Example: I understand your organization is trying to expand into the international market. Could you explain how this will affect the area I would be working in?

#### Other Questions

- What type of performance reviews can I expect? Frequency?
- What do you find most satisfying about the job and the organization?
- What, if anything, do you dislike about the organization?
- What do you consider the most important day-to-day activities or responsibilities of this position?
- What are the organization's goals for the next five years?

Most job candidates find that they ask better questions if they preface questions with an explanation of why the issue is important to them.

Example: Through one of my classes I became interested in abuse issues related to homeless women. Could you tell me about what your organization is doing to address these issues?

## **POST-INTERVIEW THANK YOU**

Expressing your gratitude after an interview is an essential part of professional etiquette that is often overlooked. Continue to demonstrate your interest in the position by sending thank you letters or emails to your interviewer(s), regardless of whether the interview went well or not. Make sure to maintain professional language and tone even in the message. The interviewer represents an organization; do not address them as if you know them personally.

### **Methods for Expressing Gratitude**

- Neatly handwritten “Thank You” note, delivered personally or mailed to your interviewer(s).
- A formal, typed letter addressed to your interviewer(s), delivered personally or mailed to your interviewer(s) in a sealed envelope.
- A formal email addressed to your interviewer(s).

### **What to DO**

- Be succinct. A paragraph to a page should be your range.
- Proofread your message before you send it.
- Highlight your relevant skills.
- Restate your interest in the position and the organization at large.
- Sign the letter if it is handwritten or typed and mailed.

### **What NOT to do**

- Do not hand the interviewer(s) pre-sealed or generic thank you letters right after the interview – it may come across as inauthentic.
- Do not get personal! Keep your message as professional as possible.

### **Deciding to Use Email or Handwritten/Typed Notes**

Consider any timelines the employer is facing.

- If the timeline is short, you will want to respond more quickly with an email.
- If time is more flexible, make the decision to send a hand/typed letter of thanks – we so rarely see those anymore and they are appreciated!