Career Development and Employment Services

Interviewing

Guide
Things to do at the Career Development and Employment Services Office

- Meet with a Career Counselor to discuss career, employment or graduate school plans.
- Search the Career Library for career, employment or graduate school information.
- Examine career interests by taking the Strong Interest Inventory and Myers-Briggs Type Indicator.
- Prepare a professional style resume, develop effective interviewing skills and learn job search techniques.
- Explore local, regional or national Experiential Education opportunities.
- Connect with potential employment opportunities through job fairs and the Job Locator System.
- Review professional and graduate school testing information, including GRE, GMAT and LSAT test guides.

Come visit us today for assistance with your career or employment needs.

Call (814) 871-7680 to schedule an appointment with a counselor.
Hours: 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. (Other hours by arrangement.)

Career Guides available in CDES:

- Resume
- Job Search
- Interviewing
- International Student Job Search
- Professional and Graduate School
- Career Action Plan
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SO, THE EMPLOYER WANTS TO MEET YOU…

Out of all the candidates, you were one of only a handful invited to meet personally with the employer. Why you? Most likely, your resume and cover letter sold you effectively, or your network of contacts was able to help get your foot in the door. Don't think you've got the job sewn up, though! The competition may be reduced in number, but it just got tougher!

The employment interview is the company’s way of learning more about you, what you have accomplished, how you think, and how you get along with and work with other people. The interview questions are designed to allow you to:

1) elaborate on your educational and personal background
2) describe skills and abilities developed through your internship, co-op, clinical or employment experience
3) demonstrate your communication and interpersonal skills
4) show the employer you have the qualities necessary to be successful in this position
5) show that you will be a good fit for the company’s corporate culture

WHAT YOU'VE ALREADY DONE - WE HOPE!

Since you're well into the job search, some of your preparation should already be underway. We suggest that if you haven't begun the following activities, START IMMEDIATELY.

- CONDUCT A SELF ASSESSMENT. A systematic evaluation of your strengths and weaknesses can help you focus on your most marketable qualities for the position. To get started, draw two columns labeled “Strengths” and “Weaknesses” on a sheet of paper, and write down as many of each as you can think of. A Career Development counselor can assist you with this assessment.
  
  - Examine your strengths and find examples that demonstrate how you applied them. During an interview, recruiters will be listening to how you describe your past experiences and the results you earned. It is important to take every opportunity to tell good stories about how you used your strengths and the outcome. A good formula to follow is SITUATION - ACTION - RESULT. Describe a situation which fits the question asked, explain what action was taken, and emphasize the results of the action, i.e., positive feedback received, improvements made, good grade received, new skill developed (see page 11).

  - Identify your weaknesses. What will the employer identify as obstacles to hiring you? Don't let these perceived obstacles stand in your way. Prepare a positive response to a potential weakness. For instance, if your major doesn't seem to exactly match the position: “Although my degree is in Political Science instead of Business, the curriculum required several oral presentations which helped me to develop strong communication and interpersonal skills. These skills will help me to be successful in this position.”

- LEARN ABOUT THE POSITION. Analyze the qualifications and duties, and then consider your specific strengths and weaknesses as they relate to the job. Look up the job title at www.onetonline.org/ to get a generic description of duties, skills, and knowledge areas.

  Identify the keywords an employer is interested in; just copy and paste the position description into http://www.wordle.net/create and hit the go button.
CREATE A TABLE with two columns, one column labeled “Desired Qualifications” and the other labeled “What Can I Talk About?” Create examples you can use during the interview to show that you have the desired qualifications for the position. For more information, reference our Resume Guide http://www.gannon.edu/uploadedFiles/Content/Student_Life/Career_Development/Job_Search_Tools/resumeguide2015.pdf.

- LEARN ABOUT THE COMPANY. Questions such as “Why do you want to work at our company?” or “What do you know about our company?” are asked to learn your knowledge of their organization.

  Where to look for company information:

    - Company website and literature
    - Google the company name
    - Business and financial magazines or the business sections of newspapers
    - Reference/Business section of college or public libraries (the librarian can help you)
    - Your professional and personal network (teachers, career counselors, relatives)

  Stay organized. Keep a written record of correspondence and what you learn about the company. Create a “profile” for each company including: name, location, contact information, products, department and/or human resource manager’s name, annual revenue, mission statement, company demographics, competitors, information about their business/strategic plans or future goals, and advertising slogan.

  When possible, learn about the interviewer and try to identify a couple of things about his/her accomplishments, history in the organization, or community service. This information will demonstrate your research skills and show that you have a strong interest in the position.

