



**OFFICE OF CAREER PLANNING**

# Interview Preparation



**WOOSTER**

Advising, Planning, Experiential Learning

# Preparing for an Interview

Preparation is critical component of a successful and memorable interview. This guide serves as general advice for interviewing use this guidebook in conjunction with Career Planning staff that will offer individual guidance. Suggestions for interview preparation include:

## Reflect on your Experiences

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- Articulate your skills, interests, and values.
- Consider examples demonstrating your strengths and areas of growth that you improved.
- Articulate why you are interested in the position, organization, and/or the field.
- Discuss decisions you have made and the thought process behind them.
- Share an achievement and steps you could take to improve if the process were repeated.
- Provide examples to demonstrate how you have developed your skills.
- Define your long-term goals.

## Research the Employer and the Field

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- Know the market rate of the salary range for this type of position.
- Read media and trade journals to learn about current trends in the field.
- Review mission statements, annual reports, and company literature.
- Think about the organization's competitors, its clients, or customers.
- Be familiar with the employer's organizational structure.
- Assess the organization's values Practice for the Interview.
- Meet with a career advisor to review your strategy and have a practice interview.
- Utilize Big Interview to practice on your time.
- Practice and critique answering interview questions with a friend and/or record yourself.
- Prepare questions you want to ask the employer, always have questions prepared as the interview is also for you to see if you want to be in an organization or role.
- Review the description of responsibilities, and anticipate questions that may be asked based on key or repeating words.
- Think about what an organization is seeking from candidates and prepare examples that could match what they are looking for.

## During the Interview

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- Be authentic, let an organization get to know you and what you bring.
- Keep your answers focused to the question being asked.
- Be as specific as possible, utilizing the S.T.A.R. method to answer questions.
- Do not try to dominate the interview, let the interviewer guide the questions.
- Always ask questions, even if it is just to get to know the interviewer more.

## After the Interview

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- Prepare thank you emails or notes to each interviewer referencing a specific moment in the interview and thanking them for their consideration.
- Send the thank you at least 48 hours after the interview.

*Meet with a Career Planning staff member to hold a practice interview and additional interviewing strategies.*

# Skills Employers View as Important from Graduates

Below are skills employers view as important from college graduates organized with the College of Wooster Graduate Qualities which are qualities that College of Wooster graduates should demonstrate, in bold:

## Independent Thinking

- Critical Thinking
- Work Independently
- Lifelong Learning
- Career and Self Development

## Effective Communication

- Presentation Skills
- Oral Communication
- Written Communication

## Integrative and Collaborative Inquiry

- Innovation and Creativity
- Analyze and Interpret Data
- Locate, Evaluate, and Use Information in Decision Making
- Integrate Ideas and Information Across Settings and Contexts

## Global Engagement

- Communicate and Work with People from Different Cultural Backgrounds
- Global Learning
- Intercultural Knowledge

## Dynamic Understanding of the Liberal Arts

- Digital Literacy
- Quantitative Reasoning
- Application of Knowledge in Real World Settings
- Working with Statistics and Numbers

## Justice and Civic Responsibility

- Ethical Judgement and Decision Making
- Self-Motivated
- Civic Engagement
- Equity and Inclusion

**Employers are More Likely to Hire Graduates with These Experiences**

- **Internship/apprenticeship** with a company/organization
- **Project** in community with people from diverse backgrounds
- Multiple courses requiring **significant writing** assignments
- **Research project** done collaboratively with peers
- Advanced, comprehensive **senior project/thesis**
- **Service-learning** project with community organization
- **Study abroad** program

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## Types of Interviews

Interviews can take many forms, and it is important to know what to expect. If you do not know the interview format, contact the recruiter, interviewer, or the Human Resources department. Below are types of interviews with tips:

- ▶ **Screening Interview** – These interviews are the first in a series of interviews, usually up to 3. They are shorter and the questions are less in depth like start date, availability, and your background, and qualifications.
- ▶ **Classic One-on-One Interview** – You meet with one or two interviewers who ask questions to get a sense of you as a person, if you are a qualified candidate, and your skills and experiences. Think of the interview as a conversation.
- ▶ **Phone/Video Interview** (e.g., Zoom, Skype, Teams, Bluejeans, etc.) – Like a “Classic Oneon-One Interview” but completed over the phone or video call.

