

What Happens During the Interview?

IT STARTS BEFORE YOU EVEN SAY HELLO

Arrive 15-20 minutes early and prepare to meet people who are not part of your formal agenda. Be courteous to everyone regardless of his or her position; you never know who might be watching you and your actions once you arrive.

Typical interviews start before you enter the interview room. The recruiter begins evaluating you the minute you are identified. Shake the recruiter's hand upon being introduced. Don't be afraid to extend your hand first. This shows assertiveness.

THE RECRUITER HAS THE FLOOR

The main part of the interview starts when the recruiter discusses the organization. Ask questions if the recruiter uses vague generalities about the position and you want more specific information. Have a clear understanding of the job and the company.

As the interview turns to talk about your qualifications, be prepared to deal with aspects of your background that could be construed as negative, i.e., low grade point average, no participation in outside activities, no related work experience. Convince the recruiter that although these points appear negative, positive attributes can be found in them. A low GPA could stem from having to fully support yourself through college; you might have no related work experience, but plenty of experience that shows you to be a loyal and valued employee or that you possess related transferable skills.

IT'S YOUR TURN TO ASK QUESTIONS

When the recruiter asks, "Now do you have any questions?" it's important to have a few ready. Questions should bring out your interest in and knowledge of the organization. Don't ask questions with answers easily be found online.

By asking intelligent, well-thought-out questions, you show the employer you are serious about the organization, want more information and you have done your homework. Prepare some questions ahead of time, but feel free to ask any questions that come up during the interview as well.

THE CLOSE COUNTS, TOO

The interview isn't over until you walk out the door. During the conclusion the recruiter is assessing your overall performance to be sure that not only can you do the job, but you want to do the job and would fit in with their organization's office culture.

Remain enthusiastic and courteous. Shake the recruiter's hand and thank him or her for considering you. Being forthright is a quality that most employers will respect. Let the employer know you are still interested in the position and why.

Just as any good salesperson would never leave a customer without attempting to close the sale, never leave an interview without some sort of closure. Although the employer has the final

power to offer a job, your demeanor during the entire interview process gives you a great deal of power, too.

EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED

During the interview, you may be asked some unusual questions. Don't be too surprised. Many times questions are asked simply to gauge your reaction. For example, a recruiter may ask, "Tell me a joke" or "What time period would you like to have lived in?" While these questions are not always used, they are intended to force you to react under some stress and pressure. The best advice is to think and give a natural response.

TYPES/METHODS

Types

Traditional
Behavioral/Situational
Technical
Case-style
Brain teaser

Methods

Phone
Virtual (video/Skype)
Group/Panel
On-site

THE SITE VISIT/INTERVIEW

After an on-campus interview, strong candidates may be invited to visit the employer's facility. An invitation to an on-site interview is NOT a guarantee of a job offer, but a chance to examine whether or not you will be a good match for the job and organization. If invited, respond promptly if you are sincerely interested. Decline politely if you are not. Never go on an on-site interview for the sake of the trip.

Document the name and phone number of the person coordinating your trip in case your plans change unexpectedly. Verify who will be handling trip expenses. Most medium- and large-size companies (as well as many smaller ones) will pay your expenses, but some will not.

Bring extra copies of your resume and any paperwork you may have forwarded to the employer; names, addresses, phone numbers and email addresses of your references; an updated college transcript; a copy of your best paper as a writing sample; a notebook; a black and/or blue pen for taking notes; and names and addresses of past employers. Bring extra money and a change of clothes. Anything can happen and you need to be ready for emergencies.

Soon after the site visit, review the business cards of those you met or write the information in your notebook before leaving the facility. A thank-you letter should be written to the person(s) who will be making the hiring decision. Stay in touch with the employer if you want to pursue a career with them.

An interview is a two-way street. You are there to evaluate the employer and determine if your expectations are met for job content, company culture and values, organizational structure, and lifestyles (both at work and leisure). Take note of how the employees interact, and also assess the physical work environment.

Partially adapted from Roseanne R. Bensley, Career Services, New Mexico State University.