- CHECK OUT THE SALARY RESOURCES at http://www.gannon.edu/Student-Life/Career-Development/Students-and-Alumni/Salary-and-Relocation-Information. It is important to learn about salary information early in the job search process.

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?

You are looking for a job that satisfies some or all of the following:

- Professionally and personally satisfying
- Offers opportunity for advancement
- Opportunity for professional/social networking
- Challenging and supportive work environment
- Provides financial security
- Provides a good benefits package
- Shares your values and mission
- Location has varied social and leisure options

Whether your goal is an entry-level position or an upward career move, you will need to show that the qualifications you offer, and the qualifications the employer is seeking, are a good match. It is likely to take many interviews before you receive a job offer. Be patient; learn from every interview and work to improve your interviewing techniques. There may be many “no’s” during your job search, though you only need one “yes” to get started on your career path.
WHAT ARE EMPLOYERS LOOKING FOR?

When selected to interview with an organization, you most likely meet the basic qualifications for the job and probably have some specific abilities they seek. During the interview, recruiters want to learn more about your background, skills and accomplishments to determine if you are a good match for the position and the company. The questions you will be asked are designed to get information about the following:

1. **Fit.** How good a fit will you be for the organization? Does the interviewer “like” you? How well will you get along with your potential co-workers? Will your work style mesh well with your supervisor's work style?
   - The most outstanding candidate may be turned down for a job if he or she cannot demonstrate an ability to fit into the office or organization's culture. Also, a less qualified candidate may get an offer if he/she is likable and willing to be flexible in fitting in. You need to demonstrate an ability to adapt to new environments and a willingness to learn.
   - Be aware that you are also trying to determine if this company is a good “fit” for you. How do you feel about the interviewer? What did you observe about the other people working at the company? Are you feeling at ease or pressured?

2. **Verification of your abilities/credentials.** You stated on your resume that you could do A, B and C. Now the interviewer will feel free to “test” you on those abilities by asking for examples. The employer is interested in how you have applied your skills and knowledge in the past and what outcomes occurred as a result of your actions. They may want to see academic transcripts or proof of certificates.

3. **Interest.** If they think you're just there because they had a job opening that looked good, your chances are slim. Demonstrate interest by showing your knowledge about the company, by relating your experiences to the job requirements, and by asking appropriate questions. To rephrase John F. Kennedy, ask not what the company can do for you, describe what you can do for the company.

4. **Communication.** How effectively do you speak and organize your thoughts? Being too talkative or too quiet can have a negative effect. Keep your responses clear, organized and to-the-point. Also, since communication is 60% nonverbal, sit up straight, avoid fidgeting (playing with your hair, clicking a pen, or gesturing too much with your hands), and maintain eye contact. Don't slouch or slump your shoulders! Practice shaking hands with people before the interview.

5. **Enthusiasm.** Smile as often as possible. Change the tone of your voice to convey your interest. Use strong adjectives and action verbs to describe your abilities and interest. Keep it positive.
Employers will be seeking some or all of the following skills. Which ones match your self assessment?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill/Quality</th>
<th>Weighted average rating*</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ability to work in a team structure</td>
<td>4.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to verbally communicate with persons inside and outside the organization</td>
<td>4.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to make decisions and solve problems</td>
<td>4.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to obtain and process information</td>
<td>4.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to plan, organize and prioritize work</td>
<td>4.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to analyze quantitative data</td>
<td>4.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical knowledge related to the job</td>
<td>4.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proficiency with computer software programs</td>
<td>4.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to create and/or edit written reports</td>
<td>3.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to sell or influence others</td>
<td>3.51</td>
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*5-point scale, where 1=Not important; 2=Not very important; 3=Somewhat important; 4=Very important; and 5=Extremely important

Think about the above lists and identify where your background best matches the skills listed. Write down some examples of where you have used each skill (at school, work, or as part of co-curricular activities). Develop a brief story for each example and describe the situation, your actions, and the results that occurred. Use the language of the job you are applying for while telling your story (planned, created, managed, led, supervised, developed, researched, communicated, presented, wrote…).
ARRANGING THE INTERVIEW - WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW!

It is important to handle the initial call from an employer effectively in order to acquire information needed to prepare for a successful interview.

- Try to accept whatever date and time the employer requests. If it conflicts with an unbreakable commitment on your part (such as a final exam), request the next available date.
- Ask for the name and title of the interviewer(s).
- Get clear directions on how to get there.
- Request a position description if you don't already have one.
- Inquire about the itinerary. Will it be a brief (30-60 minute) meeting, a lunch interview or an all-day meeting? A group interview? A succession of interviews with different company reps?
- If an overnight stay is required, inquire about hotel accommodations. Ask about the company's policy on travel reimbursement if you must travel over 50 miles one way.

