

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

Research

- Check out the organization’s website and LinkedIn page to identify recent news, research, strategic planning, marketing, or other company information.
- Look up the company on [Glassdoor.com](https://www.glassdoor.com) to search thousands of user submitted interview questions.
- It may also be useful to review the LinkedIn profile the person(s) interviewing you. You may discover their research/area of focus, common interests, or other points of discussion for the interview.

Review

- Review the job description for the qualifications that the employer is seeking – they will ask questions about these skills.
- Review your resume and cover letter and be prepared to provide detailed examples of your skills, experiences, and accomplishments.
- Think about your career goals and how this opportunity connects to those goals. Be sure that you can clearly articulate *why* you want this role.

Practice

- **Sign up for a mock interview with a career counselor.** Log-in to [Handshake](https://handshake.gwu.edu) to schedule an appointment.
- **Attend an interviewing workshop.** View the ‘Events’ calendar in [Handshake](https://handshake.gwu.edu) for details.
- **Use Interview Stream to do a self-guided mock interview.** Follow these instructions to get started: gwu.joinhandshake.com/articles/4173

Attire

Dressing appropriately for the interview shows that you are taking the opportunity seriously. Business professional attire is typically appropriate for interviews, while business casual attire is what you wear day-to-day on the job. Ask a career services staff member or the recruiter if you have questions.

Interview Attire Checklist

Business Professional

- Suit jacket with matching pants, dress, or skirt in neutral colors (black, navy blue, grey)
- Dress shirt with collar and tie
- Dress shoes or comfortable heels (closed toe)

Business Casual

- Khakis or dress pants
- Casual skirt or dress
- Collared shirt or blouse
- Dress shoes, loafers, or flats (closed toe)

- ✓ Style hair neatly and away from the face if possible
- ✓ Choose modest accessories that do not distract
- ✓ Press or iron your clothes
- ✓ Bring a portfolio or plain folder to hold extra copies of your resume, a pen, and paper for notes
- ✓ Avoid heavy fragrances (cologne or perfume)
- ✓ Do not wear heels above 3 inches or shoes that are difficult to walk in
- ✓ Reconsider clothing that is too tight, low cut, or uncomfortable to move in

Phone and Video Interviews

These are typically screening or first-round interviews that are generally shorter than an in-person interview. Keep the following tips in mind for phone or video interviews:

- Try to use a landline or Ethernet connection as mobile phones and Wi-Fi may drop out during the call. Get familiar with the features of the video tool (Skype, Zoom, etc.) so that you can avoid technical difficulties.
- Find a quiet room where you will not be interrupted and arrive 10 minutes early. For video calls, choose a space that has good lighting and doesn't have a distracting background.
- Print out copies of your resume, cover letter, and the job description to refer to while on the call. Write down the phone number of the interviewer in case you get disconnected.
- For video calls, dress for an in-person interview. Keep in mind that some clothing details may not look good on screen.
- Write down and use the name of the interviewer(s) to help create a more personal connection.
- Pause a second or two longer than you normally would before answering a question to make sure the interviewer has stopped speaking.
- At the end of the interview, mention that you would appreciate the opportunity to meet in person. This is not too forward and will convey your interest and enthusiasm.

Technical Interviews

Technical or "whiteboard" interviews are common for software engineering and computer science jobs. This style of interview allows the employer to assess a candidate's knowledge by observing their problem-solving and communication skills. Use the [TopCoder List of Learning Resources](#) and those listed below to find practice problems and tips for technical interviews.

Practice Problems	Company Resources (free for students)
Coding for Interviews codingforinterviews.com	IBM https://www.ibm.com/blogs/ibm-training/free-training-to-update-skills/
Daily Coding Problem dailycodingproblem.com	Google https://developers.google.com/training/
InterviewBit interviewbit.com/practice	SAS https://www.sas.com/en_us/learn/academic-programs/students.html
HackerRank Interview Preparation Kit hackerrank.com/interview	<i>You can also ask the recruiter for preparation resources. Google, Amazon, and Facebook provide detailed overviews of their interview process.</i>
LeetCode leetcode.com	
Articles & Tips	
Everything You Need to Know to Rock Your Next Whiteboard Test - Skillcrush	
How to Ace Your Technical Interview - The Muse	
Most Common Technical Interview Questions - The Balance Careers	

DURING THE INTERVIEW

Arriving

- Plan to arrive at least 15 minutes before the interview is supposed to start. Look up the location ahead of time and determine how you will arrive. Allow time for travel delays.
- From the moment you enter the building be polite and courteous to each person you meet. You never know who may play a role in deciding who gets a job offer.
- Turn off your cell phone, throw out any food or drinks you may have brought with you, and ask if there is a place to store bulky items (coats, backpacks).

Body Language

- Address each interviewer by looking them in the eye, with a firm handshake (if appropriate), and by introducing yourself using your first and last name.
- Sit up straight, maintain good eye contact, and give the appearance of being engaged in the conversation.
- If you tend to fidget, clasp your hands together in your lap or plant both feet firmly on the ground.
- A warm smile goes a long way!

Be Engaged

- Listen to the interviewer. Make sure that you answer the actual question being asked and have confidence in your answer.
- Don't be afraid of a little silence – take your time to provide thoughtful responses.
- Ask questions so the interview feels more like a conversation and so you can demonstrate your interest.

