



INTERVIEW FOR A JOB

Created by your Career Services Department @

ecpi UNIVERSITY



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- **Research the company.** Find out as much as you can about their mission, vision, values, history, current standing, etc. Helpful tools:
 - Company’s website & social media: LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, etc.
 - Press: business periodicals, newspaper, television/radio interviews, executive biographies, etc.
 - Subscription services for business research, such as Hoover’s, LexisNexis, Business Insights, etc.
 - Friends, family, and colleagues (may consider keeping the position confidential)

- **Research the job.** Refresh yourself on the job to which you applied, but also look at what current job postings require. Some time may have passed between your application and your interview; thus, changes may have occurred in the recruitment process. You might also learn more than you expected by seeing what other hiring needs they currently have. Pay attention to key skills or competencies. If anything is repeated in the job ad, it’s a priority.

- **Know yourself.** It may sound odd, but this is an area often overlooked. Considerations:
 - Study the résumé with which you applied for the job – it should have been tailored to the job requirements at the time. This document, and the job posting, will be the primary topics of your interview conversation.
 - Consider making lists of items you may want to discuss – accomplishments/accolades/awards, failures/mistakes/lessons learned, stories to exhibit how you operate in a work environment, strengths versus areas of opportunity, etc.

- Read “between the lines” when researching the company – why can you see yourself doing the job? How do your values match their values?
 - Consider the possible competition. What do you bring that may be “value added features,” and in what areas do you need to build? Find a way to proactively address weaknesses and turn them into positives.
 - What are your triggers when you’re nervous? Identify them and find ways to manage them. For example, if you tend to say, “Um” often, slow the cadence of your speech and listen to yourself as you respond. It’s difficult to use speech fillers when you are speaking slowly and with intent.
- **Practice, practice, practice.** Use the tools provided by the Career Services office (below), schedule a mock interview with the Career Services team, and/or find a friend or family member who will work with you. This doesn’t mean you’ll be able to *know* what they will ask, but it will make you more comfortable with the process.
 - **Prepare your questions for them.** Write them down and take notes as they reply. Ask only questions that reflect you want to add value the first day. Never ask “what’s in it for me” questions, such as, “What benefits do you offer?” Be sure to find out next steps before you leave the interview.
 - **Plan the trip.** Do a “dry run” in advance of your interview. Do this at approximately the same time and on a business day, so that you’ll get an idea of what traffic and parking options may be like the day of your interview. Appropriate arrival time in the building is 10-15 minutes prior to scheduled interview time.
 - **Plan your outfit.** Have it cleaned, pressed, and ready the night before. Consider having a backup outfit, as well.
 - **Prepare your documents.** Have extra (5-10) résumés printed on résumé paper, print professional references on résumé paper, make copies of transcripts and/or professional credentials (i.e. – certifications), have your portfolio ready (hardcopy or digital) for self-explanatory viewing, purchase blank “Thank You” cards and stamps.
 - **The day of.** Wake up early, hopefully having had a good night’s rest. You don’t want to be rushed, so allow yourself enough time to do some deep breathing, positive reinforcement to yourself, and just in case there is anything unexpected that occurs. Leave your phone and bag in the car, or at least power off your phone. If possible, only carry in a professional pad folio or portfolio with a notepad and pen. Avoid too much caffeine and don’t smoke prior to the interview.

THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

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Understanding the process employers undergo in recruiting is vital in performing well, because it's impossible to know which methods they'll use, or what questions they'll ask. With a little bit of understanding for their "plight," however, you will gain good insight into the reasons they do or ask what they do. It's like identifying the "question behind the question."

