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SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEWING TECHNIQUES

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Common Interview Types

One-On-One Interview

The traditional one on one interview is where you are interviewed by one representative of the company, most likely the manager of the position you are applying for. Because you will be working with this person directly if you get the job, he/she will want to get a feel for who you are and if your skills match those of the job requirements.

You may be asked questions about the experience on your resume, what you can offer to the company or position. The one on one interview is by far, one of the most common types of job interviews.

Panel Interview

In a panel interview, you will be interviewed by a panel of interviewers. The panel may consist of different representatives of the company such as human resources, management, and employees. The reason why some companies conduct panel interviews is to save time or to get the collective opinion of panel regarding the candidate. Each member of the panel may ask you questions during the interview.

Behavioral Interview

In a behavioral interview, the interviewer will ask you questions based on common situations of the job you are applying for. The logic behind the behavioral interview is that your future performance will be based on a past performance of a similar situation. You should expect questions that inquire about what you did when you were in a specific situation.

Group Interview

Many times companies will conduct a group interview to prescreen candidates and give them the chance to quickly learn about the company to see if they want to work there. A group interview usually begins with a short presentation about the company. After that, they may speak to each candidate individually and ask them a few questions.

One of the most important things the employer is observing during a group interview is how you interact with the other candidates. Are you emerging as a leader or are you more likely to complete tasks that are asked of you? Neither is necessarily better than the other; it depends on what type of personality works best for the position that needs to be filled.

Lunch Interview

Lunch interviews are often conducted as a second interview. The company will invite you to lunch with additional members of the team to further get to know you and see how you fit in. This is a great time to ask any questions you may have about the company or position.

Visit the [Professional Image and Etiquette](#) page on the [Career Center resource guide](#) to brush up on your dining etiquette.

Other Interview Types

There are many other types of interviews, including case interviews, puzzle interviews, the working interview, and more. When an interview is scheduled, it is appropriate for a candidate to ask for the details of the interview, including the type of interview he or she will participate in.

Prepare for Success

- **Get the details of the interview.** Ask for the names and titles of your interviewers, what type of interview it will be, and approximately how long the interview is expected to be.
- **Research the company.** This means more than just glancing at the website. Read the recent press releases, visit social media sites, Google the company, read company reviews on Glassdoor, and talk to anyone that works or has worked at the company to get insider advice.

Visit the [Career Exploration](#) page on the [Career Center resource guide](#) for more in-depth company and industry reports.



Six Key Items to know

- Products and services they provide
- Major locations-especially location of the headquarters
- How well they do it (for a public company look at the 10K report)
- Key customers
- Key competitors
- Community engagement / philanthropy

In addition to researching the prospective employer, research the organization's leaders and your interviewer(s). Know the interviewer's background and history with the company. Look for common interests or connections you might share.

- **Study the job description so you are familiar with the responsibilities.** Think from the perspective of the hiring team. What 10 questions would you ask of candidates interviewing for the position if you were the hiring manager? Practice answers to these questions. Look over common interview questions and prepare answers that are concise.
- **Be prepared to sell yourself.** Outline three success stories that you want to share at the appropriate time during the interview, e.g., in response to an interview question or when asked, "Is there anything else you'd like to share?" Each success story should be relevant to the interviewer, and help you illustrate, with a specific example, that you have the skills and characteristics that will facilitate your success in the position.

See the S.T.A.R. stories comment box later in this handout for information on how to tell an effective story.

- **Keep your answers focused.** Answer the questions you are asked directly and succinctly. Keep your answers focused on experiences from your internship, class work, professional association, or other degree-related experiences. Do not use personal or friend/family-related examples or those from religious organizations. Your answers to more complicated questions should be one to no more than two minutes in length.
- **Prepare at least five questions to ask at the interview.** Do not ask about salary or benefits at the first interview.
 - What skills or traits does a person need to be successful in this job?
 - What would I be doing the first three weeks on the job?
 - What do you like about working for this company?
 - **What is the next step in the process?**
- **Manage Your Mindset.** Get into the right frame of mind before a job interview. Think of the job interview as an opportunity for growth, not just getting a job. It's a conversation with someone about a position you're interested in, and a chance for you to be introduced to new people.