Questions to Ask Employers

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are there any new products (or services) in the development stage?• Is your company involved in the community?• What do you and/or your employees like best about working for this company?• How would you describe the management style in this organization?• What are some of the first assignments I might expect?• What is the typical career path for someone in this position? | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Describe a typical day on the job.• How often are performance reviews given? How is performance measured?• What are some of the qualities you are looking for in the ideal candidate?• What characteristics do successful employees in this company share?• What are the opportunities for professional growth?• How would you describe the organization's culture? |
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How to Answer Common Interview Questions

The key to doing well in an interview is to catch the listener’s attention with relevant and engaging responses. If your answers are too long, confusing, or unrelated to the question, you will lose their interest. Be thoughtful and make sure that you are clearly communicating the qualities the interviewer is seeking.

If the Interviewer Says...	Your Response Should...	Tips
<i>Tell me about yourself.</i>	Remind the interviewer of your background and how it relates to the job.	Give a brief summary that highlights and connects the relevant aspects of your education, skills, and personality. Do not list all of the things you have done or read directly from your resume.
<i>Why do you want this job?</i>	Demonstrate your interest in the job and desire to work with the company.	Provide specific reasons you are interested in the industry, company, and that job. Incorporate what you learned from the research you did on the organization.
<i>What are your long term career goals?</i>	Explain how the job aligns with your career path.	Consider how the current job will prepare you for the future. Even if you are unsure about what your plans will be, share what you hope to learn from the job or how it will help you grow .
<i>Strengths and Weaknesses</i>	Match your skills to the job responsibilities. Show your self-awareness and maturity.	Share honestly about your abilities. Employer’s want to build a strong team and need to know how each person will fit in. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengths – Prepare a list of 5 strengths and a brief example of each. Look at the job posting to determine what skills and qualities are relevant. • Weakness – Think of 1 or 2 areas for improvement that you feel comfortable sharing and an example of how you are trying to improve in that area. Do not avoid the answering the question. Employers want to hire genuine people, not perfectionists!
<i>“Tell me about a time when...”</i> <i>“Give an example of...”</i> <i>“What would you do if...”</i>	Show how you will respond to different situations that may come up on the job.	Connect your past experience to the current job. Whenever you can, provide an example using the STAR Method (page 5) to structure your answer.

STAR Method for Answering Behavioral Questions

Use this simple structure to organize your answers when providing an example.

QUESTION: Tell me about a time when you had to work on a team to complete a project.			
SITUATION	<i>What was going on?</i>	Give a brief description and provide context for your story.	<p><i>“Last semester, I worked on a research team of four students to submit a proposal for the SEAS R&D Showcase. The goal was to use technology to address an environmental need caused by climate change.”</i></p> <p><i>Each team was required to submit a video and poster presentation with a demonstration. We had one month to prepare and decided to assign each person a different part. I volunteered to work on the video.</i></p> <p><i>I suggested that we draft an outline of the important parts of the project so that it would be consistent across the video, poster, and presentation. I created a Google Document with the video script where everyone could make comments and I made a schedule for recording so that everyone could participate.</i></p> <p><i>Although everyone had busy schedules we were able to use our meeting time efficiently to address questions and prepare for the presentation. The judges commented that our presentation was well organized, and we received second place in the competition.”</i></p>
TASK	<i>What was your responsibility or challenge?</i>	Keep your answer focused by identifying your responsibility within the situation.	
ACTION	<i>What did you do?</i>	Provide statements about the actions you took to address the challenge. Focus on what your actual role was, don't refer to a generic solution or what someone else might do.	
RESULT	<i>What was the outcome?</i>	Provide a specific outcome that resulted from your actions. Try to give a result that reflects well on you, or describe what you learned from the situation.	

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

Next Steps & Thank You Note

Before you leave, ask the interviewer(s) for their contact information to follow up. Also ask about next steps: *Will there be any follow up interviews? What's the timeline for a final decision?* Within 24 hours of your interview send a brief thank you note via email. Reaffirm your interest in the job by including something you discussed during the interview.

Reflect

After leaving the interview, write down some notes about what was discussed. Include any questions that you have about the job or organization that you may want to follow up on later. Also note if there were any questions that were especially challenging. These may be questions to practice for future interviews.

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Communication

- Have you handled a difficult situation with a co-worker? How?
- Do you listen? Give an example of when you did or when you didn't listen.
- Have you handled a difficult situation with a client? How?
- What do you do if you disagree with your boss?
- Describe a written technical report or presentation you had to complete.

Time Management

- When you worked on multiple projects, how did you prioritize?
- Tell me about a time you worked effectively under pressure or a tight deadline.
- Have you been in a situation where you didn't have enough work to do?

Problem Solving

- Give an example of an occasion when you used logic to solve a problem.
- Describe a time you took initiative to respond to a challenge.
- Have you ever made a mistake? How did you handle it?
- Tell me about a time you had to adjust your plans or change them all together.

Decision Making

- Did you ever make a risky decision? Why? How did you handle it?
- Did you ever postpone making a decision? Why?
- Tell me about a time when you had to make an unpopular decision.
- Would you make the same decision again? Why or why not?

Teamwork & Leadership

- Give an example of how you've worked on a team.
- How would you convince someone to work on a project they weren't thrilled about?
- Share an example of how you were able to motivate employees or co-workers.

Achievements

- Give an example of a goal you reached and tell me how you achieved it.
- What is your greatest accomplishment?
- Have you gone above and beyond the call of duty? If so, how?

Work Style & Personality

- What makes you unique?
- Are you able to multi-task? Can you give me some examples?
- How would your colleagues describe you?
- How do you organize your typical day?
- How do you handle failure?
- How do you feel about constructive criticism?
- If I hire you, what is the first contribution you will make to the company?
- What are your interests and hobbies outside of work?