- Employers reportedly receive hundreds of résumés for each job opening, regardless of the level or type of position. This means they either spend hours whittling down that stack of applicants, or use technology to assist them in doing so. Typically, once a manageable number of candidates are identified as potentially qualified, a second screening method is used to further narrow the field. This is often a phone interview or the first round of face-to-face interviews.
- If the wrong choice is made, it could cost the business tens of thousands of dollars, or more.
- Most hiring managers do NOT enjoy the process.
- Once they've found 2-3 "finalists," or the most qualified, another round of interviews ensues to find the "best fit" for the team. Sometimes, this round may include panel or team interviews, lunch interviews, etc., but usually some variance of the prior step(s).
- Typical interview setups employers may use are:
 - **Phone interviews** – Don't feel obligated to do the phone interview on the spot. Be sure to schedule it in the near future, so as not to make them wait too long. Make certain you are in a quiet location without distraction. Stay focused, smile, and engage.
 - **Video/online interviews** – Often used for remote candidates who are considering relocating for the job, or just to save the employer the time of conducting on-site meetings.
 - **On-site interviews** – Performed at the employer's office, and can be done in a conference room, typical work space for the job, or a manager's office. One or more individuals may perform the interview.
 - **Panel interviews** – Usually conducted on-site and involve multiple members of the company asking you interview questions. When responding, be sure to first make eye contact with the person asking the question, then try to give equal "eye time" to the panel members throughout your response.
 - **Group interviews** – Typically held on-site, this is somewhat the reverse of the panel interview. The employer has a group of competing candidates together, while the interviewer conducts questioning with each, or gives the group a task to complete. You see your competition firsthand.
 - **Lunch/dinner interviews** – Usually at a restaurant, these interviews can be both disarming and nerve-wracking at the same time. Be sure to use your best manners, order something not too messy or expensive, and try your best to be engaging, professional, and enthusiastic. Treat the server and everyone around you with respect and positivity. The employer will usually pay, but you may consider offering to pay for your meal when the check comes, to show you don't "assume" they will pick up the tab.

Invariably, every hiring manager has been "burned" by hiring a bad fit. Try to keep that in mind when interviewing. Consider they may be just as nervous about making a bad hire again as you are about the interview. Imagine the kinds of bad hires they may have encountered: lazy, negative, incompetent, argumentative, etc. Conveying compassion for their challenges, and that you aren't one of those bad hires, is a great way to win them over.

Job Interview Training System

The ECPI Career Services Office is pleased to present our new, custom interview training system powered by Big Interview.

Use Big Interview to learn and practice your interview skills, whether you're interviewing for a job or graduate school.

Students have complimentary access. All you'll need is your school email and school code (*see below for details*).



Interview Bot

How to access Big Interview:

GO TO: <http://ecpi.biginterview.com>

If you DON'T have an account:

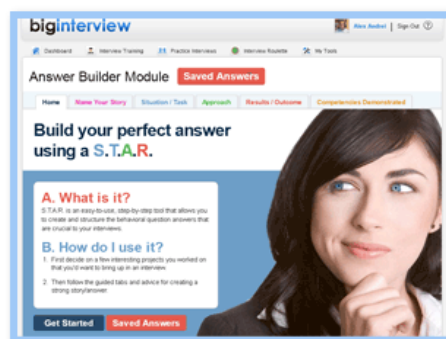
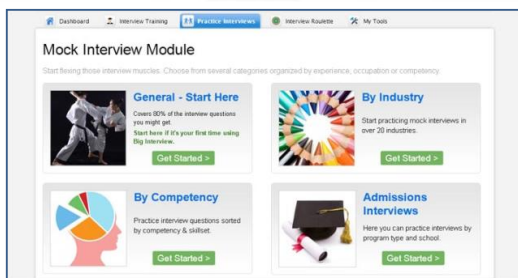
Step 1: click Register

Step 2: enter your school code "ecpi1208", followed by your name and school email.

Step 3: then click "Create account".

Then wait for the Big Interview confirmation email to arrive in your school inbox and click the embedded link to confirm your account.

You'll then be ready to start practicing!



