

Interview Preparation

Beyond the resume and cover letter, interviews help employers learn more about how your academic background, skills and experience match the requirements of a job opening. At the same time, employers are evaluating your communication skills and other traits to determine if you will fit with the organizational culture. You want to answer the employers' questions competently, smoothly and professionally. You also want to use the interview as a means of learning more about the position and the organization to see if you would be happy and productive in the job. Remember that the interview is the main determinant of whether or not you receive a job offer. Preparation is the key!

Prepare for the Interview:

[Research the Company](#)

[Common Interview Questions & Answers](#)

[Prepare with these Sample Interview Questions](#)

[Practice Your 30 Second Commercial](#)

[Review Your Interview Preparation Checklist](#)

Types of Interviews:

Telephone Interviews

Telephone interviews are becoming a major part of the interviewing process when applying for internships, part- and full-time jobs, and graduate school. Employers may contact you anytime during the day, night, and weekend, either informally or formally. They may request additional information, set up a formal interview, reschedule a time or simply chat with an applicant to get a sense of their personality. Telephone interviews may indeed be "first round" screening measures for employers deciding whom they would like to invite for face-to-face interviews. It may also be your only interview for the position.

[Telephone Interview Tips](#)

Skype Interviews

Skype interviews are on the rise. Unlike phone interviews, you and the interviewer can see each other, so you don't have to worry about some of the issues that phone interviews present. However, the technology issues remain.

Find a quiet room or office from which to conduct the interview, preferably one with white walls or a neutral background. Always test your Skype connection in the room from which you will be interviewing.

[Skype Interview Tips](#)

Behavioral Interviews

Behavioral interviewing is designed to reveal more in-depth information than other interviewing styles. Traditional interview questions ask general questions such as “Tell me about yourself.” The process of behavioral interviewing is much more probing and works very differently. In a traditional job interview, it is easier to provide a “canned” answer that tells the interviewer what he or she wants to hear. For example, if asked: “Tell me about your biggest weakness,” you might respond with a carefully practiced statement that turns a negative into a positive: “I am perfectionist and often work too hard to make sure that everything is exactly right.” In a behavioral interview, the interviewer will probe for depth and detail. For example, “Tell me about a decision you made that you eventually regretted.” As you tell your story, the interviewer may ask: “What were you thinking at that point?” or “What were the short term and long term consequences of that decision?”

What to Expect:

Behavioral interview questions generally start with any one of the following phrases:

- Tell me about a time when you...
- Describe a circumstance when you were faced with a problem related to...
- Think about an instance in which you...
- Tell me how you approached a situation where...

With this type of interview, you should expect a structured interview with set questions, as opposed to a more casual style of interviewing. The interviewer is probably evaluating you against a profile of desired behaviors considered necessary for success. You will oftentimes receive follow-up questions that probe for more details and attempt to evaluate the consistency of your answers. Many of the questions will have multiple parts, and the interviewer will generally take notes during your answers.

The STAR Method

The STAR method is a structured manner of responding to a behavioral interview question by discussing the specific **S**ituation, **T**ask, **A**ction, and **R**esult of the situation you are describing.

Situation: Describe the situation that you were in or the task that you needed to accomplish. You must describe a specific event or situation, not a generalized description of what you have done in the past. Be sure to give enough detail for the interviewer to understand. This situation can be from a previous job, from a volunteer experience, or any relevant event.

Task: What goal were you working toward?

Action: Describe the actions you took to address the situation with an appropriate amount of detail and keep the focus on YOU. What specific steps did *you* take and what was *your* particular contribution? Be careful that you don't describe what the team or group did when talking about a project, but what you actually did. Use the word “I,” not “we” when describing actions.

Result: Describe the outcome of your actions and don't be shy about taking credit for your behavior. What happened? How did the event end? What did you accomplish? What did you learn? Make sure your answer contains multiple positive results.

Sample Response (Using STAR Method)

Follow Up

After the interview, it is important to write a thank you note to the interviewer(s) to acknowledge the meeting, reiterate important points you made in the interview, or provide information you forgot to mention. This letter also shows your organization and professionalism. This may be done via email or with a handwritten card.

[Follow Up Etiquette](#)