PREPARATION - STUDYING FOR THE TEST

Going into an interview without preparing is like taking a test without studying. Though a bad grade on a test may be made up next time, there is no make-up test for a poor interview. Prepare early and practice your interviewing skills as you conduct your job search.

**Interview Prep Tips**

- Review your information on the company and position.
- Develop some questions to ask the employer (see page 13 for ideas). Many employers seek to find out how much a candidate has researched the company, so be prepared! If it is listed on the stock exchange, know the current stock price.
- Anticipate questions. Many of the most commonly asked questions are listed on page 12 in this manual. Which ones are likely to be asked? Identify the questions you hope won’t be asked and work out some answers to these questions; dealing with your fear early in the process will help you to be more relaxed later. Develop results-oriented answers to possible questions and practice giving your answers out loud.
- Use Google to identify interview questions specific to your objective, e.g., "physical therapist" and "job interview questions."
- Visit Career Development for a mock interview. A counselor will meet with you and ask actual interview questions, then constructively critique your performance. Mock interview sessions can be videotaped so you can view yourself in action. **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED**
- Practice, Practice, Practice! Practice answering questions with family, friends, or even when you're alone while driving or doing household chores. Use a mirror, tape recorder or videotape if possible. Your responses need to sound natural, and practicing will help to keep your answers at the tip of your tongue.
- The Post-Interview Feedback Sheet on the inside back cover can be a helpful way to measure your performance in a mock/practice or real interview.
DRESSING FOR SUCCESS - CONSERVATIVE AND SIMPLE

Because first impressions are formed within 30 seconds of meeting you, it is to your advantage to look professional. Proper business attire is equated with a professional attitude and behavior, while improper business dress is often equated with a lack of professionalism. Dress on the conservative side: You want to be remembered for what you are saying, not what you are wearing!

Many companies have casual-dress policies, though interviewees must still dress professionally. Employers consider your appearance to be relative to your interest in the job. If you are poorly dressed, you must not be very interested. KEEP IT SIMPLE and CONSERVATIVE!

Men:

DO'S
Dark, conservative suit (navy or gray)
Light colored dress shirt (white preferred)
Contemporary tie with subtle patterns
Shined, dark colored shoes and socks
Belt that matches shoes

DON'TS
Khakis and a shirt
Dark shirt or same color as suit
Tie with distracting colors/words
Sneakers, sport socks, or unshined shoes

Women:

DO'S
Dark, conservative suit
Skirt, knee length or below
Light colored blouse
Matching shoes with moderate heel
Hosiery that matches skin tone

DON'TS
Spiked/ scuffed shoes, dirty heels, open toes
Colored, patterned or seamed nylons
Backpack
Mini-skirt or skirt well above the knees
Too tight, low cut or revealing blouse
Trendy/loud nail polish

Both:

DO'S
Neat, clean and controlled hair
Clean and trimmed nails
Minimal cologne/perfume
Minimal jewelry (one ring or chain)

DON'TS
Messy/dirty hair; unprofessional styles
Dirty nails; messy polish
Heavy, lingering scents
Multiple rings, earrings, or chains (men should not wear earrings)
Backpack

A Word on Pant Suits, Tattoos and Body Piercing

Styles change over time, though for interviewing it is best to dress in the most professional outfit possible. Pants suits for women may be acceptable wear in some fields (education or medical), though for business it is best to wear a suit with a skirt or a skirt and blouse. When in doubt, choose an outfit on the conservative side.

Many young adults have tattoos and body piercings, though many organizations may believe that this trend does not fit their corporate image. Cover the tattoos and lose the piercings.

Still not sure what to wear? Ask us, we’re here to help.
10 Fashion Blunders

1. **Wild Nail Polish** – Nails should be clean and well groomed, light/neutral shades.

2. **Excess or Dangling Jewelry** – Wear no more than two rings per hand or one earring per ear. No face or ankle jewelry should be worn. No oversized necklaces or bracelets.

3. **Open-Toed or Backless Shoes** – Flats only.

4. **Bare Legs** – Wear stockings to all interviews, either a neutral shade or a color to match your shoes.

5. **Old Suits** – Suits should not have too wide or too narrow lapels, or be too baggy or tight. Invest in a good fitting suit.

6. **Short Skirts** – Hemlines should not be more than three inches above the knee. It is best if the hemline is below the knee when you are sitting down.