Allow yourself to get excited about the interview. Remind yourself of what you've achieved to date, or ask a friend or family member to give you a last-minute 'pep talk' to build your confidence.

Marc Burrage of Hays, leading global experts in professional and skilled recruitment, recommends, "Use optimistic language towards yourself, such as "I'm looking forward to the interview" or "I'm sure it will go well." Positive self-affirmations – such as "I'm proud of myself for getting this far" or "this interview will be a wonderful opportunity for me to learn and grow" – don't just make you feel good; according to a review of research literature by David Tod of Liverpool John Moores University, James Hardy of Bangor University and Emily J Oliver of Durham University, there is evidence that motivational self-talk helps to improve performance."



In-Person Interviews

- **Dress Like A Professional.** The way you dress for an interview is your “visual brand.” You want the interviewer to see a competent professional they can put in front of a customer. You will feel more confident if what you wear looks good on you.

Women's Interview Attire

- Solid color, conservative suit
- Closed toe shoes
- Limited jewelry
- Pull long hair back
- Tan or light hosiery
- Sparse make-up & perfume
- Manicured nails
- Cover visible tattoos, remove extra piercings

Men's Interview Attire

- Solid color, conservative suit
- Conservative tie
- Dark socks, professional shoes
- Neat, professional hairstyle
- Clean shaven or neat moustache/beard
- No aftershave
- Neatly trimmed nails
- Cover visible tattoos, remove extra piercings

- **Bring a professional folder or padfolio.** It will include a pad of paper and pen, your company research, a list of questions you will ask about the company and position, extra copies of your resume, a references page, and (optional) recommendation letters from your references.
- **Arrive 10-15 minutes early.** Allow yourself plenty of time for locating the address. Parking may be an issue and traffic can be unpredictable. Bring extra copies of your resume, reference sheets, and letters of recommendations. Consider bringing work examples you might share as you discuss experiences relevant to the interviewer.
- **Make a great impression on everyone from the receptionist to the CEO.** Act as if you are a guest. A firm handshake and good eye contact makes the interviewer feel more comfortable. Never say anything negative about a former employer or teammate. Turn off your cell phone.
- **Let your body do the talking.** Positive body language includes leaning forward slightly and good eye contact. To help calm yourself, take a deep breath through you nose and then blow it out slowly through your mouth. Repeat this three times and center your thoughts. Control your fidgeting; most people aren't aware of their nervous tendencies, so do a mock interview with someone who will make you aware of when you do when you are nervous.
- **Make a strong closing statement.** Summarize your most important skills and qualifications and make a point to express interest in the job. They want someone who sincerely wants the job! Shake hands with each person in the interview, ask for a business card, and thank them for their time. Send a thank you note to the people in the interview within 24 hours. Follow up with any material you have been asked to provide.

Phone Interviews

How employers use phone interviews

Employers use phone interviews to screen applicants they've identified as potential candidates for a position. Interviewers ask questions to review your background and to assess if you are a fit for the position and organization. A phone interview may be scheduled or unscheduled. Unscheduled phone interviews let the prospective employer know how well you can think on your feet.



In a phone interview, you don't observe visual cues. This means you have to pay more attention to intonation and tone. Telephone interviews can be as long as in-person interviews, so prepare just as you would for an in-person interview.

Before the Interview:

- Confirm all details (date, time, and who you will be talking to).
 - If you will initiate or receive the call
 - Who to contact if you are unable to participate due to an emergency
- Set up a professional, friendly voicemail message (hopefully you already have one). Make sure your voicemail box is not full.
- Review the position description carefully and make sure you understand the responsibilities and desired qualifications for the position. Research the company and culture.
- Practice a phone interview and record it so that you can listen to it. Use headphones for your practice interview that you can also use for your actual phone interview.
- Choose a quiet, comfortable, and private space for the interview. Be sure to communicate with others that you wish to not be disturbed. Remove all possible distractions before the interview.
- Make sure your phone is fully charged and notifications are silenced.