Questions Employers Ask

PERSONAL

1. **Tell me about yourself.**
2. What are your hobbies?
3. **Why did you choose to interview with our organization?**
4. Describe your ideal job.
5. What can you offer us?
6. **What do you consider to be your greatest strengths?**
7. What are areas of growth for you?
8. **Have you ever had any failures? What did you learn?**
9. Of which three accomplishments are you most proud?
10. Who are your role models? Why?
11. **How does your college education or work experience relate to this job?**
12. **What motivates you most in a job?**
13. Have you had difficulty getting along with a former professor/supervisor/co-worker and how did you handle it?
14. Have you ever spoken to a group of people? How large?
15. **Why should we hire you rather than another candidate?**
16. **What do you know about our organization (products or services)?**
17. Where do you want to be in five years? Ten years?
18. Do you plan to return to school for further education?

EDUCATION

19. **Why did you choose your major?**
20. Why did you choose to attend your college or university?
21. Do you think you received a good education? How?
22. In which campus activities did you participate?
23. Which classes in your major did you like best? Least?
24. Which elective classes did you like best? Least? Why?
25. If you were to start over, what would you change about your education?
26. Do your grades accurately reflect your ability?
27. Were you financially responsible for any portion of your college education?
28. **What has been the most influential aspect of your college experience?**

EXPERIENCE

29. **What job-related skills have you developed?**
30. Did you work while going to school? In what positions?
31. What did you learn from these work experiences?
32. What did you enjoy most about your last employment? Least?
33. Have you ever quit a job? Why?
34. **Give an example of a situation in which you provided a solution to an employer.**
35. **Give an example of a time in which you worked under deadline pressure.**
36. Have you ever done any volunteer work? What kind?
37. **How do you think a former supervisor would describe your work?**

CAREER GOALS

38. Do you prefer to work under supervision or on your own?
39. **What kind of boss do you prefer?**
40. Would you be successful working with a team?
41. Do you prefer large or small organizations? Why?
42. What other types of positions are you considering?
43. How do you feel about working in a structured environment?
44. **Are you able to work on several assignments at once?**
45. How do you feel about working overtime?
46. How do you feel about travel?
47. How do you feel about the possibility of relocating?
48. Are you willing to work flextime?

Before you begin interviewing, think about these questions and possible responses. Be sure you are able to communicate clear, unrehearsed answers to interviewers.

Practice your responses by coming into the Center for Career & Professional Development, for a Mock Interview. Call 401-254-3224 for more info.

QUESTIONS YOU ASK EMPLOYERS

1. What is the top priority for the person in this position over the next three months?
2. What is the biggest challenge in your department?
3. What have you enjoyed most about working here?
4. How would you describe a typical week/day in this position?
5. Can you explain the organizational structure? Who would I report to? Who would be on my team?
6. If I am extended a job offer, how soon would you like me to start?
7. **Can you describe your ideal employee?**
8. How will my performance be measured? By whom?
9. Who is your biggest competitor for your products/services? How is what you offer different from your competitor?
10. Are there any other questions I can answer for you?
11. **What are the next steps in the process?**

The questions above are designed to help you gather more information, and possibly find a way to provide additional valuable information to the employer that did not come out while you were answering their questions.

QUESTIONS NOT TO ASK EMPLOYERS

1. Avoid asking questions about general content that can be found on employer website/company's annual report.
2. Don't bring up salary or benefits in initial interview.
3. Don't ask questions that have been answered in the interview.

Are You Ready for a Behavioral Interview?

Today more than ever, each hiring decision is critical. Behavioral interviewing is designed to minimize personal impressions that might cloud the hiring decision. By focusing on the applicant's actions and behaviors, rather than subjective impressions that can sometimes be misleading, interviewers can make more accurate hiring decisions. You can practice your interview skills by scheduling a mock appointment with the CCPD.

How to Prepare for a Behavioral Interview

- Recall recent situations that show favorable behaviors or actions, especially those involving coursework, work experience, leadership, initiative, planning and customer service.
- Prepare short descriptions of each situation; be ready to give details if asked.
- Be sure each story has a beginning, a middle, and an end; i.e., be ready to describe the situation, your action and the outcome or result.
- Be sure the outcome or result reflects positively on you (even if the result itself was not favorable).
- Be honest. Don't embellish or omit any part of the story. The interviewer will find out if your story is built on a weak foundation.
- Be specific. Don't generalize about several events; give a detailed accounting of one event.