7. **Leather** – A good casual look, though keep it in the closet for the interviewing season.

8. **Turtlenecks for Men** – Wear a tie and a collared shirt, preferably white with a button down collar.

9. **Over Accessorizing** – Purses and briefcases should be conservative and in good condition. Bring the minimum amount of stuff to the interview.

10. **Sports Look** – Sneakers and Dockers don’t make it with a suit. No matter what you may see on Hollywood’s “red carpet.”

**WHAT TO BRING - PACKING FOR YOUR INTERVIEW**

Here are some necessities for your interview:

- Extra copies of your resume, references and transcripts; keep your originals.
- Pen and note pad (jot down notes after the interview, not during).
- Samples of your work (portfolios, papers/projects which demonstrate communication skills, leadership, creativity or problem solving). Bring one or two examples of your work.
- List of 3-5 questions for you to ask the interviewer.
- Name and phone number of interviewer, as well as directions to the interview location.

These items will typically fit in a “padfolio” (can be purchased at college bookstore or office supply store). Teachers and advertising students (and some other majors) should always bring their portfolios, and all interviewees should bring any specific information the employer has requested.
THE INTERVIEW - FIRST IMPRESSIONS MATTER!

Arrive 15 minutes early; be polite and respectful to everyone you meet, including secretaries, receptionists and employees passing by.

TURN YOUR CELL PHONE OFF BEFORE ENTERING THE BUILDING.

When you get to the designated office, introduce yourself and state why you are there (“My name is ______ and I am scheduled to meet with Mrs. Caldwell.”). While waiting, review the questions you plan to ask, and look over the company information you researched.

DO NOT call or text anyone, nor open up your laptop to do personal business. Wait patiently. Take some deep breaths. Think positive. Sit up straight.

When the interviewer approaches you, stand up, establish eye contact, smile and be ready to greet him/her. Show confidence. Give a firm handshake. Remember your manners: “It’s a pleasure to meet you, Mrs. Caldwell. Thank you for inviting me here today.”

The first few minutes of your interview are critical. The old saying, “You don’t get a second chance to make a first impression” is particularly true in interviewing. Your appearance (see page 6) and your attitude will combine to make an initial positive or negative impression on the recruiter.

Interviewers often attempt to make small talk (“Nice weather we're having,” or “Did you have any trouble getting here?”) at the start of the interview. Some employers view small talk as a test of your interpersonal skills. Make only positive comments, and feel free to make some small talk of your own if the employer does not.

Some things that create a bad first impression: slouching, mumbling, bad breath, poor appearance, lack of manners or a negative persona, e.g., Employer – “Did you have any trouble getting here?” Candidate – “The directions were a nightmare and the people around here do not know how to drive.”

THE INTERVIEW - WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN TO ME?

No two interviews are identical. They may be as short as 30 minutes, or as long as a day. When setting the appointment, try to get a rough idea of the itinerary so you can prepare yourself.

Typical Interview Structure
1. Introductions
2. Candidate answers questions
3. Candidate asks questions
4. Closing
Here are some possible interview situations:

- One-on-one interviews, involving just the candidate and a single interviewer.
- Group interviews, in which several candidates are interviewed at once.
- “Panel” interviews, with one candidate and two or more interviewers.
- A series of interviews in which the candidate has several short meetings consecutively with different individuals. Some of these interviews may be technical and some may be general.
- Lunch interviews, which take place while dining and involve one or more interviewers.
- Stress interviews are to determine how you will perform under pressure. The goal is for the employer to observe your actions under stress.
- Tests. An employer may put the candidate through a written or oral exam to test his or her abilities. More companies are requiring personality, competence and/or drug testing.
- On-campus interview, which lasts about 30 minutes and takes place in the Career Development office.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

Video Interview

Video interviews using software such as Skype or WebEx are becoming increasingly popular.

Here are a few tips for video interviews:

- Interview in a quiet place. Remember that the interviewer can see what is behind you, so try to have a solid background. Sitting in front of a blank wall is least distracting to the interviewer.
- Make sure your computer, webcam and VoIP software are working properly before the interview begins.
- Dress in interview attire.
- Maintain eye contact by looking at the camera and not at the computer screen. Don’t lean in too close to the camera. Sit up straight and don’t fidget or touch your face or hair.
- Relax and speak clearly. Smile and be enthusiastic.
- If the connection is lost during the interview, remain calm and simply call the interviewer back and explain what happened.

Telephone Interview

Employers often conduct first interviews by telephone.

