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# Interviewing Guide

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## GETTING STARTED: PREPARING FOR YOUR INTERVIEW

Effective interviews require careful and thorough preparation on your part. Knowing what to expect, the kinds of questions you may be asked, and how to respond to them gives you greater self-confidence and increases the chances that your interview will be successful.

**You should not apply for a job until you can realistically begin within 2 weeks (and no more than 4 weeks) from the interview date.**

### Are you prepared to take the call?

Before preparing for your interview, you will be scheduling it.

- If the employer calls to schedule an interview, let it go to voicemail: this gives you time to check your calendar and prepare your response. Respond with a call back to the scheduler within 1 to 3 hours.
- Make sure to clarify some details beyond date and time, such as: where the interview will be held (or will it be a virtual/phone interview), who will you be meeting with, how long the interview will be, what kind of interview it will be (one-on-one, group, etc.), do you need to bring anything, etc.
- Even if you accept the interview over the phone, it is good to confirm details over email (if the employer does not email you details, you can email them saying thank you for the opportunity and confirming details).

### Step 1: Self-Evaluation and Understanding

Employers are interested in learning about how your education, experience, skills, and personal qualities fit with their company and their open position(s). The job description will be helpful in evaluating your “fit” for the company and position. You should review your resume and cover letter to prepare yourself for elaborating on your experiences and skills. As you begin to prepare for your interview, consider how you may discuss the following areas:

- Educational experiences (including study abroad/mission trips/volunteer experiences)
- Your skills, strengths, and weaknesses
- Extracurricular and leadership experiences
- Future professional plans (your goals for 5-10 years beyond your first job)
- Work experiences
- Professional interests
- Reasons you are interested in the company and position
- Your accomplishments and challenges that you have overcome

## Step 2: Research the Employer and their Industry

Do your research because employers will notice. Your responses to the interview questions will reveal how prepared you are. Thorough preparation will also give you an idea of the qualities and skills employers are looking for and will help you to anticipate the kinds of questions you might be asked. Be sure to do research on:

- The type of organization
- Mission and goals of the organization
- Core values
- History of the company
- Individuals that you will be interviewing with
- Key leaders within the company
- Company location(s)
- How the company is organized
- Leading competitors
- Types of training available to new employees
- Types of paid and non-paid benefits

Connect your research back to your self-evaluation in Step 1. What strengths do you possess that relate to the position? What experiences have you had that may benefit the company? Your goal is to demonstrate **how you can meet *their* needs**.

## Step 3: Practice Answering Interview Questions

There are several ways that you can practice answering questions. Here are several techniques that you can use when practicing for an interview:

1. Brainstorm potential questions (and refer to the end of this guide) and write out your responses, relating your experiences and skills to the company and position.
  - a. Most interview responses will be about 30 to 45 seconds in length (roughly 5 to 7 sentences).
  - b. Once you have written out your responses, read through them several times. This will help you articulate your answers the way that you intend. Once you feel comfortable answering the question, you can practice answering the question aloud without looking at your responses.
  - c. Remember to use the [STAR Method](#): The STAR method is primarily used for behavioral based interview questions. Interviewers ask behavioral based questions to learn more about how you have or may react in a particular situation. With these questions, you are typically asked to provide an example or elaborate on a particular situation (“Tell me about a time when...” or “Describe an example of when you...”).
2. Do Video Practice
  - a. Using a webcam or your phone, have a friend ask interview questions and record your responses.
  - b. Share your videos with the Office of Career Development and seek feedback.
3. Conduct a mock interview with the Office of Career Development. You can complete a practice interview with the Advisor for Vocation and Career Development and receive specific feedback.

# INTERVIEW CHECKLIST

## Before the Interview

1. Save the date on your calendar and ensure that you do not have any conflicting obligations.
2. Bring at least 5 copies of your resume, cover letter, and job description.
3. Common items you may want to bring include: a padfolio or notepad, a pen, and mints (use them *before* the interview, not during it).
  - Optional items to bring: a portfolio of your work (make sure no portfolio items are confidential), transcripts, and/or your list of references.
4. Ensure that you have the [appropriate clothing for your interview](#).
5. Research the company, the department, and write notes and questions to take with you.
6. Practice responding to interview questions.
7. Give yourself plenty of time to get to your interview in case there are parking or traffic issues; you will want to check-in with the reception desk **10-15 minutes before your interview**. Be prepared to arrive early and stay late.
8. LEAVE YOUR PHONE IN THE CAR.

## During the Interview

1. Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication
  - Have a firm handshake, but do not squeeze too hard.
  - Maintain eye contact.
  - Pause before answering questions. Even if you are prepared with an answer, give yourself a second to make sure that you can answer the question thoughtfully.
  - Avoid verbal fillers (“um,” “like,” “you know,” etc.) and fidgeting.
  - Have a positive attitude and smile and remember that you were selected for an interview, so they are interested in learning more about you.
2. Take notes about the company and any follow-up questions you may have for the interviewers (other than your padfolio and pen, try not to keep too many items on top of the table).
3. At the end of the interview, ask for business cards from the interviewer(s) so that you can send them a thank you email/note after the meeting.
4. [Ask the interviewers questions](#). Typically, several minutes will be available for you to ask questions.

