



PURPOSE OF AN INTERVIEW

While the interview is primarily for the interviewer to determine if you are a good match and qualified for the position, it is also a time for you to interview the company. Keep in mind that you are seeking a position that is well suited for you just as much as the interviewer is seeking someone qualified for the position. If you remember this, it can help with interview jitters. During the interview, the employer is trying to determine who you are, what you can offer and to get a glimpse of your personality. When you have a thorough understanding of yourself, you can then present yourself in the best possible light. You can show employers what you want them to see.

You must be able to clearly articulate your skills and personal attributes. Without fully exploring these issues, you may come up short when answering questions during the interview. Knowing your behavioral traits will help you in the interviewing process. You will be asked hypothetical questions, such as, "What would you do in this situation?" followed by a specific problem you may encounter on the job. Many grads have limited work experience to show what they have done in the past. You need to have a strong sense of self to know how you would most likely react in the given situation and why; and be able to show why that response is appropriate.

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

RESEARCH | Before you go on a job interview, it's important to find out as much as you can about the position, company and industry. This will ensure that you'll be prepared both to answer interview questions and to ask the interviewer questions. You will also be able to get a better understanding if the company and the company culture are a good fit for you. Review the position description that you applied to. See how your skills align with the skills they are looking for and practice aligning your interview answers with those skills.

Ways to Research:

- Visit the company web site; review the company mission statement and company history, products and services, management, as well as information about the company culture.
- Use *LinkedIn* to find company profiles and learn more about the company you're interviewing with. You'll be able see your connections at the company, new hires, promotions, jobs posted, related companies and company statistics. Take a look at your interviewer's profile to get insight into their job and their background.
 - Also check if any Merrimack alumni work at the company who might be a connection for you.
- Google the organization to see if they have been in the news recently.

PREPARE | Take the time to prepare your interview technique including knowing what's on your resume, being able to articulate why you are qualified for the job, why you are interested in the company and practice staying calm and focused.

A good technique for answering questions is by using the STAR formula: 1) Describe a Situation or Task in which you were involved, 2) Explain your role and what Action you took, and 3) Illustrate the Results you achieved.

- Meet with your career advisor who can work with you to prep for upcoming interviews.
- Utilize *Quinnia* (located under "Resources" on the O'Brien Center for Career Development website) to practice interview and send to your career advisor for feedback.
- Schedule a mock interview for formal practice and immediate feedback.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS | On the next page are some interview questions you may want to use to practice. Below is an example of a well thought out answer for a potential question. Remember, you want to tailor your answers to what they are looking for in the job description.



Sample Interview Questions

- What interests you about this job?
- What do you know about this company?
- Why do you want to work here?
- Where do you see yourself 5 years from now?
- What was your biggest accomplishment/failure?
- What can you contribute to this company?
- How would you describe yourself?
- How do you like to be managed?
- What problems have you encountered at work?
- Have you ever had difficulty working with a manager?
- What do people most often criticize about you?
- Do you prefer to work independently or on a team?

Q. Do you prefer to work independently or on a team?

A. While I have experience both working collaboratively and independently, I prefer to work collaboratively. Considering my experience in marketing, often times the best ideas come while working collaboratively. For example, while working at my marketing internship, the interns were working on branding a company-wide presentation that our director was making. One of the interns suggested we use Prezi and she had a great idea for a creative way to design it, but admitted she didn't have the background to create it. I did have the background and we were able to work together to create a really well branded presentation that the director was very impressed with.

***Note the STAR formula was used to provide a thorough answer to the question.*

DURING THE INTERVIEW

DRESS TO IMPRESS | You want to ensure your first impression is a good one, therefore being dressed appropriately for the interview is key.

What to Wear: Ladies - Suit, professional shoes that are easy to walk in, and blouse, be sure hair and nails are trimmed and neat.
Gentlemen - Suit, shirt and tie, dress socks (not gym socks!) dress shoes, be sure hair and beard are neat and trimmed.

Remember, your interview starts as soon as you arrive, do not talk or text on your cell phone or listening to music while waiting to be called in for the interview.

What to Bring: Multiple copies of resume, copy of your references, pen and notepad or a padfolio.

Present Yourself:

- Greet the interviewer by name with a firm handshake and smile.
- Be self-confident, alert and interested.
- Sit comfortably; maintain good body posture and eye contact.
- Listen carefully to what the interviewer is saying and asking.
- Be articulate, don't use slang, think before answering questions.
- Be prepared to ask thoughtful questions to the interviewer (see examples below).
- Express a clear interest in the position and thank the interviewer.

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE INTERVIEWER | At the end of your interview, it is likely the employer will ask you if you have any questions for them. You should always be prepared to ask questions, it shows you are prepared, engaged and interested. You may think of some questions to ask during your interview, however you will want to come prepared to ask questions. Here are a few samples :

- What are the most important responsibilities of the position?
- What are your biggest priorities over the next year?
- What is the next step in the interview process? What is the time frame?

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

EVALUATE | Think about the position and organization; is this a good fit for you? Consider what you did well and where you had room for improvement, think about what questions you had difficulty answering and work on ways to improve.

FOLLOW UP/THANK YOU | Be sure to write a 'thank you' note right after the interview. This can be via email or handwritten note. The thank you note is an opportunity to thank the employer for their consideration and time and to reiterate your interest and qualifications for the position.

CONTINUE YOUR JOB SEARCH | Just because you have interviewed doesn't mean you stop researching and applying for jobs. Keep your momentum going, it may take a few interviews before you find the right job.