Interviewing

The gateway to securing a job is through the interview. There are several types of interviews: phone, video, and face-to-face. You may be involved in more than one of these during the interview process depending on the position for which you are applying. It is important to be prepared for all types, especially a face-to-face interview.

**Phone:** Phone interviews require as much preparation as a face-to-face interview. It is important that you do your research about the company and prepare answers to common interview questions. Phone interviews are typically used to narrow the candidate pool and to determine whether a face-to-face interview will be conducted. For all interview formats, it is important that you conduct a mock interview to practice your answers and presence. When on a phone interview be sure to do the following:

- Check your surroundings to make sure you are in a quiet place.
- Ensure that your phone is fully charged.
- Wherever possible, use a landline. If not, ensure that the area in which you will conduct your interview has adequate cell phone service.
- Use a headset with a microphone, if using a mobile device.

**Video:** Video interviews have become increasingly popular over the last few years. In preparation, ensure that you have accounts with the most commonly used modes, which include Skype, Zoom, and Google Hangouts. It is important to treat a video interview in the same way that you would a face-to-face interview.

- Dress professionally.
- Log in to the platform being used ahead of time to ensure that you are able to log in properly.
- Check your audio and video settings ahead of time.
- Ensure that your computer is plugged in and that you have adequate internet coverage. Use a headset.
- Ensure that you are in a quiet place and the background of where you will be sitting is appealing, but not distracting.
- During the interview, when answering questions, try as best as possible to look into the camera and not at the person/people on the screen. This helps you to appear to be looking directly at the person/people instead of down at the screen.

**General Interview Guidelines**

**Before the interview**

- Document your experiences
  - Make a list of all your professional accomplishments
  - Include volunteer experiences, extra-curricular activities
  - Note dates, locations, and brief descriptions of what you did, how you did it, and the end results
  - Study this list and come up a short way to express each experience
  - Be prepared to use them as examples to answer questions during the interview
• Research the industry, company, and job description
  o Use internet resources or the library to find out about the company: its mission, vision, number of employees, locations etc. Is there any significant news about them? Any major changes? Major challenges? The names of directors, managers, CEOs, owners
  o Talk to current employees if you can
  o Study the job description. Be prepared to talk about how you meet the requirements

• Do a mock interview
  o Review commonly asked interview questions and prepare/practice answers
  o Practice your answers out loud by yourself and with someone else for feedback
  o Prepare questions to ask the employer

• Create a list of references
  o Identify professional references (former employers, co-workers)
  o Contact your references and let them know that you’re applying for jobs. Ask if they can provide you with a positive reference and if so, can you list them on your applications. Let them know what kind of positions you are applying for. You may even send them copies of the job descriptions.

• Find out the date, time, and place of the interview
  o Make sure you know exactly where the interview is located
  o If the interview is in an area that you are not familiar with, try to visit it the day before so that you know exactly where you are going
  o Be sure to get the full name of the interviewer(s) beforehand (Ask the person who contacts you who you should ask for when you arrive)
  o Prepare your schedule so that you arrive 10-15 minutes early. Take traffic, bus schedules, and another other possible delays into consideration

• Prepare your attire (Face-to-face)
  o Make sure your clothes fit properly
  o Women and men: dark-coloured suits (matching suit – top and bottom) Acceptable colours: Black, grey, dark brown, navy
    • Also acceptable for women: dark-coloured skirts/pants and a formal blouse
    • Also acceptable for men: dark-coloured pants and button-down, plain, long sleeve shirt and tie
  o Women: avoid short skirts, tight-fitting clothes, and blouses with low cuts. Wear minimal jewellery (studs or small hoops, plain necklace, no more than one ring and/or bracelet); minimal, natural-looking makeup (earth tones – avoid bright coloured eyeliner, lipstick, and nail polish); conservative hairstyle (avoid bright hair colours and flashy hairstyles). Wear a conservative shoe, solid colour – either black or brown. (avoid heels that are too high). **Note:** This the standard form of dress for traditional job interviews. There are exceptions depending on the position for which one is applying. For example, there are positions that may require you to display your sense of style and creativity in your interview attire. It is important to note that these suggestions allow the interviewer to focus on what’s important – your answers to questions and nothing else. This form of dress typically works to removes distractions.
  o Avoid perfume.
  o Men: clean and conservative shoes
During the Interview (face-to-face)