Here are a few tips for telephone interviews:

- Interview in a quiet place.
- If possible, use a landline phone and temporarily disable call waiting.
- Keep these items at hand: copies of materials you have sent the interviewer (resume, cover letter, writing samples, etc.), information you have received from the organization, a “cheat sheet” of research information you have gathered about the organization, a list of your significant experiences and skills that you wish to communicate, a list of your questions about the organization and the position, pen and paper.
- Consider standing throughout the interview. It will help you project energy and reduces the risk of sounding too casual over the phone.
- Smile and be enthusiastic 😊

RESPONDING TO QUESTIONS - PUT YOUR BEST FOOT FORWARD

Just as there are many types of interview situations, so there are many styles of interview questioning. Often the style depends upon the itinerary and the time available. Questions may come rapidly, one following another, or a recruiter may prefer a more relaxed, conversational style. A few rules for answering all interview questions:

1. Be positive and avoid negative answers.
   - If you are asked a question that requires a negative response, such as “Describe a time in which you failed to complete a project on schedule,” emphasize a lesson learned from the experience at the end of your answer. Avoid “bashing” current or previous employers, and do not dwell on rationalizations and excuses!

2. Use concrete examples whenever possible.
   - Anyone can say that they possess a skill. But a descriptive experience can show the employer that the skill has been used in practical ways and got results (Situation → action → result). Use work- or school-related examples, or a personal experience that demonstrates maturity.

3. Emphasize professional, not personal, goals and situations.
   - Employers do not want to hear about your desire to own a big house and a fast car. They want to examine your professional aspirations as they pertain to this job and this company. Employers value evidence of a strong work ethic, teamwork, persistence, commitment to quality, and a can-do attitude.

4. Listen!
   - Pay attention to each question asked and provide the information requested. Listen carefully to the employer when he/she discusses aspects of the company or the job. Demonstrate that you're listening through thoughtful answers and questions.

SCHEDULE A MOCK INTERVIEW WITH A CAREER COUNSELOR
CALL 814.871.7680 TO SET UP A TIME
BEHAVIOR BASED QUESTIONS - STORYTELLING

Past performance is a good indicator of future performance. Because of this fact, employers today are moving toward “behavior-based” interview questions. These questions force the applicant to describe events and episodes in their lives. From these answers, employers learn how the candidate will behave under similar circumstances on the job. If you have followed our tips on interview preparation, you should have plenty of examples to choose from. Consider the following examples:

**Yes or no question: “Do you work well under pressure?”** A candidate could (but of course, shouldn't) just say “yes” without elaborating.

**Behavior-based question:** “Describe a situation in which you had to work under stressful circumstances.” A candidate must now provide a story demonstrating his/her ability to work under pressure, and more is learned about the individual's true ability to handle stress. Use the “Situation-Action-Result” method to construct an effective response.

**SITUATION → ACTION → RESULTS (SAR)**

The SAR method is a great way to answer behavioral based or general interviewing questions. You can practice answering the “Questions Frequently Asked” on page 12 using this format.

**Explain the SITUATION:** Briefly provide a situation that you have encountered. It should support the skill/ability that you want to demonstrate.

**Example:**

**Interviewer:** “Please tell me about a time, while working in a group, that you had to deal with a difficult situation.”

**Candidate response:** “During my marketing class, we were assigned to create a marketing plan for a local company. We had a 4-member group, with only 3 participating members.”

**Explain your ACTION:** Clearly state the course of action that you took to handle the situation; be honest and specific. What were the factors with which you had to deal?

**Candidate response continued:** “First, I called a group meeting and restated the work that each person had originally agreed upon. Then, I asked if there was any reason the other group members felt that they could not complete their share of the work. This did not motivate or prompt our group member to start her task. As a result, I approached her and told her that we were concerned that she was not completing her share of the work, and asked if there was anything that the rest of the group could do to help her.”

**Explain the RESULT:** What was the outcome of the situation? The outcome should have been either a positive result or a positive learning experience.

**Candidate response continued:** “She apologized and said that she was having some difficulties at home, but would put more effort into the project. In the end, she did complete her share with support from the rest of our group. I received positive feedback from the other group members for how assertively I handled the situation, and we earned an “A” on the project.”
QUESTIONS FREQUENTLY ASKED DURING INTERVIEWS

Use SITUATION → ACTION → RESULT to develop answers to general and behavior based questions.

