

Basic Interviewing Tips

Before the Interview:

- Thoroughly research the employer and the position for which you will be interviewing. What does the organization do? Who are the main players? Who are their competitors? Where has the organization been and where is it going? What is the employer looking for?
- Obtain interviewer(s) name and title.
- Confirm the time/date/location of the interview.
- Review your resume and be able to elaborate on it.
- Identify your skills, interests, and values that relate to the job. Be able to clearly describe your strengths and share stories of when you demonstrated your strengths.
- Review frequently asked questions, practice interviewing and request feedback from others for improving your interviewing skills; do a mock interview!
- Prepare questions to ask the interviewer.
- Know the general salary range for the position.
- Plan what to wear. Dress the part of a job seeker. This is not the time to be trendy.
- Brush up on your dining etiquette.

During the Interview:

- Arrive early.
- Bring extra copies of your resume.
- Relax and be yourself.
- Be positive, truthful, and polite.
- Follow the lead of the interviewer (don't try to take over the interview).
- Listen closely to the interviewer's questions; ask for clarification if needed.
- Be concise in your answers; give concrete answers to back up your claims.
- Never slight a former employee or colleague
- Be aware of your posture and body language, watch your grammar.
- Be sure to clarify any follow-up arrangements.
- At meals, order items that are easy to eat. Take the lead of your host. Don't drink alcohol.

Questions to Ask the Interviewer:

- Is there anything else you would like to know about my strengths and how I can make a contribution?
- What results do you expect to get from the person in this position?
- How would you describe your management style?
- What characteristics do you most like to find in people in this job?
- What specific experiences would help someone do well in this job?
- What do you consider to be the most difficult task involved in this job?
- Will I have an opportunity to meet the people I would be working with?
- What would be a typical first assignment? First year?
- What are the primary results you would like to see me produce?
- Do you have any recent graduates from the UW working for you? May I talk with them?
- How would you describe the work environment here?
- What do you like about working here?
- What has been your career path with the company?
- What type of performance appraisal would I have? When? How often?
- What is the largest problem facing your industry now? Facing your staff?
- Are there opportunities for growth and advancement?
- What is a typical career path for someone starting out in this position?
- What can I do between now and when you make an offer to assure I get the job?
- When may I expect to hear from you? When do you expect to make your decision?
- May I contact you if I have additional questions? (Ask for a business card)

Behavioral Based Interview Questions

1. Describe a time on any job that you've held in which you were faced with problems or stresses that tested your coping skills. What did you do?
2. Give an example of a time in which you had to keep from speaking or not finish a task because you did not have enough information to come to a good decision.
3. Give an example of a time in which you had to be relatively quick in coming to a decision.
4. Tell me about a time in which you had to use your spoken communication skills in order to get a point across that was important to you.
5. Can you tell me about a job experience in which you had to speak up in order to be sure that other people knew what you thought or felt?
6. Give me an example of a specific time you conformed to a policy with which you did not agree.
7. Describe a situation in which you felt it necessary to be very attentive and vigilant to your environment.
8. Give an example of a time in which you had to use your fact finding skills to gain information for solving a problem - then tell me how you analyzed the information to come to a decision.
9. Give me an example of an important goal that you had set in the past and tell me about your success in reaching it.
10. Describe the most significant written document/report/presentation that you have had to complete.
11. Tell me about a time when you went above and beyond the call of duty to get a job done.
12. Give me an example of a time when you were able to successfully communicate with another person, even when that individual may not have personally liked you.
13. Describe a situation in which you were able to effectively "read" another person and guide your action by your understanding of their individual needs or values.
14. What did you do in your last job in order to be effective with your organization and planning?
15. Describe the most creative work related project that you have carried out.
16. Describe a time in which you felt it was necessary to modify or change your actions in order to respond to the needs of another person.
17. Tell me about a time that demonstrates your leadership skills.
18. What did you do in your last job to contribute toward a teamwork environment? Be specific.
19. Give an example of a problem that you faced on any job and tell me how you went about solving it.
20. Describe a time you were able to positively influence the actions of others in a desired direction.
21. Tell me about a time when you performed well in a crisis situation.

Use the **STAR interview technique** to paint a word picture of yourself to potential employers. The **STAR Technique works best for behavioral-based questions – which often start with “Tell me about a time when....”** Sample behavioral-based questions are below.

STAR Method

Situation: Recently, I was part of a group project in my Organizational Communications class. We had an assignment to design an effective public relations campaign for a fictitious company.

Task: We chose to market a bank opening a new office in a small community. We had to come up with a marketing plan and media kit designed to introduce the company to its new community and to solicit new bank customers.

Action: As the project team leader, I set up an appointment with the Director of Marketing at XYZ Bank and got her insight on the project. After the meeting, I came up with a creative marketing plan, which was enthusiastically received by the other group members. I then assigned each group member a particular task, based on his or her area of expertise. For example, one member was responsible for writing a press release. I monitored the group's progress to make sure we were meeting our deadlines and also put together a strong oral presentation to make to the class.