- **Focus on what you can control...**
 - You can't know what the employer will do in the interview, but, you CAN control your level preparedness, your self-presentation and your attitude. Focusing your energy on what you CAN control and avoiding time on things you CAN'T control is a good way to calm nerves and perform better. It's a great confidence-builder to know you've done all you can do before going into an interview. Remember, if you haven't prepared, it's difficult to fool yourself!
- **Keep it sunny...**
 - Staying positive in an interview is critical. Remember, they don't know you. This is your one first impression. If you speak negatively about yourself, your former company, or anything at all, they may assume you'll bring negativity to the workplace. Carefully choose your words and avoid negative language at all costs. Correct yourself if you accidentally come across the wrong way.
- **What's the intent of the question?**
 - Or, as mentioned earlier, "the question behind the question?" Ask yourself, "If I asked them this question, what insights might I get into who they are at work?" THIS is what the employer is going for! Understand they are trying to visualize you in the role while you are interviewing.
- **Make a connection through storytelling...**
 - You can be technically correct in an interview and still be forgettable. You have to reach them on an emotional level for them to remember you. You can do this through good story telling and body language. Your body language should be attentive but engaging, professional but comfortable. Remember when you tell your stories – there's always a happy ending, and YOU are always the hero! Be compelling!
- **Show the *right* kind of vulnerability...**
 - No one needs to be a completely open book when competing for a job, BUT the employer needs to feel like you've "let them in." The right way to do that is to avoid coming off as defensive and to show the right kind of vulnerability. In other words, show how much you want to work with them and how passionate you are about your chosen career. Light up when you talk about these things, and they'll be moved.
- **Take time...**
 - To read their body language and determine how you're being perceived; to survey the physical surroundings and glean any insights based on the setup; to actively listen and carefully craft a thoughtful response. It's not a game show, and they don't expect you to be the first to hit the buzzer. They're assessing your behavior to determine what kind of employee you will be. If you appear reactionary, they may think you make knee-jerk decisions at work.
- **Authentically speaking...**
 - One of the quickest ways to lose their trust is to appear less-than-genuine. Be your best self, because you *are* competing, but make sure you are still *you*. Don't be afraid to have a sense of humor about yourself. Just be certain to keep it professional. "Professional" doesn't equate to "stiff." Imagine you are them - if the person I'm interviewing is enjoying the conversation, chances are I'll enjoy it, too!

- **Learn to be an opportunist...**
 - Some may have trouble “bragging” about themselves in an interview. That’s the wrong perspective! This is an expensive decision they have to make. If you don’t fully inform them, they could make the wrong choice. Besides, never forget it’s a competition. Whether you can see your competition or not, imagine them there, lined up in the hallway, coming after your interview. How will you stay memorable? How might you be different, or bring something unique? Sell, for example, your experience at ECPI University. You balanced a home life, and maybe a job, with 2 new classes every 5 weeks, and finished in half the time of a traditional college. Maybe with honors? Doesn’t that show your drive and determination? Leave it all on the table!
- **Never forget why we’re here today...**
 - There’s a simple way to stay on target during the interview. At the end of nearly any question, if you add these words in your head, “...in this position,” it will keep you from running off course. You’ll be asked open-ended, and sometimes vague questions, to see where you’ll go with your answers..
- **Your job is to do the “heavy lifting” ...**
 - Most employers have spent a great deal of time and resources communicating what their need is and who they are as an entity. By the time you make it to an interview with them, you should know they expect it’s your time to do the work. Think of it like a movie. Your résumé was the preview, and the interview is the show. They’ve bought their ticket, and now they want to sit back, with their popcorn, and see the show. That means, you aren’t waiting for them to sell you on why you want to be there. Rather, your role is to educate them on who you are and what you bring to the table. In short, how you’ll solve their problem. NEVER assume they know anything about you. Be clear & specific about your capabilities.
- **Don’t forget the grace...**
 - Being gracious and accommodating might seem like a strange concept for an interviewee, but why can’t you be? This is one of those things you CAN control, so take advantage! If you’re an introvert and this doesn’t come naturally, try to think of instances in your personal life where you are a host/hostess, and employ that same attentiveness to the employer during the interview. For example, if you were having a party at your home, wouldn’t you greet every guest warmly, attending to their needs, and ensuring they are comfortable? So why can’t you be the host/hostess when the employer wants insight into your professional world? Another simple technique is taking the questions they ask about YOU and ensuring your answers are all about THEM.