Phone Interviews (Continued)

During the Interview:

- Use the interviewer's formal title during the conversation (Mr. or Ms. and their last name). Only use a first name if they ask you to.
- Stand up or sit up straight and smile when you speak. Your position affects the quality of your voice. (If you are sitting down or relaxing, you don't project the same readiness and intensity as when you stand up.)
- Speak slowly and enunciate clearly. Match the interviewer's speed and tone of voice to help you build rapport and be relatable on their level.
- Be enthusiastic by showing interest in the position and organization.
- Take notes (important dates, times, duties, trainings, etc.).
- Listen to the interviewer and don't interrupt. If you have something you want to say, jot it down and mention it when it's your turn to talk.
- If you need a few seconds to gather your thoughts, don't worry, but don't leave too much dead air. If you need the interviewer to repeat the question, just ask.
- Ask relevant and targeted questions about the job and company. Show them you've researched the company and you want to know more.
- Let the interviewer end the interview.
 - Ask about the next step in the process.
 - Ask for the interviewer's email address. Send a thank you email to thank them for their time and reiterate your interest in the position. It is important to show your appreciation regardless of how the interview was conducted.

Things to have handy

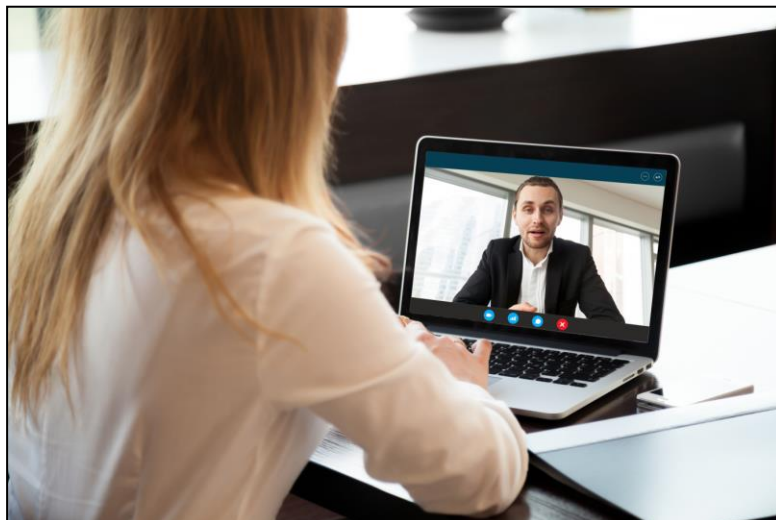
- ✓ Resume and position description
- ✓ A "cheat sheet" with talking points
- ✓ Pen and paper to take notes
- ✓ Company research (with relevant information highlighted)
- ✓ Questions to ask about the company and position
- ✓ Water (in a spill-proof container)

Video Interviews

Types of Video Interviews

Live Video Interviews: These interviews are conducted in real-time, similar to in-person interviews, using a video chat platform like Zoom or Skype.

One-way / Recorded Video Interviews: This type of interview involves no human interaction. Companies send you a link to an interviewing platform that you use to record your answers to prearranged interview questions. Your responses are reviewed at a later time by a hiring team.



Before the Interview:

You will prepare for virtual interviews the same way you prepare for in-person interviews. It's important to research the company, dress professionally, understand the job description, and have stories prepared to demonstrate your qualifications.

Special Considerations for a Video Interview

- **Location & Environment:** It's important to set the stage for the video interview in a well-lit room with your back to a neutral wall that is free of posters or other items. Your face should be well-lit and the webcam should be at eye-level so that you aren't looking down into the camera. Don't use a swivel chair.
- **Minimize Distractions:** Ensure that the space will be free of distractions and that you won't be interrupted during your interview, e.g., by pets, loud roommates, a knock on the door, construction noise etc. Close other programs and browser tabs.
- **Check Your Technology:** Make sure you have a strong internet connection, confirm that your webcam and headset or earbuds work properly. Download the interview software in advance and make sure you have the recommended browser installed on your computer.
- **Practice:** Practice in the location you'll be interviewing. Record yourself and play it back. Practice with a friend or schedule a mock interview.
- **Time Your Responses:** You will generally have a few minutes to record your response to each interview question. Practice your answers with a stopwatch. Your answers to more complicated questions should be one to two minutes in length.
- **Notes:** Don't get distracted by looking down at notes. Jot down a few bullet points on a sticky note and place it beside your webcam, or review notes in any allotted prep time for the question (recorded video interviews).

