

guide to

# INTERVIEWING



## PREPARATION

**Reflect on your Strengths:** Know your values, interests, and abilities and how you have used them in past experiences. Align your strengths: write down examples of how you performed tasks and how it connects to the job you will be doing. If you need some direction, take a self-assessment through the MU Career Center.

**Research the Employer:** Take some time to browse the company's website, social media, LinkedIn presence, and industry articles. Gain an understanding of the mission, vision, and culture of the employer and consider how you will contribute. Be prepared to answer "What do you know about us?"

**Plan your Look:** Almost every interview requires business professional dress unless you are told otherwise. This includes a suit, nice shoes, minimum accessories, and an overall polished appearance. Check out our Pinterest board on the MU Career Center site for men, women, and gender-neutral professional attire.

**Know Where to Go and What to Bring:** Plan your transportation in advance by knowing where you are going, how long it takes to get there, and where to park. Ideally you want to be walking in the door 15 minutes early. Consider bringing copies of your resume, references, questions to ask, and a portfolio, if applicable. Turn off your phone!

**Show your Professionalism:** Body language is an important part of creating an impact right away and carrying it throughout the interview. Have a firm handshake, maintain good eye contact, sit up straight, and smile when you talk about your experience. This also includes speaking clearly and not using a lot of "ums" and "likes."



*Want to stand out to employers?*

**CLEARLY  
ARTICULATE YOUR  
STRENGTHS AND  
SKILLS.**

**BE SPECIFIC AND  
GENUINE IN YOUR  
ANSWERS.**

**SHOW ENTHUSIASM  
AND A  
WILLINGNESS TO  
LEARN.**

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[career.missouri.edu](http://career.missouri.edu)  
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## ANSWER THE QUESTIONS

**Tell me about yourself.** Almost every interview starts off with this question. Make it around 30-60 seconds long, and cover a past-present-future format:

- Introduce your recent professional/involvement/academic background: *include your Mizzou degree*
- Add what you are doing currently that is most interesting and relevant: *jobs, internships, orgs overview*
- Let them know what led you to this position: *how you found it and why you are interested*
- Provide a transition statement at the end: *"I'm excited to talk about how my experiences connects."*

**Getting to know you:** These are typically open-ended questions about you, your interests, and how you work. Be positive and genuine. State an answer, and then back it up with evidence.

"What about this position interests you?"

"Why do you want to work here?"

"Where do you see yourself in \_\_\_ years?"

"What motivates you to accomplish tasks?"

### "What are your greatest **STRENGTHS**?"

- ⊕ Provide 3-4 strengths
- ⊕ Give specific examples of how you apply them
- ⊕ Explain if you have been recognized for them
- ⊕ Connect them to the position

*"I'm achievement-oriented. Every day starts with a to-do list, and that frames how I manage my day. As a student and at my part-time job, if there was a task on my list, it got done well and ahead of time. I look forward to working with this team to find out what we can accomplish together and how I can best contribute."*

*"I'm a hard worker."*

### "What is an example of a **WEAKNESS**?"

- ⊕ Give an honest answer of something that doesn't come naturally to you.
- ⊕ Follow up with how you are managing it so it doesn't get in the way of your success

*"My greatest weakness is that I sometimes focus too much on the small details of a project. I've been striving to improve in this area by clearly defining the core mission of a project and revisiting it often. I also check in with coworkers more frequently to remind me of the big picture. That way I can still ensure quality without affecting productivity or the team's ability to meet the deadline."*

*"I'm often late and put off projects until the last minute."*

*"I'm a perfectionist."*

*"I work too hard."*

**Other questions.** Here are some additional question types to prepare for:

**SCENARIO QUESTIONS:** How you would respond in hypothetical situations that you might not have experienced before

**DIRECT QUESTIONS:** To the point, allowing the employer to get definite, usually one-word answers

**ODD QUESTIONS:** Designed to test your creativity and ability to think on your feet: what is your thought process and why did you answer a certain way