- Bring copies of your resume, cover letter, and list of references (on resume paper!)
- Bring something to write with and write on. You and write down your questions to ask on a notepad.
- Smile and have a good handshake.
- Turn your cell phone completely off
- Be prepared to engage in small talk as you walk to the interview room or before you begin the interview. (Look around the room for interesting things to talk about)
- Make eye contact
- Be aware of your posture. Sit up straight. Sit forward a little in the chair to prevent slouching. (Women, cross your legs at the ankles).
- Be aware of your body language. Maintain eye contact at all times. Beware of big hand movements, fidgeting, foot shaking/tapping etc.
- Speak clearly and confidently. Be aware of your volume.
- Listen carefully so that questions are answered appropriately
- Do not chew gum.
- When answering questions, try to speak positively about your past experiences and employers.
- Be positive and upbeat.
- Always ask questions. Prepare at least three questions about the job or company to ask the employer.
- Use Standard English.
- Give detailed answers with examples. Use the STAR method to formulate your answers: 1. Situation or Task that you were involved in, 2. Explain your role or what Action you took, 3. Talk about the Results you achieved.
- Ask questions! Prepare questions to ask ahead of time. Questions should come from your research and careful review of the job description. Refrain from asking surface or obvious questions. This is your chance to find out if the position or company is a good fit for you.

(Taken from Nova Southeastern University’s Office of Career Development)

After the Interview

- Find out about the next steps in the interview process
- Get the business cards of each person (contact information) in the interview
- Say thank you. Send a Thank you letter/email/hand-written card to each person in the interview within 24-48 hours of the interview. (See the Sample Thank You Letter in this packet).
- Follow-up by calling or emailing the interviewer if the time in which they said they would contact you has passed
Sample Interview Questions and Answers

Q: Tell me about yourself?

A: I am currently junior, accounting major at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan. Once I complete my program, I plan to pursue a career as a Certified Public Accountant. I’m confident that this internship would allow me to practice the skills I’ve learned in the classroom (and in other work experiences) and also provide more exposure to the field.

Q: Why do you want to work at ____________?

A: Besides being a leader in the accounting field, this company’s values of integrity, quality service, and philanthropy are also some of my personal values and what has attracted me to the organization. I believe here I will be able to grow professionally in an environment that matches my personal values and goals.

Q: What is your greatest strength?

A: My greatest strength is my ability to be flexible. I developed this skill through my experiences working in the customer service industry where you encounter different people and different scenarios every day. I ensured that I made a conscious effort to treat every customer like they are my first customer of the day and provided them with the experience I would want to have. In the same way, in the accounting field, while there are many procedures that remain the same, there are elements that require flexibility, especially during peak periods in the industry. I believe maintaining flexibility will enhance my success in this field.

Q: What is your greatest weakness?

A: My greatest weakness is talking with my customers too much, but I ensure that my talking doesn’t affect my productivity, so that I don’t keep them or other customers waiting.

Q: What does a typical day look like for you?

A: On a typical day, I’m get up early to get myself and get ready for the day by ensuring I eat a proper meal, reviewing any material for class, and making sure I have all the materials ready for classes. The rest of the day is usually spent doing schoolwork and participating in extra-curricular activities like Student Government. At least days out of the week, I ensure that I get in at least 30 minutes of exercise, because I believe having a healthy body allows me to be a better student. I also make time for social activity in my schedule to maintain a balanced life.

Q: How would the people who know you describe you?

A: People who know me would say that I’m personable. I always try to be positive and I’m a hard worker. If there are things to get done, they know that they can count on me. This has allowed me to gain the Employee of the Month Award at my current position, twice over the last 2 years.

Q: Tell me why I should hire you?

A: I am eager and ready to contribute my theoretical knowledge, practical experience with transferable skills, and commendable work ethic to be a positive addition to your company. I’m also open to learning new ways of doing things and the different operations of this specific organization so that I can continue to grow professionally.
Other Common Questions

1. What are your short-term goals? Long-term goals?
2. What do you see yourself doing in five years?
3. Describe what you find stressful in a job. How do you handle the stress?
4. Describe a recent situation when you had to motivate others. What was the outcome?
5. How do you feel about relocating, traveling, working overtime, and spending weekends in the office?
6. Tell me about your most difficult decision and how did you go about making it? 9. What do you really want to do in life?
7. What types of situations put you under pressure, and how do you deal with the pressure?
8. What personal factors do you consider most important in evaluating yourself or your success?
9. What have you enjoyed most and liked least about the work you have done?
10. Tell me what you know about our organization?
11. What qualities should a successful supervisor/manager possess?
12. Do you prefer to work in a group or alone?
13. What kind of supervisor do you prefer? Tell me about your best/worst supervisor.
14. What do you think it takes to be successful in a company like ours?
15. What kind of reference do you think your last employer will give you?

Behavioral/Situational Questions:

Adaptability

1. Tell me about a time when you were asked to do something you had never done before. How did you react? What did you learn?
2. Recall a time when you were assigned a task outside of your job description. How did you handle the situation? What was the outcome?
3. Tell me about the biggest change that you have had to deal with. How did you adapt to that change?
4. Tell me about a time when you had to adjust to a colleague or classmate’s working style to complete a project or achieve your objectives.