COMMON PITFALLS TO AVOID

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- **Use professional language**, grammar, and correct context. Avoid slang and fillers, such as, “you know.”
- **Body language** should convey professionalism, engagement, confidence, attentiveness, and calm. Don’t fidget or hold anything in your hands. Lean-in slightly to show openness. Smile and project warmth and enthusiasm.
- **Be gracious to the receptionist!** They don’t call this position the “gatekeeper” for no reason. This is a valued member of their team, and showing them a little respect and kindness can make a big difference – whether in person or on the phone.
- **Avoid trite, overused words** and expressions. Understand how many times they must hear some of these.
- **Don’t bring your personal life** into the conversation. If they can’t legally ask you, don’t offer the information.
- **Redundancy** is as hazardous in the interview as on the résumé. Unless you are making a point by repeating yourself, use every opportunity to speak as a chance to show your full range of offerings.
- **Avoid vague answers.** They’re trying to get to know you. It’s difficult to visualize what kind of co-worker you’ll be if you don’t lend enough specifics or details. Remember that “how” and “why” you’re the right fit is something they need to know. Consider giving examples that either quantify or qualify what you just said. “I’m the best candidate,” only tells them how highly you think of yourself. “I’m the best candidate because I saved my company 20% on budgeted annual expenses last year,” better clarifies your competence.
- **Never lie** in an interview, and don’t be afraid to admit what you don’t know. Sometimes they may ask something for which they know you don’t have the answer. Show willingness to find the answer, and email them or call them with it as soon as possible after the interview. This shows your willingness and potential to be resourceful.
- **Actively listen.** If you don’t, you may miss all parts of the question. You need to show that you are both a good communicator (listening) and that you can follow instructions.
- **Have questions for them!** This is critical if you want them to believe you are trying to make a long-term commitment. Your questions should not be of self-interest, but show that you are trying to learn how to add value day one. Have them written out in advance, and record their answers. This shows conscientiousness and attention to detail. It may also make them wonder if you are interviewing with other companies. That’s a good thing!
- **Don’t forget to find out the next steps.** You don’t want to leave an interview without knowing what to do next. Do you follow-up with them? Do they call you? Follow their instructions to the letter.
- **Don’t forget the “Thank you,”** before you leave the interview and then again within 24 hours via a hand-written “Thank You” card. Send one to anyone who spent significant time with you. This is a good way to demonstrate you’ll go the “extra mile.”
- **Don’t forget to ask for the business card** of everyone to whom you plan to send a “Thank You.”
- **Don’t be afraid to try something new.** Ask for a tour, offer to volunteer for a day, or share the wonderful experience you had as their customer. Think outside the box, but keep it genuine and professional.
- **Appearance counts.** Be sure you look neat and clean, with attention to detail. No excessive piercings. Tattoos should be covered for some job types. Avoid heavy fragrances, as some interviewers may have sensitivities. Don’t smell like smoke.
- **Arrive 10-15 minutes prior** to the interview time. If you get there earlier, wait in your car, reviewing your résumé or the job until time to go in.
- **Remember that all eyes are on you** the moment you drive onto their property! Don’t do anything you wouldn’t want them to see.
- **Know the full name** of the person with whom you are scheduled to meet.
- **Offer a firm handshake and a warm smile** upon greeting. This is a very easy way to make a great first impression.
- **Expect the unexpected.** It’s all a stress test, so show your flexibility if you get a creative or off-beat question.
- **Don’t rush** or cut your answers short. This gives the impression you want to get the meeting over with. That doesn’t go very far in making them feel wanted.
- **Don’t allow things to distract you.** Maintain good eye contact with the interviewer. Be “present” with them.
- **Avoid giving salary expectations** until time of offer, if you can. If asked, it’s best to stick with “I’m completely negotiable,” or “I’m confident at time of offer, you would offer something fair.”
- **Don’t fail to be the person they’ll work with every day!** Sometimes we allow our nervousness to turn us into a whole different persona. Try imagining that you’ve “punched in” for the interview. You want them to visualize you on the team by the time you leave the interview, so you should do so before the interview.