**TELL ME HOW THIS WILL HELP YOU IN THIS JOB \*POINTS TO AN EXPERIENCE ON YOUR RESUME\*:**

Looking for you to connect a previous experience on the spot

## CONNECT YOUR EXPERIENCE

**Tell me about a time...** Behavioral questions let the employer know how your past performance will detail how you will function in their position doing similar things. Specific stories, examples, and descriptions of your strengths stand out in your answers. Reflect on examples of when you:

- Solved a problem or overcame an obstacle
- Adapted to a situation, group, or environment
- Led a group or project
- Worked on a team
- Encountered a conflict with another person
- Achieved a success/met a goal
- Went above and beyond/did something unique

**When it comes to behavioral questions, the STAR method is a great way to give provide complete and compelling answers.**

- **Situation** describes the situation or circumstances that you encountered.
- **Task** indicates the task, target, or goal you set out to achieve.
- **Action** refers to the steps you took to solve the problem, improve the situation, or complete the task.
- **Result** shows how your role resulted in a positive outcome and/or what you learned.



*"Describe a time when you contributed to a team."*

SITUATION	TASK	ACTION	RESULT
In my current position at the Stripes Store, we work as a team when receiving new inventory.	I love working with my fellow staff to create process efficiencies, so before we got started, I suggested we meet and strategize how to best get inventory out.	After making sure I had buy-in from the staff, we implemented a plan to have one person unpack, another find product numbers, someone else cross-check those numbers on our online system, and everyone else gets the products to the floor.	This has become our standard system now, and I received positive feedback for not only helping to plan but for jumping in wherever I was needed. I look forward to helping the team here to plan and maximize processes as well.

*Choose an example behavioral question above. How would you answer?*

SITUATION	TASK	ACTION	RESULT



## FOLLOW UP

**Do you have any questions for us?** Make a lasting positive impression on an employer by asking thoughtful questions during and at the end of the interview. You will learn vital information, and show the employer that you are interested and have prepared in advance.

“What do you **LIKE MOST** about working here?”

“What are the **NEXT STEPS** in this process?”

“What does a **TYPICAL DAY** look like for someone in my position?”

“How would you describe the **WORK ENVIRONMENT** here?”

“Should I be hired, what can I do between now and then to **BEST PREPARE?**”

### Did You Know...

In many cases, a simple thank you letter addressing your genuine interest and gratitude can make the difference between being hired or being overlooked.

Less than 20% of candidates send a thank you: stand out among your peers by this simple action.

**Show appreciation:** A thank you note should be sent within 24 hours of the interview, and you can choose between a handwritten note or an email. To stand out, **make a mention of something you discussed in the interview** and reiterate your interest in the position and how you fit. Wrap up with your **contact information** and a sincere ending note.

## ONLINE INTERVIEWS

Interviewing virtually is growing in popularity and a format for which you should be prepared. You may speak directly with an employer (two-way) or record yourself to send in for a screening interview (one-way).



**Test It Out:** Conduct a mock interview with someone you know to make sure the video and audio capabilities on your computer are in working order. Practice on Big Interview!

**Set Up:** Be mindful of your background and think about what it would convey to employers. Be in a quiet space without distractions. Light yourself from the front. Put your webcam at eye level. Close everything else on your computer. Dress like you would for an in-person interview. Start this process early!

**Impress the Employer:** Login 5-10 minutes ahead of schedule and be ready. Have notes there and available, but don't look at them too much during the interview. Keep good posture. Look at the camera, not the screen. Tip: put the video image of yourself by the webcam, or put a post-it note next to it as a reminder.

**Engage:** Use your face to show you are interested and excited about the opportunity. Smile and kick your enthusiasm up a notch to make up for the lack of in-person communication. Use verbal feedback cues, but let the other person finish speaking before you respond because mics will mute the other person when someone else starts speaking.

*next steps:*

Talk with a Career Specialist for one-on-one assistance: <https://career.missouri.edu/connect>  
Check out more resources at <https://career.missouri.edu> > Resources tab