Analysis/Solution Mindset

1. How do you handle stress?
2. Do you follow any specific process or steps while solving a problem?
3. Tell us about a problem at work which you couldn’t solve and what did you do?
4. How do you deal with new challenges at work?
5. In case of an urgent situation, what do you do, react immediately to solve the problem, or assess the situation?

Collaboration
1. Give an example of a successful project that you were part of. What was your role? What made the project successful in your view?
2. Describe a situation from your past work experiences in which you have determined a team was the best potential solution to a problem, a needed process improvement or a planned change. How did the teamwork out for you? Was it the correct decision in retrospect?
3. What actions and support, in your experience, make a team function successfully?
4. Can you share an example of a situation in which teamwork enhanced your ability to accomplish your goals or the outcomes that were expected from you as an employee?
5. Share a time when you experienced working with a difficult co-worker on a team. How was the co-worker difficult and what did you do to resolve the situation to encourage the team's ongoing progress?

Communication
1. How do you prefer to build rapport with others?
2. How would you go about simplifying a complex issue to explain it to a client or colleague?
3. How would you go about persuading someone to see things your way at work?
4. How would you go about explaining a complex idea/problem to a client who was already frustrated?
5. What would you do if you there was a breakdown in communication at work?

Digital fluency
1. How computer literate are you, and which software programs are you familiar with?
2. Could your work performance be improved by incorporating new technical knowledge and developments?
3. What is your level of experience with software used in your job? What resources do you use when faced with a PC problem?
4. Have you ever used software to make a work or school related presentation?

Empathy
1. What do you fear most?
2. What are your strengths and weaknesses?
3. What kinds of things or people inspire you?
4. What are your career goals?
5. Are you a team player?

Entrepreneurial mindset
1. What do you want out of this experience?
2. What is your dream job?
3. What is your ambition?
4. How can you make this department better?
5. What do you want on your resume in two years?

Resilience
1. How do you handle setbacks?
2. Describe a project that you had to work on for an extended period and how you stayed engaged?
3. Have you ever been in a situation where you were close to giving up? How did you deal with this?
4. Have you ever turned a dream into a reality?

Self-awareness
1. Describe a time when you were tempted to blame someone else for something but instead resolved it by owning your part of the issue.
2. What’s an example of how you used your emotional intelligence to be effective in your role?
3. What percentage of agreements do you currently keep with the people you live and work with? What causes you to break agreements the most? How do you approach broken agreements?
4. Describe a recent sensitive conversation. Either a time when you delivered feedback that may have been hard for the other person to hear, or a time when you revealed something about yourself that was vulnerable in service of connection or creative collaboration. How did the conversation go? What did you learn?
5. What are your favorite ways to bring play into your work?

Social/Diversity Awareness
1. What personal values are most important to you?
2. Describe what you consider an ideal work culture.
3. What do you think the most challenging aspect of working in a diverse working environment?
4. Can you give us an example of a time when you worked with or helped somebody of a different culture/background of your own?

Questions to ask
1. What might a typical workday in this position be like?
2. What kind of supervision will I receive? How will my performance be evaluated?
3. What is your organization’s short range and long-range plans for the future?
4. I was reading about (blank) in your organization’s literature, and I am interested in learning more about it. Can you tell me more?
5. What do you like about working here or this company?
6. What are some the problems facing your staff today?
7. Is there anything else I can tell you about my qualifications?
8. From what I have told you, do you feel my skills will contribute towards your organization?
9. How would you describe the company environment?
10. How are employees rewarded if they perform well?
11. Describe the kind of people who excel in your company.
12. How do current employees feel about their jobs and the company?
13. What is your turn-over rate of new hires within one year? Why do they leave?
14. What are the opportunities to move up within the organization?
15. How secure is this position? If I were to be laid off, what assistance would I receive?
16. What qualities are you looking for in your new hires?
17. What characteristics does a successful person have in your organization?
Mock Interview Interviews
Mock Interview Guidelines

A mock interview is a simulation of an actual interview. Students may schedule a 30-minute mock interview with a Career Coach via the appointment tab on the Career Center’s website. Please be mindful of the following when preparing for your mock interview.