*Tips:* Find a quiet place where you will not be disturbed. Focus on the interview avoiding other activities like checking your phone, shuffling papers, chewing gum, etc.). Listen closely to your interviewers – you cannot rely on their nonverbals.

- ▶ **Group Interview** – Group interviews are common particularly in the early stages of phased interviewing or for positions that require teamwork or leadership. You will be grouped with other candidates and asked questions or required to do some group activity.

*Tips:* Be respectful and interested in the other candidates. Avoid bossing people around. Speak up but do not speak over others.

- ▶ **Panel Interview** – Panel interviews are used most often in government, academia, and for high-level positions. Panel interviews have just one interviewee (that is you) and multiple interviewers, often individuals you would work with.

*Tips:* Respond to the person posing the question, making primary eye contact with them while briefly glancing at the others during your response.

- ▶ **Case or Situational Interview** – Case interviews are often used for consulting jobs and present you with hypothetical business scenarios then ask you to come up with a solution. There is usually no one “right” answer so the process is as important as the outcome.

*Tips:* Feel free to take notes for some time before responding. Present your idea for an action-oriented solution. Show what resources you will use in the process. Share your reasoning out loud – to show your logic and problem-solving ability.

- ▶ **Technical Interview** – Technical interviews are often used in to gauge a candidate’s aptitude, knowledge, and/or skills. They could also look for personal qualities like communication and interpersonal skills.

- ▶ **“AI” Algorithm-based Interview** – Video interviews that are prerecorded through software are likely an AI interview. AI are used by employers to screen candidates more efficiently.

*Tips:* Be direct as the computer cannot infer implications. Incorporate keywords and phrases echoing the job posting. Hiring software will listen for vocal tone so speak like you are talking to a human.

## Behavioral Interviewing and S.T.A.R. Method

Behavioral interviewing is a technique used by employers to learn about your past behavior in various situations. Past behavior is a better predictor of future behavior rather than how you would act in a hypothetical future situation. Reflect and identify quality examples that demonstrate your skills.

The S.T.A.R. method stands for:

**S**

### Situation

Give context to the problem or task you accomplished.

**T**

### Task

Describe the specific task or event associated with the situation.

**A**

### Action

Describe the action *you* took to accomplish the task or solve the problem. Be sure to focus on **YOUR** role within the task. Do not tell what you *would* do, whenever possible, discuss what you have done.

**R**

### Result

Detail what happened, what the outcome was, and the impact your work had.

It is suggested that you utilize the S.T.A.R. method for as many questions as possible to highlight your behaviors that an organization may be searching for with candidates. Examples of a behavioral question could be:

- Describe a time when you successfully used persuasion to convince someone to see things differently.
- Describe a time when you were faced with a stressful situation that demonstrated your coping skills.
- Give an example of a time when you used good judgment in solving a problem.
- Give me an example of a time when you had to set a goal and were able to meet it.
- Give an example of a time when you had to follow a policy with which you did not agree.
- Please discuss an important written document you were required to complete.
- Tell me about a time when you had to go 'above and beyond' to get the job done.
- When was a time you had too many tasks and you had to prioritize your actions?
- What is your typical way of dealing with conflict?
- Tell me about a time when you were able to successfully deal with another person even when that individual may not have personally liked you (or vice versa).
- Tell me about a time you had to make a difficult decision in the past year.
- Give me an example of a time when you tried to accomplish something but failed.
- Give me an example of a time when you motivated others.
- Tell me about a time when you delegated effectively.
- Give me an example of a time when you used your fact-finding skills to solve a problem.
- When was a time you had to make an unpopular decision?
- Describe a time you set your sights too high (or too low).



## Sample Interview Question

### ● **Open-ended questions:**

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why do you want to work here?
- Why should I hire you?
- What makes you unique?
- What questions you have for me?
- What attracted you to this role?

### ● **Questions about your characteristics:**

- What do you consider to be your major strengths and weaknesses?
- How would a friend or a professor who knows you well describe you?
- What accomplishment has given you the most satisfaction?
- What major challenge have you encountered and how did you deal with it?
- Tell me about a time you had to overcome a challenge?

### ● **Questions about your work experience**

- What have you learned from some of the jobs you have held?
- What job have you enjoyed the most?
- What kind of work environment do you prefer?
- Tell me about a time you worked in a team, what role in a group do you take on?