- Bring some prepared questions, but also include a question or two that was generated through the interview process.

**NOTE:** Be sure to include questions about the next step of the process (if there will be another round of interviews, when/how you will be notified of selection, if you need to provide any additional references, etc.).

5. Thank everyone for their time.

### After the Interview

1. Reflect on the interview and write down any last-minute notes or questions and gauge how you feel about the opportunity.
2. Send a thank you email **within 24 hours**.
3. Mail a handwritten thank you note **one day after the interview**.
4. Follow-up via email **one week after your interview**.

## SAMPLE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### 1. "Tell me about yourself?"

This is commonly used as an icebreaker to see your reactions, body language, how well you can communicate, and to find out about your job skills. You want to state your experiences and skills that are relevant to the employer.

In your answer, give a brief introduction, tell your key accomplishments (using the [STAR method](#) and [RAT concept](#)), key strengths related to these accomplishments (including any areas of expertise), why these are important to the employer, and how you see yourself fitting into the position/organization you're applying for.

**SAMPLE ANSWER:** "I am currently a senior at Boyce College majoring in Humanities. For the past two summers, I have interned for **NAME OF ORGANIZATION**. It was an excellent experience that taught me how to think critically when problem solving. The four years I've spent at Boyce have developed my self-discipline as well as my attention to detail. I am now looking forward to a career **FILL IN JOB FIELD** after graduation. This opportunity to work for **COMPANY NAME** will allow me to contribute to your mission of **FILL IN MISSION** and grow in my knowledge of the industry ."

### 2. "What is your greatest weakness?"

This may sound like a negative question, but the employer is trying to gain an understanding of your level of self-awareness and desire/ability to improve. Tell the employer your weakness (that will **not** affect your ability to do the job) and share what you are doing to address the weakness.

**SAMPLE ANSWER:** "I am naturally a straightforward person, and this personality trait has helped me get work done efficiently. However, not everyone responds well to my direct feedback. To keep my relationships strong with my teammates, I have read several books such **FILL IN TITLE(S)** about interpersonal communication and leadership. I am now much more attentive to how I give feedback."

### 3. "Where do you see yourself 5 years from now? What are your future goals?"

The interviewer may be trying to ascertain whether your goals fit with the organization's, what expectations you have of them, and if you are goal-oriented and able to plan ahead. If you desire advancement and have leadership aspirations try not to come across as overly ambitious or un-teachable.

**SAMPLE ANSWER:** "I understand that my growth within this organization will depend on my job performance, education, and the company's success. My first focus is on excelling at this position, but in the next few years, I hope to earn my master's degree. Doing so will enhance my education and enable me to better contribute to the organization's mission of **FILL IN MISSION.**"

### 4. "Why are you interested in our organization and/or this position?"

The employer wants to see what you know about the organization and position and that you're genuinely interested in them. This is where all your hard work pays off. Show that you have researched the organization and thought about how it fits with your goals, skills, etc.

**SAMPLE ANSWER1 :** "I have been reading about your new training program and am really excited about **FILL IN.**"

**SAMPLE ANSWER 2:** "After talking with other people who work for **FILL IN ORGANIZATION,** I feel that I am a good fit for this organization because **FILL IN THE SKILLS YOU BRING TO MEET THEIR NEEDS.**"

### 5. "What did you NOT like about your previous supervisor and/or company?"

Eventually, you will leave this company/organization (like your last one), and employers want to see the likelihood of you maintaining their reputation. Speaking badly about your previous supervisor or company may indicate to your prospective employer that you may speak badly about them in the future. Employers can also gauge your "fit" with company culture by your response, so it is important you focus on the **positive aspects** of the position and why you are ready to move-on. Focus on what you loved and/or learned.

**SAMPLE ANSWER:** "Though the people at my previous company were great to work with, there were limited opportunities for growth due to the size of the company. I am excited for the opportunity to work at a larger establishment to challenge myself and have more professional development opportunities. I have a skillset that will enable me to contribute here at **FILL IN COMPANY,** and I hope to bring my knowledge and experience to your company."

## OTHER COMMON INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What do you know about our company?
2. What are your greatest strengths?
3. Tell me about a conflict you had with a co-worker or client.
4. How have your past experiences prepared you for this position?
5. Describe your ideal working environment.
6. Why should we hire you?
7. In what ways can you add value to our company/team?
8. What kind of qualities do you prefer in a supervisor?
9. Describe an example of when you showed...(certain skill or quality)
10. What did you enjoy most about your last job? Least?
11. How would your last supervisor evaluate you?
12. How would your best friend describe you?
13. Why did you choose your major?
14. Tell me about a time when you worked as part of a team.
15. Describe three things that are most important to you in a job.
16. How did you prepare for this interview?
17. Tell me about a time you failed.
18. Describe a time you did more than what was expected or required.
19. Do your grades reflect your ability?
20. Why did you choose to attend Boyce College?
21. How do you feel about travel or relocating?
22. Give an example of a solution you provided an employer.
23. What unique qualifications do you have that other applicants may not?