General Questions

- Tell me about yourself.
- What are your short and long range employment goals? When and why did you establish these goals? How are you preparing yourself to achieve them?
- Do your grades accurately reflect your abilities? Why or why not?
- Describe your previous job or internship.
- Why did you choose the career for which you are preparing?
- What do you consider to be your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
- How would you describe yourself?
- Why should I hire you?
- What qualifications do you have that will make you successful in this organization?
- What qualities should a successful manager possess? Describe the relationship that should exist between a supervisor and those reporting to him/her.
- In what school activities have you participated? How has your involvement influenced you?
- Which accomplishment(s) has/have given you the most personal satisfaction?
- Why did you choose ________ as your major field of study?
- What do you think about travel? Relocating?
- What criteria are you using to evaluate the company for which you hope to work?
- What do you know about our company? Why do you want to work for our company?
- What activities do you choose when you have free time?
- What are your ideas on salary?
- What types of people seem to “rub you the wrong way”?
- How have previous jobs prepared you for this position?
- Describe your most rewarding college experience.
- Suppose you received offers from all the firms you are interviewing; how would you make your choice?

Behavior-Based Questions

- Describe a time when you had to complete a project within a deadline.
- Tell me about an instance when you resolved an interpersonal conflict.
- Explain how you made an important decision.
- How do your grades represent your true ability? What do you think you could have done differently to improve your academic performance?
- Tell me about a time when you worked with others on a team project.
- How did you handle a situation in which you failed to meet your standards?
- Describe an example of when you missed an obvious solution to a problem.
- Give an example of when you worked under a great deal of pressure.
- Tell me about a time when a professor or employer criticized your work. How did you handle it?
- Explain how you would adapt to a new situation. Give an example.
- Describe an instance in which you had to deal with a difficult co-worker/classmate.
- Tell me about a time when you were challenged to change the way you normally behave/think.
- How would you handle a situation where you believed a co-worker was acting in an unethical manner?
- Describe a complex problem you had to solve and walk me through your thinking as you solved it.
- Tell me about a time when you had to win someone over to your way of thinking. How did you accomplish this? What was the outcome?
- What is the most stressful situation you have handled and what was the outcome? Describe a situation in which you aspired to reach a goal. What obstacles did you confront along the way? What did you do to overcome them?
INTERVIEWING INTERNET RESOURCES

http://www.quintcareers.com/intvres.html Tell me about yourself. The interview question database contains questions and answers to 150 typical traditional and behavioral job interview questions.


YOUR TURN TO ASK - WHAT DO YOU WANT TO KNOW?

Many candidates wrongly believe that asking questions is not a good idea, and that it shows a lack of knowledge. However, having no questions shows recruiters a lack of interest. A few intelligent, thoughtful questions should be asked, questions that investigate a candidate's suitability for the job and the job's suitability for the candidate. Avoid questions that raise awareness of your weaknesses. What follows is a list of questions that could be asked, and questions that must not be asked.

Possible questions to ask

- Please describe a typical work day/week for this position.
- What are the challenges of this job?
- What have others in this position gone on to do?
- What training/professional development opportunities exist?
- What are the immediate goals/priorities for this position?
- What is the most important role for this position?
- How is success evaluated?
- Are there extra duties that go along with the job that are not described fully in the job description?
- What are you looking for in a candidate?
- Describe the corporate culture/environment.
- How is performance measured? How is strong performance rewarded?
- How has the company grown over the past five years?
- How do you envision the company changing in the next five years?
- What economic or industry trends most affect this department?
- What is the next step in your hiring process? When can I hope to hear from you?
- Do you have a business card?

Questions NOT to ask:

- What is the salary?
- What kind of medical or fringe benefits are there?
- How much vacation time do entry level employees get?
- How do you feel about hiring someone who ...has been in jail? ...belongs to ___ (political or religious affiliation)?
- How much money do you make?
FOLLOWING UP - YOU'RE NOT DONE YET - SAY THANK YOU.

Within 24 hours, write and mail a short letter of appreciation. This note may be typed or handwritten, on paper or on small, plain thank you cards. Email is appropriate if that has been your main form of communication, or if you want to send a quick message of thanks, to be followed by a written or typed correspondence. The Resume Guide and Adams Cover Letter Almanac have excellent samples of thank you letters and other job search correspondence. A good message will include:

- A statement of appreciation for the employer’s time.
- An enthusiastic expression of your interest in the job.
- A brief mention or elaboration of a topic discussed OR something critical that was NOT discussed.
- A positive closing statement.