WHAT TO WEAR

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Not sure what the company dress code is? Err on the side of caution. Conservative is always best. What you wear on the job may be different than what you should wear to an interview. For both genders, clothes should be neat, pressed, and fit appropriately. Shoes should be polished and in good repair. Fragrance should be minimal. Carry a professional pad folio, portfolio, or briefcase. Ensure your outfit is comfortable, helps your confidence, and isn't a distraction in the interview.



LADIES



GENTLEMEN

✓ Dark suit is preferred – black, brown, grey, or navy.	✓ Dark suit is preferred – black, brown, grey, or navy.
✓ Skirts should be knee length or just below.	✓ Dark dress shoes & socks.
✓ Avoid bare legs, sheer tops, and open-toed shoes.	✓ A conservative, professional tie.
✓ Blouses should be solid or conservative prints, with a high neckline. No cleavage!	✓ Long-sleeved, solid, white or light-colored (oxford) dress shirt.
✓ Minimal jewelry. Avoid trends and only one pair of earrings, no larger than a nickel.	✓ Limit jewelry to wedding and/or collegiate ring and a professional watch.
✓ Hairstyles should be conservative and befitting the job. - I.e. Healthcare professionals may want to wear hair pulled back.	✓ Face should either be clean shaven or beard/moustache neatly groomed.
✓ Makeup should be professional and natural-looking.	✓ Dark belt, best matched with shoes.
✓ Fingernails should be clean, in good taste, well-manicured and appropriate for the job.	✓ Fingernails should be clean and well-manicured.

BUSINESS PROFESSIONAL

BUSINESS CASUAL

BUSINESS PROFESSIONAL

BUSINESS CASUAL



NATURAL LOOKING MAKEUP

PORTFOLIO

PRESSED SUIT

NO BULKY JEWELRY

APPROPRIATE LENGTH SKIRT

POLISHED, CLOSED-TOE SHOES



NICE BLOUSE



FRESH HAIRCUT

CLEAN SHAVEN

PRESSED SUIT

APPROPRIATE TIE

PORTFOLIO

POLISHED SHOES



BUTTON-UP SHIRT

MATCHING BELT AND SHOES

PRESSED SLACKS

What to wear?

This guide demonstrates acceptable Business Professional and Business Casual Attire for your upcoming career events.
NOTE: For Interviews, always choose Business Professional attire.

COMMON INTERVIEW QUESTIONS - Frequently Asked by Employers

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- 1. Tell me about yourself?** *Think of answering this as if they had asked, "So why are we here today," keeping your answer relevant and concise (1-2 minutes). Highlight the key aspects that will be of most interest to them, based on the job posting. You want to get them interested at the onset!*
- 2. Where do you see yourself in a year? In 5 years?** *It's historically true that the most successful people are goal-oriented, so exhibit you are also. Be sure to include them in your future goals. After all, this is a courtship! Don't forget to include value-adds for them, such as professional certifications you may obtain. Never discuss anything not relevant to the job.*
- 3. What are your strengths?** *In sales, you should always maximize the positive, thus, provide 5-7 areas where you excel. Be sure to provide examples/explanations, instead of a simple laundry list of adjectives. Also make certain to include both the right character traits and the right technical qualifications for the job. You need both sides to be a good employee in any role.*
- 4. What are your weaknesses?** *In sales, you minimize the negative, thus, if they ask for multiples, provide no more than 2 weaknesses. If they ask for one, only give one. Turn this into a positive for them by honestly choosing something which they might exploit, and articulate how you're a better employee for having worked on the area(s). For example, "I have a difficult time telling people, "No." I've learned that if I have a deadline that is a priority, I can politely explain this, then offer to help as soon as I've met my obligation. I may even offer a potential alternative. People usually respond well when I take this approach."*
- 5. Why are you interested in this position or seeking work now?** *You should always remain positive throughout the interview. On this response, it's also important to reiterate your interest in them, as well as how adding you to their team may enhance their business. The discussion should focus less on what's in it for you, and more on what will benefit them. Additionally, sending the message that you're ready for a challenge is always a good way to score points.*
- 6. Why do you want to work here?** *This is where you really get to display the research you've done and how well you and the employer will fit together. Stay focused on who they are as an entity - their values, their successes, etc. Keep it very positive. If you've had a personal interaction as a customer, sharing an upbeat anecdote about your great experience is a wonderful way to make a good impression.*
- 7. Describe your most recent role.** *This is a great opportunity to show them you're a top-performer at work. Focus on results you've achieved, rather than a boring list of daily tasks. Tailor the answer to the job for which you're interviewing by focusing on areas that are aligned or similar to the work they need done.*
- 8. Why should we hire you?** *Consider this like the "grand finale" at a fireworks show or "closing arguments" at a trial. This is where you get to summarize your case, adding a few juicy morsels that will influence the audience and leave them wanting more. Don't drone on too long, but be sure to include anything important you may have not yet said. Remember that enthusiasm is important, and you need to ASK FOR THE JOB! They want you to!*
- 9. What salary are you looking for?** *Salary, benefits, and terms of employment should be left for time of offer, but, sometimes, employers like to ask about salary requirements in the interview. When this happens, you have to be diplomatic without hurting your chances for future negotiations. Try to leave the door open for time of offer without being offensive. For example, "Based on what I know about your company, I feel confident at time of offer, you'll offer something fair." If they push back, just reiterate your flexibility and your desire with, "I'm completely open to negotiation when the time comes. I would just love to be a part of your team."*
- 10. Do you have any questions for me?** *YES you do!!! If you really care about this opportunity, you will have at least 3 to 5 questions for them (see below) that focus on how you may contribute as much as possible to their mission. Avoid any "What's-In-It-For-Me" questions, because these just make you seem self-centered.*