Result: The project was fun and allowed me to develop the management skills necessary to lead a very diverse group of 6 people. The most rewarding part was that our group received the highest marks in the class and the professor currently uses our project materials as an example in his classes.

Sample Behavioral-Based Questions

1. Tell me about a course, work experience, or extracurricular activity where another group member didn't carry his/her weight. How did you handle the situation?
2. Give me a specific example of a time when you had to address an angry customer. What was the problem and what was the outcome? How would you assess your role in defusing the situation?
3. Tell me about a suggestion you made to improve the way job processes/operations worked.
4. Give me some examples that show you can adapt to a wide variety of people, situations, and/or environments.
5. Give me an example of a time when there was a decision to be made and procedures were not in place. What did you do?
6. Describe a time on any job that you've held in which you were faced with problems or stresses that tested your coping skills. What did you do?
7. Give an example of a time in which you had to keep from speaking or not finish a task because you did not have enough information to come to a good decision.

Handling Illegal Questions

From: JobWeb: Your Online Complement to the **Job Choices** Magazine Series
 By Rochelle Kaplan

Various federal, state, and local laws regulate the questions a prospective employer can ask you, the job candidate. An employer's questions—whether on the job application, in the interview, or during the testing process—must be related to the job you're seeking. For the employer, the focus must be: "What do I need to know to decide whether this person can perform the functions of this job?"

If asked an illegal question, you have three options:

- You can answer the question—you're free to do so, if you wish. However, if you choose to answer an illegal question, remember that you are giving information that isn't related to the job; in fact, you might be giving the "wrong" answer, which could harm your chances of getting the job.
- You can refuse to answer the question, which is well within your rights. Unfortunately, depending on how you phrase your refusal, you run the risk of appearing uncooperative or confrontational—hardly words an employer would use to describe the "ideal" candidate.
- You can examine the question for its intent and respond with an answer as it might apply to the job. For example, the interviewer asks, "Are you a U.S. citizen?" or "What country are you from?" You've been asked an illegal question. You could respond, however, with "I am authorized to work in the United States." Similarly, let's say the interviewer asks, "Who is going to take care of your children when you have to travel for the job?" You might answer, "I can meet the travel and work schedule that this job requires."

Examples of Illegal Questions

| Inquiry Area | Illegal Questions | Legal Questions |
|---------------------------------|--|--|
| National Origin/ Citizenship | • Are you a U.S. citizen? • Where were you/your parents born? • What is your "native tongue"? | • Are you authorized to work in the United States? • What language do you read/speak/write fluently? (This question is okay only if this ability is relevant to the performance of the job.) |
| Age | • How old are you? • When did you graduate? • What's your birth date? | • Are you over the age of 18? |
| Marital/ Family Status | • What's your marital status? • With whom do you live? • Do you plan to have a family? When? • How many kids do you have? • What are your child-care arrangements? | • Would you be willing to relocate if necessary? • Would you be able and willing to travel as needed for the job? (This question is okay if it is asked of all applicants for the job.) • Would you be able and willing to work overtime as necessary? (This question is okay assuming it is asked of all applicants for the job.) |

Job Search Preparation

- About.com – Dress for Success -
<http://jobsearch.about.com/od/interviewsnetworking/a/dressforsuccess.htm>
- Ask the Head Hunter – Interview articles and more -
<http://www.asktheheadhunter.com/articles.htm>
- BlackVoices.com – Career Advice -
http://blackvoices.aol.com/black_work_money/careers/headlines_features_advice
- Business Etiquette – <http://www.ravenwerks.com/practices/etiquette.htm>
- CareerBuilder.com – Advice and Resources -
<http://www.careerbuilder.com/JobSeeker/Resources/CareerResources.aspx>
- College Grad Job Hunter – Job Search Advice - <http://www.collegegrad.com/jobsearch/>
- Graduating Engineer and Computer Careers Online –
<http://www.graduatingengineer.com/interview/index.html>
- Job Hunters Bible – <http://www.jobhuntersbible.com/>
- Job Interview Net – <http://www.job-interview.net/index.htm>
- JobWeb – http://www.jobweb.com/Resumes_Interviews/default.htm
- Monster.com – <http://content.monster.com/>
- MonsterMoving.com – <http://www.monstermoving.monster.com/>
- Quintessential Careers – <http://www.quintcareers.com/student.html>
- Symplicity – <http://guide.symplicity.com/>
- Wall Street Journal – <http://www.careers.wsj.com/jobhunting/interviewing/>