USING THE STAR TECHNIQUE TO ANSWER BEHAVIORAL QUESTIONS

Think of 4-6 situations you have been faced with in the past. Vary your examples so they are from all areas of your past (including internships, volunteering, class projects, part-time jobs, school activities, etc.). Describe your stories using the following STAR method. Practice telling the story using the STAR method, but do not memorize them word for word.

S – Situation or (T) Task: Describe a specific situation or task (i.e., *“Assigned to a team and team member wasn't pulling their weight.”*)

A – Action: What action did you take? (*“I met with the team member in private and explained the frustration of the rest of the team and asked if there was anything I could do to help.”*)

R – Result: What happened as a result? What was the outcome? (*“We finished our project on time and got a B on the assignment.”*)

How to Prepare for Video Interviews



KNOW THE PROGRAM

Oovoo, Skype, iChat, Yugma. The list goes on and on. Before your interview, make sure you've played around with the program enough to know how it works.

BRAND YOURSELF

Just like the email address on your resume or the message on your voicemail—be professional. Be sure the username used for your virtual Interview represents you as a mature and polished candidate.



TEST THE CONNECTION

Do you have a readily available power source? Is the wifi signal strong? Do you have access to a phone, and if it's a cell phone, strong service? Even if everything is checked beforehand, technology can still fail you. Make sure you have the interviewer's phone number, just in case!

AMBIANCE

Dress professionally, silence distractions (i.e. cell phones, pets, roommates, etc.), and avoid situating yourself in front of any noisy backgrounds. Also avoid harsh backlight that will turn you into a silhouette.



POSITION & POSTURE

Do you look at yourself on the screen, or talk directly into the camera? Does your posture present you as casual and relaxed, or confident and poised? Be sure to practice your positioning and posture prior to the interview with your Career Advisor!

Informational

INTERVIEWS

Can you tell me about your career path and how you got where you are?

What are the different entry-level jobs in this career field?

What aspects of this career field do you like/dislike?

What is the typical career progression in the field?

What background or experience is required or helpful?

What other organizations or people in the field would you suggest I talk with, and may I use your name when I contact them?

What do you do on a typical day?

Are there resource books, articles, online sources, or professional associations that you would suggest I use?

What would you suggest for someone who is just beginning in the field?

What courses might be helpful for me to enhance my chances for employment in the field?

How competitive is the job market?

What is the salary range at the entry-level and higher levels?

What is the future of the field in terms of new and expanding opportunities?

What related fields are available for people with backgrounds such as yours?

Informational interviewing is a networking approach which allows you to meet key professionals, gather career information, investigate career options, get advice on job search techniques and get referrals to other professionals.

The art of informational interviewing is in knowing how to balance your hidden agenda (to locate a job) with the unique opportunity to learn firsthand about the demands of your field. Never abuse your privilege by asking for a job, but execute your informational interviews skillfully, and a job may follow.

What motivates professionals to grant informational interviews?

Most people enjoy sharing information about themselves and their jobs and, particularly, love giving advice. If someone reached out to you for advice on attending RWU, you would most likely be more than willing to answer questions and give advice.

Some may simply believe in encouraging newcomers to their profession and others may be scoping out prospects for anticipated vacancies. It is common for professionals to exchange favors and information, so don't hesitate to call upon people.

How do you set up informational interviews?

Email | Phone | LinkedIn

Best way: by being referred to someone in your network. Research LinkedIn to find individuals of interest, and ask to be introduced.

What do I say to someone to ask for an informational interview?

Example message to send through LinkedIn or email:

"Dear Andrew,
My name is Julie Jones and I received your contact information from Megan Lee in the Center for Career & Professional Development. I am currently a senior at Roger Williams University majoring in public relations. I admire your career path in PR and am wondering if you might have time to meet with me or have a quick phone call to answer some questions I have about the field. Thank you in advance!"
Julie Jones

Always remember to send a thank-you letter to every person who grants you time and to every individual who refers you to someone.

JOB MARKET QUESTIONS

If you are preparing to enter the job market, you may wish to ask questions such as:

1. What experiences would make an entry-level job seeker competitive?
2. What are the major challenges/problems that your organization is facing and would like solutions for?

Adapted with permission from University of Maryland's Terp Guide.