COMMON INTERVIEW QUESTIONS - Solid First Round Questions to Ask the Employer

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Choose 3-5, in addition to always including #'s 9 & 10. Have them written down in advance, and ask to take notes during their responses. For second/final interview round questions, use the resources [below](#).

- 1. What is a typical day like in this position and/or department?** *This shows them you're interested in the "Big Picture," not just your immediate duties. Employees who are truly mission-focused effort to learn as much about the entire business operation as possible.*
- 2. Can you describe your ideal candidate?** *This is a great chance to get immediate feedback on your interview performance! You may also get a chance to add something you forgot earlier. Just be sure not to interrupt their response.*
- 3. If fortunate enough to be chosen, can you suggest any ways I may add the most value day one?** *Again, this reflects that you're mission-focused and want to provide them the most benefit possible.*
- 4. Is it possible to get a tour of the facility?** *Even if they don't have the time or manpower, or if it's a security issue, you'll still likely score points for showing that you're trying to gain the "big picture."*
- 5. I understand it's difficult to find the right fit for the job. I would be willing to volunteer a few hours of my time for an on-the-job interview, if you would be open to the idea.** *This is a way to stand out from the competition with creativity and by expressing compassion for the difficult job they have in recruiting. It also shows that you are willing to give to receive.*
- 6. What do you like most about working for this company?** *This is a way to gain insights into the company that you wouldn't have learned through your own research. It also might provide a way to personally connect with your interviewer.*
- 7. Can you share your 5-year growth plans?** *It's not favorable to inquire about benefits you may receive if chosen for the job, but this is a keen way to find out about company expansion. Chances of upward mobility are good if they are growing. Ask only if their plans haven't been publicized anywhere. You never want to ask about something you could have learned on your own.*
- 8. How would you describe the culture here?** *This is another way to learn more about the role and the company that you wouldn't have been able to find on your own. It shows you are taking this decision seriously, which is a good way to gain favor with them, because they take the decision very seriously.*
- 9. What are the next steps in the process?** *Be sure to get exact instructions/expectations from them so that you know how and when to follow-up.*
- 10. May I have your business card?** *You want to send a Thank-You note immediately, then follow-up as instructed by the interviewer, so it makes sense that you have their exact name, title, and contact information to do so accurately.*

- [Career Spots Videos](#)
- [Big Interview](#)
- [wikiHow – How to Prepare for a Job Interview](#)
- [Forbes.com – How to Ace the 50 Most Common Interview Questions](#)
- [Careerealism.com](#)



<http://www.gcflearnfree.org/interviewingskills>