Video Interviews (Continued)

During the Interview:

- Log into the interviewing platform approximately 10 minutes early. Set up and test your camera, connection, and microphone on a fully charged device.
- Email your recruiting contact immediately if you are unable to connect, or if the interviewer does not log into the interview at the agreed upon time.
- Some on-demand interviews may have specific time limits to answer the questions or a maximum number of attempts. Read the instructions carefully so you know how long you have to answer the question and how many attempts you have.
- Maintain steady eye contact and always look at the camera, not the screen. Listen carefully, and smile and nod as appropriate.
- Maintain good posture. Sit up straight and lean forward slightly towards the camera to appear interested and engaged.
- If something unexpected happens, e.g., an ambulance goes by behind you, simply excuse yourself and move on.
- If you lose connection during the interview, don't panic. Close your web browser, re-open it, and click on the interview invitation to reconnect.

After the Interview

In general, there are three kinds of follow-up you can send after an interview: one to your interviewers immediately after the interview, a second follow-up if you haven't heard back, and a third follow up after you've been notified you didn't get the job.

- Immediately after the interview, follow up with a thank you email or letter that reiterates your interest in the position within 24 hours.
- Send materials or documents requested by the employer immediately.
- Wait before adding a potential employer on LinkedIn; connecting on social media during the interview process can be perceived as too forward.
- Unless otherwise specified, follow up with the interviewer after about two weeks to check on the status of the job selection process.
- Send a thank you note even if they notify you that you didn't get the job.
 - Thank them for their time and tell them that you enjoyed learning about their organization and the position.
 - Ask for feedback, "Would you mind providing feedback on what I can improve upon in the future?"
 - Let them know you would be interested in hearing about future opportunities.

Thank-You Email Checklist

- ✓ Thank interviewers for their time
- ✓ Personalize your message with details from your conversation
- ✓ Reiterate your interest in the position
- ✓ Thank them (again)
- ✓ Let them know you are looking forward to hearing from them
- ✓ Do a spelling/grammar check

Common Interview Questions

The Basics

Basic questions are asked so the interviewer can get to know you. They are usually general in nature and can be easily answered. NEVER say negative things about a former employer, professor or coach.

- Tell me about yourself
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- What were some of your favorite/least favorite classes? Why?
- Tell me about this (class / internship / activity) I see on your resume?
- What activities do you do outside of work or school?
- How would you assess your writing and communication skills?
- How would your past professors or managers describe you?
- How has your internship experience prepared you for this position?
- What do you know about this organization?
- Why do you want to work here?
- Why should we hire you?
- What are your salary requirements?

The Challenging Ones

Behavior based interview questions are asked because your past behaviors are the best predictor of future performance. Plan for these types of questions by practicing success stories before the interview. Use a star format (Situation, Task, Actions, Result) to develop your answers.

Tell me about a time when / Describe a situation in which...

- you worked on a project and it failed.
- you faced conflict or difficulty in either work or school
- you had a conflict with either a supervisor or peer on a project
- you had a leadership role or project you are particularly proud of
- You handled a looming deadline
- You worked on a team. What was your role?
- You taught a concept to a co-worker or classmate?
- Someone critiqued your work. How did you respond?

Be prepared to tell S.T.A.R. Stories

Use the S.T.A.R. method to help you organize specific, thoughtful, and concise answers.

S. = Situation Describe a specific event or situation from a previous job, from a volunteer experience, or relevant event.

T. = Task What goal were you working toward?

A. = Action Describe the actions you took to address the situation with appropriate detail. What specific steps did you take and what was your particular contribution?

R. = Results Describe the outcome of your actions: What happened? How did the event end? What did you accomplish? What did you learn? Include multiple positive results.

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