INTERVIEW RUBRIC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Impressions</th>
<th>Interview Content</th>
<th>Interview Skills / Techniques</th>
<th>Closing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Excellent interview: You should get a job offer!</strong></td>
<td><strong>Average interview: You could get called back, but it is not certain.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Interviewing skills need significant improvement: You would not get this job.</strong></td>
<td><strong>You successfully convey your interest in the position. You ask appropriate questions. You thank the interviewer.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Your appearance is professional; you are wearing a business suit. You greet and shake hands with your interviewer correctly. Your conversation is enthusiastic and engaging.</td>
<td>You look nice, but you do not wear a suit. Your greeting is appropriate, but you forget to shake hands with your interviewer. Your conversation is enthusiastic and engaging.</td>
<td>Your attire is unprofessional: You wear jeans or shorts to the interview. You do not greet or shake hands with your interviewer. Your conversation is not energetic.</td>
<td><strong>You convey some interest in the position. You are not prepared to ask questions. You thank the interviewer.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interview Content</strong></td>
<td>You are knowledgeable about the organization and position. You display poise and confidence. You relate your skills to the job very well.</td>
<td>You have excellent eye contact with your interviewer (without staring). Your language and grammar are appropriate. (No use of &quot;um&quot;). You speak at the correct speed.</td>
<td><strong>You do not show any interest in the position. You do not ask any questions. You do not thank the interviewer.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You are knowledgeable about the organization and position. You display poise and confidence. You relate your skills to the job very well.</td>
<td>You are knowledgeable about the position, but not about the organization. You display adequate confidence in your answers. You state your skills, but do not adequately relate them to the job.</td>
<td>You have adequate eye contact with your interviewer. Your language and grammar are adequate. You use &quot;um&quot; and other inappropriate terms, but not enough to disrupt the interview. You speak a little too quickly or too slowly.</td>
<td><strong>You do not show any interest in the position. You do not ask any questions. You do not thank the interviewer.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interview Skills / Techniques</strong></td>
<td>You look at the floor or ceiling when speaking. Your grammar and language are inappropriate. You speak too quickly or too slowly.</td>
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<td><strong>Closing</strong></td>
<td><strong>Evaluate your interview performance after each interview by filling out the Post Interview Feedback Form on the inside back cover of this guide.</strong></td>
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SECOND INTERVIEWS - YOU'RE ALMOST THERE

Your interviewing skills made a positive impression. You've made the company's short list! This is a very positive sign for your candidacy. Time to breathe easy? NOT YET!!! You still have some work to do! Here is what to expect at a second interview or company visit.

- You'll meet and be interviewed by the people who will be supervising you. You may have individual or group interviews. Expect a long day. Stay poised. You'll be asked the same questions more than once (see page 9).
- Questions will be designed to learn about your personality, your knowledge of the field and the company, and how you will “fit” in their organization. Questions will be more specific and technical. You're already considered a strong candidate. Be positive and upbeat.
- If you go to lunch with the interviewer(s), eat light. Don't order alcoholic beverages, and order easy to eat food. Take your cues from the interviewers. Ask them what they would recommend to eat. If you have no direction from the interviewer, order something you like from the menu items in the middle price range. Stay away from saucy or potentially messy foods (soups, wings, jumbo sandwiches). Pay attention to your manners (“Please pass the salt and pepper.” and “Please excuse me.”).
- If given a tour, ask questions and show interest and enthusiasm.
- Be prepared to discuss salary and benefits. Many entry level positions have set salaries. You need to be aware of your worth, as well as the typical salary for the job. Consult Career Development for more information.
- Prepare questions to ask your interviewers. The second interview should consist of give and take for both sides. Some ideas: training programs/professional development, company or departmental goals. It is okay to ask some of the same questions that you asked in the first interview, especially if you would like to get more details about the job.
- Be sure to find out what the next step is in the hiring process and when they plan to make a hiring decision. If you don't hear from them by the designated date, feel free to call to inquire about the status of the position.
- You may be asked to complete skills, personality, honesty and/or drug/alcohol tests.
- Send a thank you note. If interviewed by more than one person, send a note to each person.

THE OFFER - YES OR NO?

Your hard work has finally paid off and you have an offer to consider. That's right…“to consider.” You don't have to take it! An offer may come at any time, at the end of the interview or days later. Follow our Job Offer Checklist on the next page to make a good decision.
JOB OFFER CHECKLIST

☐ Learn about salary, health, 401K and vacation time benefits.

☐ Research the position and see what the average salary is for a person with your credentials.

☐ Assess the demand for your skills. If your skills are highly specialized, you may have an edge in salary negotiation (see page 17), but if they are general and shared with other applicants, you may not. Be flexible.


☐ Determine whether the company is a good fit for you, and develop more questions before you decide. See a Career Development counselor for help. Make sure all questions were answered - if not, call the employer!