Company/Industry Research

- Hoover's Online – <http://premium.hoovers.com/subscribe/>
- InfoUSA – <http://www.infousa.com/>
- Investext Group – <http://www.lib.washington.edu/databases/investext/>
- Researching Companies Online – <http://www.learnwebskills.com/company/>
- Symplicity – <http://guide.symplicity.com/resources/>
- ValuationResources.com – www.valuationresources.com/IndustryReport.htm
- Vault.com – <http://www.vault.com/>
- WetFeet.com – http://www.wetfeet.com/research/company_interviews.asp

Career Portfolios

- University of Washington Portfolio Project Builder description
<http://catalyst.washington.edu/catalyst/how-to/portfolio/about.html>
- Career Portfolio Basics - <http://depts.washington.edu/geogjobs/Careers/pfolbasics.html>
- Starting Your Portfolio Collection - <http://depts.washington.edu/geogjobs/Careers/pfolcoll.html>
- The Teaching Portfolio – <http://members.tripod.com/~papertiger1/index.html>
- The Electronic Portfolio Boom: What's It All About?
<http://www.campus-technology.com/article.asp?id=6984>
- Portfolio Power: The New Way to Showcase All Your Job Skills and Experiences
by Martin Kimeldorf, Peterson's, Princeton, NJ, 1997
- Creating Portfolios for Success in School, Work, and Life
by Martin Kimeldorf, Free Spirit Publishing,, Minneapolis, MN, 1994
- Creating Your Career Portfolio: At a Glance Guide
by Anna Graf Williams and Karen J. Hall, Prentice-Hall, Inc., 2004
- The Employment Portfolio: Identifying Skills, Training, Accomplishments and References for the Job
Seeker, by Charles Bostaph and Roland Vendeland, Prentice Hall, 1999
- Creating a Digital Portfolio: A Guide to Marketing and Self-Promotion by Cynthia Baron, Hayden
Books, Indianapolis, 1996

In recent years, there's been a trend toward a more relaxed dress code in the workplace. "Business Casual" and "Casual Fridays" are new terms in the lexicon of professional dress. So what does it all mean? How should you dress for success in the new millennium? To find the answer to that and other questions, we consulted with recruiters and human resources professionals representing several professional areas.

Our respondents included:

- Christina Boyden, PricewaterhouseCoopers
- Jocelyn Flennaugh, RealNetworks
- Nicole Weisgerber, Enterprise Rent-A-Car
- Gayle Keenan, Primex Aerospace Company
- Jill McCannon, Capital One

What should you wear to the interview?

The definition of appropriate interview attire varies from industry to industry. As you might expect, technology companies favor more casual attire. However, it's not as casual as you might think. While jeans and a T-shirt may be de rigueur for employees, you, as the interviewee, should dress a little more conservatively. Below are some of the responses:

I would definitely recommend a suit for any professional services organization. We work in a conservative, professional environment and we expect our hires to portray this image.
PricewaterhouseCoopers

Our interviews are business casual. We let students know that we do not expect them to wear suits or jackets. Some students feel more comfortable in an interview setting when they are wearing a suit, and we respect that. We like for candidates to look polished and presentable.
Capital One

First impressions are hard to ignore so you should be dressed to impress. For the interview process, I prefer if candidates are wearing a conservative suit; navy, black, gray, or brown for men with a white shirt and conservative tie. Save the trendy patterned shirts and ties for another time. For women, pant suits or skirt suits. *Enterprise Rent-A-Car*

Even though we have a business casual dress code, I expect students to dress professionally. By that, I mean for men, a dress shirt with a tie, or a suit. For women, a skirt, dress or dress slacks.
Primex Aerospace Company

For our business, we're pretty casual. I think a candidate should always strive to be about one degree more formal than their interviewers, so I would advise business casual. The important thing is to appear clean, organized, and put-together. *RealNetworks*

Nervous about interviewing?

...DON'T PRACTICE DURING REAL INTERVIEWS!

**CCS PRESENTS MOCK INTERVIEWS:
An opportunity for you to practice interviewing
with a peer advisor or counselor before the real thing.**

A Mock Interview will help you:

- Know what to expect when you interview for real.
- Learn more effective ways to answer different types of questions.
- Become more comfortable and confident during interviews.
- Have a successful interview.

Mock Interview Steps:

1. Review the "5 Steps to a Successful Interview" on the reverse side.
2. Choose a position to focus on in your mock interview.
3. Drop off a copy of your resume and a description of the position when you schedule your mock interview. If you are practicing for a graduate or professional school interview, try to include a copy of your personal statement.
4. Before the interview, research the employer or graduate program.
5. Your mock interview can be recorded [**OPTIONAL**] by videotape or DVD. Blank videos and DVDs are available for purchase in the CCS for \$2.00.
6. Review what went well in the mock interview and what needs to be improved with your mock interviewer.
7. Review videotape/DVD and follow-up. [**OPTIONAL**]

**GO INTO INTERVIEWS WITH CONFIDENCE.
SCHEDULE A MOCK INTERVIEW TODAY!**