- Book your appointment
- Provide a job description for the position you’re applying or type of position you wish to apply for. If you’re practicing for a graduate school interview, provide any guidelines communicated to you by the school
- The Career Coach will be simulating an actual interview and will play the role of the interviewer from the very beginning of the meeting. If you have booked an in-person mock interview, after checking in at the front desk, the career coach will escort you to the interview room. Your interview assessment begins the moment you enter the Career Center. Similarly, the interview simulation begins as soon as you log on to the chosen platform for a virtual mock interview.
- Once the mock interview is complete, the Career Coach will review the Mock Interview Feedback form with you and provide feedback
- Be sure to carefully review the Mock Interview Feedback Form and Interview Preparation Guide before your mock interview.
## Mock Interview Feedback Form

**Student Name:** ______________________  
**Date:** _____________

**Interviewer’s Name:** ______________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>1-2</th>
<th>3-4</th>
<th>5-6</th>
<th>7-8</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Appearance</strong></td>
<td>Overall appearance is untidy</td>
<td>Appearance is somewhat untidy</td>
<td>Overall neat appearance</td>
<td>Overall appearance is very neat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Choice in clothing is inappropriate for any job interview (torn, unclean, wrinkled)</td>
<td>Choice in clothing is inappropriate (shirt un-tucked, tee-shirt, too much jewelry, etc.)</td>
<td>Choice in clothing is acceptable for the type of interview</td>
<td>Choice in clothing is appropriate for any job interview</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poor grooming</td>
<td>Grooming attempt is evident</td>
<td>Well groomed (i.e. shirt tucked in, jewelry blends with clothing, minimal wrinkles)</td>
<td>Very well groomed (hair, make-up, clothes pressed, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Greeting</strong></td>
<td>Unacceptable behavior and language</td>
<td>Used typical behavior and language – did modify behavior to fit the interview</td>
<td>Acceptable behavior, well mannered, professionalism somewhat lacking</td>
<td>Professional behavior and language (handshake, “hello”, “thank you ” , etc.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unfriendly and not courteous</td>
<td>Attempts to be courteous to all in interview setting</td>
<td>Courteous to all involved in interview</td>
<td>Friendly and courteous to all involved in interview</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communication</strong></td>
<td>Speaking is unclear – very difficult to understand message of what is being said (i.e. mumbling)</td>
<td>Speaking is unclear – lapses in sentence structure and grammar Volume is uneven (varied)</td>
<td>Speaking is clear with minimal mistakes in sentence structure and grammar Volume is appropriate</td>
<td>Speaks clearly and distinctly with no lapse in sentence structure and grammar usage; speaks concisely with correct pronunciation Volume conveys business tone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Body Language</strong></td>
<td>Fidgeted – (i.e., constant movement of hands and feet); none or very poor use of physical gestures, facial expressions and body movements detracted from the interview process</td>
<td>Fidgeted – (i.e., movement of hands and feet frequently); minimal use of physical gestures, facial expressions and body movements in a manner which enhanced the interview process</td>
<td>Minimal fidgeting (i.e., occasionally shifting); average use of physical gestures, facial expressions and body movements in a manner which enhanced the interview process</td>
<td>No fidgeting; consistently used physical gestures, facial expressions and body movements in a manner which enhanced the interview process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posture and Eye Contact</td>
<td>Sits up straight; average posture; establishes eye contact with interviewers during the interview 70-80% of the time</td>
<td>Sits up straight, good posture; establishes eye contact with interviewers during the interview 80-90% of the time</td>
<td>Sits up straight, excellent posture; looks relaxed and confident; establishes eye contact with interviewers during the interview 90-100% of the time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politeness</td>
<td>Several times, the student interrupted or hurried the person doing the interviewing; forgot to thank person(s)</td>
<td>Student interrupted or hurried the interviewer 3-5 times during the course of the interview, thanked the person after the interview</td>
<td>Student never interrupted or hurried the interviewer and thanked them after the interview</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Attitude</td>
<td>Somewhat interested in the interview; shows little enthusiasm</td>
<td>Shows basic interest in the interview; shows some enthusiasm</td>
<td>Appropriately interested and enthusiastic about the interview process</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responses to Questions</td>
<td>Gives well-constructed responses, but sounds rehearsed or unsure</td>
<td>Gives well-constructed responses, does not sound rehearsed, student somewhat hesitant or unsure</td>
<td>Gives well-constructed, confident responses that are genuine</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate Integrity</td>
<td>Responses are somewhat inconsistent or contradictory</td>
<td>Responses are generally consistent</td>
<td>Responses are all consistent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Demonstration of Interview Skills</td>
<td>Demonstrated limited proficiency; limited demonstration of competent interview skills in a generally confident manner</td>
<td>Demonstrated average proficiency; average demonstration of competent interview skills in a generally confident manner</td>
<td>Highly proficient; appropriately utilized interview skills in an enthusiastic, motivating and engaging manner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total out of 80 points possible (10 topics x 8 max possible)

- ½ point scoring is appropriate for this section (i.e. 7.5, 6.5, 3.5, etc.)