

PANEL AND GROUP

INTERVIEW TIPS

Panel Interviews

Panel interviews involve more than one interviewer, and individuals on the panel typically represent different areas of the company/program. Each will have a say in whether you move forward in the application process. They generally sit in one line or cluster facing the interviewee.

- Find out who will be on the panel ahead of time, if possible. Research their roles within the organization and anticipate questions they may ask or qualifications to which they may pay particular attention.
- Since the interviewers will be working together to make a decision about you as a candidate, be sure to engage and build rapport with each person. Previous research about your panel of interviewers will help with this.
- When responding to a question, direct your initial answer to the person who asked, but then engage the other interviewers as you continue to elaborate. Engaging interviewers can be accomplished through body language - try to make eye contact and turn your shoulders to face them to show that they have your attention.
- Panel interviews may feel rushed, as the interviewers can be competing with each other for time during the interview. Consequently, this can lead to the feeling of urgency on behalf of the interviewers; they may cut one another off or may rapidly ask follow-up questions. Even if this is the case, don't feel the need to match their pace with your responses – take the time you need to respond while getting to the point quickly, and be ready to move on as soon as you are finished.
- Ask questions of each of the interviewers at the end of the interview. Just as each interviewer has a different function within the organization, each also has a unique perspective to provide.
- For each of the interviewers you interact with, be sure to get a business card (or contact information) and send a unique thank-you note to each of them within 24 hours of the interview. Interviewers may compare the notes they receive from you, so be sure to include a connection you made with each individual and convey a personalized, genuine appreciation for their time.

Group Interviews

Group interviews involve two or more candidates interviewing for the same position. In addition to listening to your answers, interviewers will observe how you interact with others. Group interviews are typically run in one of two formats: (1) the interviewer may ask traditional interview questions and ask each candidate to discuss their qualifications in front of others, or (2) the interviewer may have candidates discuss an issue or solve a problem collectively to evaluate your teamwork and communication skills.

- Arrive about 10-15 minutes early for the interview, to allow for time to settle in, become comfortable with the atmosphere, and review any notes or questions you prepared prior entering the interview room.
- Introduce yourself to the other interviewees in the group before the interview begins. This will help you to feel more comfortable asserting yourself, as well as supporting their ideas, during the interview.
- Show confidence in the content of your answer, even if you are nervous.
 - Be alert and ready for anything. These interviews are interactive – listen closely to the question, pay attention to others' answers, and expect to participate.
 - You will be answering fewer questions throughout the interview (in comparison with a one-on-one interview), so try to make each answer as complete and thorough as possible.
 - Make sure to come with examples that make you stand out from other candidates because they'll be sitting right next to you.
 - Speak with purpose, rather than starting your answer with an apology for speaking up or letting your voice trail off at the end.
 - Back up all statements with concrete knowledge and experiences.

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Group Interviews (Continued)

- Make sure you demonstrate good teamwork and group communication skills. Do not “compete” with the other interviewees.
 - Be courteous. While you don’t want to answer every question first, make sure you give yourself the opportunity to comment on each question asked.
 - Interviewers may be looking for leadership skills, but this does not mean you should talk over others or try to be the loudest. Instead, act as a facilitator and/or equal team player. This shows that you are confident and willing to listen to others.
 - Include quieter people. If someone hasn’t said much, ask their opinion. This shows you are considerate and a true team player. However, don’t defer to someone else when it’s your chance to speak.
 - Praise others for their good ideas. This is a good way to seem friendly and somewhat authoritative at the same time. Be sincere with compliments and offer them sporadically.
 - Don’t be shy. Speak up without cutting other people off or going over your allotted time. While you want to make sure you stand out, you also want to demonstrate that you are polite.
- At the end of the interview, be sure to thank the interviewer and address other interviewees with something like, “I really enjoyed meeting you today. Best of luck to you.”
- Send a thank-you note within 24 hours of your interview. Ensure your thank-you note stands out from the others by including a unique contribution you made to the group conversation or something else that sets you apart from the other candidates.

Useful Phrases for Group Interviews

- The following phrases are helpful to use in a group interview to promote teamwork and overall interview flow.
 - “That’s a good idea. I agree with what you said, and I also think...”
 - “While I understand what [other candidate] said, I feel differently because...”
 - “I would also like to add that...”
 - “I had a similar experience, but... [explain how yours was different and what you learned from it].”
- To another candidate who has not yet gotten the chance to speak, you may ask:
 - “What is your opinion on this?”
 - “What is your perspective?”