### ● **Questions about the organization or position:**

- Why did you decide to seek a position with this organization?
- What factors are important to you in a job?
- What are you looking for in a supervisor?
- How do you handle stress in work?
- How do you evaluate success?
- What are your long-term career goals?
- Where do you see yourself in five years/ten years?
- What are your salary expectations?

### ● **Questions about your college experience:**

- Why did you choose The College of Wooster?
- Why did you choose your major?
- Describe your most rewarding college experience.
- What have you learned from participating in co-curricular activities/leadership roles?
- What do you like to do in your free time?
- How has your collegiate experience prepared you for this role?

## Discussing your Independent Study

A clear advantage you will have as a College of Wooster applicant is Independent Study.

### Some sample skills gained through Independent Study are:

- Time Management Strategies
- Decision Making Capabilities
- Critical Thinking Skills
- Organizational Experience
- Research Techniques
- Presentation Skills
- Writing Skills
- Creativity
- Analytical Reasoning
- Stress Management

### Tips for explaining Independent Study to others not familiar with Independent Study include:

- Explain the scope and time commitment, they may be surprised at the scope of this academic requirement
- Utilize the S.T.A.R. Method when discussing your Independent Study emphasizing specific skills gained and results found during the process
- Describe your Independent Study in a logical fashion starting at the beginning and explaining your activities sequentially

### Below are examples on how to discuss your Independent Study in an interview:

- Independent Study is a yearlong, self-designed, faculty mentor research project that all College of Wooster students complete before graduation. I chose \_\_\_\_\_ as my topic of study and prepared a detailed outline planning my project that included targeted completion dates for each phase of the project. Realizing that I would need monetary support to travel to New Mexico to interview members of the Indigenous population I connected to my topic, I contacted various professional organizations and submitted grant proposals to secure \$\_\_\_\_\_of funding toward my efforts. I then conducted research \_\_\_\_\_ databases to identify sources for additional information relevant to the topic. I prepared a draft of interview questions to be used and discussed my strategies for interviews with participants. Upon my return, I transcribed the qualitative portion of the interviews and entered the quantitative data into \_\_\_\_\_ statistical program to complete an analysis. Once the findings had been determined, I wrote an 80-page thesis describing my study and used Microsoft Excel to create a variety of graphs for presenting the numerical results. I then defended my Independent Study to members of my academic department.
- One experience where I managed multiple competing deadlines was during my senior year at The College of Wooster. A requirement for graduation is completing a yearlong, self-designed research project. This was completed during my final year of college in addition to carrying a full academic calendar and robust extracurricular schedule. During my Independent Study, I anticipated a scheduling conflict with the research and \_\_\_\_\_. After reviewing my main calendar that holds all important deadlines, I was able to assess which deadline needed to be prioritized based on the other parties involved and future deadlines that relied on these tasks. Ultimately, I chose to prioritize \_\_\_\_\_ because this deadline, if missed would result in additional delays and would require additional reschedules. In the end I was able to accomplish both tasks by prioritizing which deadline could be adjusted. If selected for \_\_\_\_\_ position, I will bring my skills of time management and critical thinking to \_\_\_\_\_ that I learned during my Independent Study.



## Handling Illegal Questions

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:

- 1.** You can answer the question – you're free to do so, if you wish. However, if you chose 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.
- 2.** 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.
- 3.** 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 and their Legal Counterparts:

Inquiry Area	Illegal Questions	Legal Questions
<b>National Origin / Citizenship</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Are you a U.S. citizen?</li> <li>– Where were you/your parents born?</li> <li>– What is your “native tongue”?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Are you authorized to work in the United States?</li> <li>– What languages do you read, speak, or write fluently? (This OK, as long as this ability is relevant to performing the job)</li> </ul>
<b>Age</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– How old are you?</li> <li>– When did you graduate?</li> <li>– What’s your birth date?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Are you over the age of 18?</li> </ul>
<b>Marital/Family Status</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– What’s your marital status?</li> <li>– Who do you live with?</li> <li>– Do you plan to have a family? When?</li> <li>– How many kids do you have?</li> <li>– What are your childcare arrangements?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Would you be willing to relocate, if necessary?</li> <li>– Travel is an important part of the job. Would you be able and willing to travel as needed by the job? (This OK, as long as it is asked of ALL applicants)</li> <li>– This job requires overtime occasionally. Would you be able and willing to work overtime as necessary? (This OK, as long as it is asked of ALL applicants)</li> </ul>
<b>Affiliations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– What clubs or social organizations do you belong to?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– List any professional or trade or other organizations that you belong to that you consider reflect your ability to perform this job.</li> </ul>
<b>Personal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– How tall are you?</li> <li>– How much do you weigh?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Are you able to lift a 50-pound weight and carry it 100 yards, as that is part of the job?</li> <li>– (Questions about height and weight are not acceptable unless minimum standards are essential to the safely performing the job)</li> </ul>
<b>Arrest Record</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Have you ever been arrested?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Have you ever been convicted of _____? (The crime named should reasonably relate to the performance of the job in question)</li> </ul>
<b>Military</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– If you’ve been in the military, were you honorably discharged?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– In what branch of the Armed Forces did you serve?</li> <li>– What type of training or education did you receive in the military?</li> </ul>

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## Pre-Employment Inquiries – Disabilities

Inquiry Area	Illegal Questions	Legal Questions
<b>Job Performance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Do you have any physical or mental impairment that would keep you from performing the job you seek?</li> <li>- What physical or mental impairments do you have that would affect your job performance?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Are you able to perform the essential function of the job you are seeking, with or without accommodations? (OK as long as interviewer has thoroughly described the job)</li> </ul>
<b>Attendance Requirements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How many days were you sick in your last job?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Can you meet our attendance requirements?</li> <li>- How many days were you absent in your last job?</li> <li>- How many Mondays or Fridays</li> <li>- Were you absent last year on leave other than approved vacation leave?</li> </ul>
<b>History of Injury</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Do you break bones easily?</li> <li>- Do you expect the leg to heal normally?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How did you break your leg?</li> </ul>
<b>Drug Use</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What medications are you currently taking? How often did you use illegal drugs in the past? Have you ever been addicted to drugs?</li> <li>- Have you ever been treated for drug addiction?</li> <li>- Have you ever been treated for drug abuse?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Are you currently using illegal drugs?</li> <li>- Have you ever used illegal drugs?</li> </ul>
<b>Alcohol Use</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How much alcohol do you drink?</li> <li>- Have you ever participated in an alcohol rehabilitation program?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Do you drink alcohol?</li> <li>- Have you ever been arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol?</li> </ul>
<b>Vision</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What is your corrected vision?</li> <li>- When did you lose your eyesight?</li> <li>- How did you lose your eyesight?</li> <li>- Are you color blind?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Do you have 20/20 vision? (If a job requirement)</li> <li>- Can you distinguish between color bands? (If this is an essential function)</li> </ul>
<b>Mental State</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What is your corrected vision?</li> <li>- When did you lose your eyesight?</li> <li>- How did you lose your eyesight?</li> <li>- Are you color blind?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How well can you handle stress?</li> </ul>
<b>Physical Ability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Are you able to sit? Can you carry objects?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Can you sit for four hours at a time?</li> <li>- Can you carry 3lbs boxes to the copier? (If essential functions of the job.)</li> </ul>
<b>General</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tell me all of your disabilities?</li> <li>- Please complete the following medical history: Have you had any recent or past illnesses or operations? If yes, list and give dates.</li> <li>- What was the date of your last physical exam? How's your family's health?</li> <li>- When did you lose your eyesight? How?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What are your job skills, educational background and prior work experience?</li> <li>- Are you able to perform the job functions with or without reasonable accommodations? (OK if interviewer has thoroughly described the job)</li> <li>- As part of the hiring process, after a job offer has been made, you will be required to undergo a medical exam. (Exam results must be kept strictly confidential, except medical/safety personnel may be informed if emergency medical treatment is required and supervisors may be informed about necessary job accommodations, based on results)</li> <li>- Can you demonstrate how you would perform this job-related function?</li> </ul>
<b>Wheelchair Use</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Why do you use a wheelchair, and will we have to make any accommodations for the wheelchair?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Will you need any accommodation to participate in the recruiting process?</li> </ul>

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### **MISSION STATEMENT**

Career Planning provides guidance and resources for students to integrate their values and strengths, liberal arts education, and experiences into purposeful career paths.

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