☐ If you are weighing several offers in a short period of time, request an extension on the deadline. Companies will not always grant you this request, so you must be prepared to make an informed decision and choose which offer is the best fit for you.

☐ Consider the total package, i.e., salary, hours, health benefits, vacation, sick/personal time, opportunities for professional development (tuition remission), reimbursement for travel expenses, work environment (flex hours, comp time), opportunity for advancement, office and company culture; what would your cost be if you had to buy them yourself?

☐ Write out the pros and cons of the offer(s) you received. This can give you a visual way to evaluate the offer.

☐ Sometimes you'll accept an offer and receive another offer soon after. This can be a tough decision. Be sure to consider all the consequences of reneging. It's best to seek to extend your deadlines rather than risk burning a bridge that will never be rebuilt. Accepting an offer is a commitment. Accepting an offer while continuing to search for better offers is unethical behavior.

☐ Ask how often salaries are reviewed and how raises are determined.

☐ Remember, nothing is official until you get it in writing. Whatever the verbal offer is, request information in writing before agreeing.

☐ As always, a Career Development counselor can assist in your decision making process. Call 814.871.7680 for an appointment or phone consultation.
NEGOTIATING THE OFFER - GET A FAIR SALARY

When offered a new position, the following points can help you to ensure that you are receiving appropriate compensation. Career Development counselors are available to assist you as well.

- Ask questions and make sure you have a clear understanding of the answers before accepting the job.
- If you're asked for a salary figure, give a range rather than an exact number.
- If the number given by the employer is lower than expected, respond with “Based on my research, the average starting salary range for this position is $35,000 to $38,000, and by virtue of my strong academics and internship experience, I am looking for a starting salary in the upper end of that range.” This leaves room for compromise.
- When considering your ability to live on a given salary, remember to consider taxes (occupation tax, city, county and school), the local cost of living, parking, bonuses and health/stock/vacation benefits. Is anything deducted from your salary for health benefits?
- Don't consider yearly or Christmas bonuses as part of your salary; they're not guaranteed.
- Focus on the skills and qualities you're bringing to the company, rather than the salary. Convince them that you're worth the salary you're requesting, based on your education and accomplishments.
- If your salary includes commission, get a realistic estimate of what to expect. Expect that the employer will give you “best case scenario.” Ask what the average commissions are within the department for new employees over time (first 6 months, first year, first two years).
- Get all promises in writing.
- Unless the negotiations have met or exceeded all your requirements, don't accept a job or a salary offer immediately. Request some time to consider your options. Resist recruiter pressure to make a split-second decision. If given an offer, request 24-48 hours to evaluate and compare their offer against other offers.

INTERNET JOB OFFER NEGOTIATION RESOURCES

http://www.quintcareers.com/salary_negotiation.html


www.rileyguide.com/offers.html

http://jobstar.org/tools/salary/chapman.php

As aforementioned, salary is not an issue for the candidate to raise in the first interview. However, the recruiter may bring it up by asking “What are your ideas about salary for this position?” It is critical to do some research on salaries for similar positions. If asked about your salary expectations, give a range as opposed to a specific amount. You may now ask whether the salary for the position fits within that range. Express your flexibility, depending on location, duties and fringe benefits. Please read the section on Salary Negotiation (page 17) for more information.

There are numerous websites that provide free, current data on job salaries, such as www.salary.com. Make sure you research both position title and location. If you see numbers based on national figures, they might have to be adjusted for the location of the company you are considering. Higher salaries in major cities like New York, Los Angeles and Chicago tend to skew those national averages.
Employer Feedback

Biggest Mistakes College Graduates Make

Acting bored or cocky 61%
Not dressing appropriately 61%
No knowledge of the company 58%
Unprofessional use of cell phone 50%
Not asking good questions in the interview 49%
Asking about salary 38%
Spamming employers 21%
Unprofessional content on social networking sites 19%

-NACE Survey of Employers

Want to make sure you’re prepared for the professional interview? Call 814.871.7680 to schedule an appointment with a career counselor.
POST-INTERVIEW FEEDBACK SHEET

Within 48 hours following an employment interview, take some time to complete this exercise. In the first column, write down as many of the interview questions you can remember. In the second column, write down the key points of the answer you gave. In the third column, write down some ideas on how you could improve the answer given in the interview. Focus on improving the answer by giving examples of skills, accomplishments or responsibilities; show results you have earned when you applied your skill, ability or personal attribute in the classroom, at work or during an activity.

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<tr>
<th>Questions Asked</th>
<th>Key Points of the Answer</th>
<th>How To Improve the Answer</th>
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