

INTERVIEWING GUIDE

CAREER SERVICES CENTER

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GENERAL INTERVIEW FORMAT

Each interview will vary based on the personality and agenda of the interviewer. You can expect most interviews to utilize the following format:

THE WARM-UP

- Greeting
- Establish Rapport
- Explain Structure of Interview
- Verify Data on Resume, etc.

GATHER EVALUATION DATA

- Open-Ended Questions
- Behavioral Questions
- Probing Questions
- Determine Whether Match Exists
- Strengths, Liabilities

ANSWER QUESTIONS/OFFER INFORMATION

- Explain Training Program
- Describe Position
- Answer Candidate's Questions

CLOSE INTERVIEW

- Explain What Happens Next

The first minute is absolutely critical to interviewing success. Many interviewers will make a snap judgment about you – good or bad – and spend the rest of the interview validating the first impression. Most job candidates walk into the room, shake hands, and then meekly sit down to await the first question. This can make for a poor first impression. Certainly, you need to be comfortable with your own style, but be prepared with an attitude that this is your job to get, not the interviewer's to give. ***Exhibit confidence, enthusiasm, and a high level of interest during the first minute of the interview. Be yourself and do it your own way, but do it!***

COMPANY RESEARCH

Conducting thorough company research is vital to an effective job search. This process not only helps a job candidate tailor his/her resume and cover letter to a particular position, but it is especially helpful with interview preparation.

Employers view researching the company as a critical factor in applicant evaluation because it demonstrates the candidate's interest and enthusiasm for their company. Recruiters often comment that students lack company research skills.

WHAT INFORMATION IS IMPORTANT:

Age	Products	Services	Competitors	Public/Private/Foreign
Reputation	Divisions	Subsidiaries	Earnings	Foreign Operations
History	Sales	Location	Officers	CEO Letter to Shareholders

WHERE TO FIND THIS INFORMATION:

HOOVERS ONLINE

<http://hoovers.com>

- Contains basic directory and financial information for over 8,000 public companies. Includes links to web pages, recent news articles, top competitors, and industry information.

WETFEET

<http://wetfeet.com>

- Contains company and industry research and career-related information to help students make better career decisions. Also includes job and internship opportunities.

NONPROFIT TIMES

<http://nptimes.com/>

- Offers NPT Top 100 report, NPT Power and Influence Top 50, Salary Survey.

GUIDESTAR

<http://www.guidestar.org/>

- National database of nonprofit organizations. Includes economic reports and more on nonprofits.

WHAT EMPLOYERS SAY ABOUT RESEARCH:

Incorporating your knowledge of the organization into the interview will impress the employer. Your preparedness will confirm your interest in working for the organization and allow you to demonstrate your awareness of any challenges it faces or needs that it has (and how you can help!).

~ Job Choices 2006

Conducting thorough research is vital to an effective job search. This process not only helps a job/internship candidate tailor his/her resume and cover letter to a particular position, but it is especially helpful with interview preparation. It also assists with the identification of organizations that would be the best fit. Employers view researching the company as a critical factor in applicant evaluation because it demonstrates the candidate's interest and enthusiasm for their company. In order to assist you with your job and internship search, we developed a new "Prep Sheet" checklist. There are three types of interviewing checklists: **For Profit Checklist, Nonprofit Checklist, and Government Agency Checklist.**

For Profit Checklist

Name of Company: _____

Organization Knowledge

Company History: _____

Company Leaders: _____

Organizational Structure: _____

Principle Products/Line of Business: _____

Primary Locations: _____

Stock Price: _____

Stock Trends: _____

Industry Knowledge

Industry Background/General Information: _____

Competitors: _____

Position's Career Path: _____

Relative Size of Industry: _____

Industry Trends and Facts: _____

Current Events

New Products/Lines of Business: _____

Recent News Articles about Organization: _____

*adapted from the University of Notre Dame Career Center

Nonprofit Checklist

Name of Organization: _____

Mission of Organization: _____

Populations Served: _____

Executive Director: _____

Local, Regional, National and World aspects of the organization: _____

Size of local, national organization: _____

Volunteer structure and size: _____

How the organization refers to its constituents – clients, guests, patrons, members: _____

Who comprises the Board of Directors: _____

CEO or President of the national and/or international levels of the organization: _____

Partnerships with community, other agencies and organizations, corporations: _____

Important information from Annual Report; nptimes.com – NPT Top 100 Report; organization website:

Recent news: _____

Primary sources of funding – could be a mix of the following: _____

Government Agency

Bureau, agency, or department name: _____

Public service mission: _____

Sector of the population to which agency's services are directed: _____

Top positions titles and person's names in agency such as Executive Director, Sec. of Dept., elected positions, legislators, Governor, Senators, Representatives: _____

Level of government at which the agency functions – city, county, township, state, region of the state, federal: _____

Branch of government – executive, judicial, legislative: _____

Counterpart to the agency at the different levels of government, for example Cincinnati Housing Authority is the municipal level of the state and federal department of Housing and Urban Development: _____

Recent news articles, reports, or stories involving the bureau, agency, or department: _____

Size and jurisdiction of office with whom you are interviewing; as well as size and jurisdiction of parent agency to the office: _____

Recruiting terminology, for example the federal government calls an open position a vacancy; GS level is a grade level equivalent to a particular salary range for the federal government; state and municipal levels of government may have their own specialized vocabulary for the hiring process: _____

Political appointments, elected and hired positions within the agency with whom you are interviewing: _____

Partnerships with nonprofit agencies: _____

Contracts and business relationships with corporations and manufacturing companies: _____

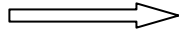
Relationship of government agency with which you are interviewing to other government departments or agencies; differences between focus of public service and connection between them: _____

THE PSYCHOLOGY BEHIND SOME COMMON INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Adapted from the book Money Jobs

WHEN INTERVIEWERS ASK YOU

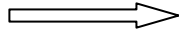
Describe yourself. What in your background qualifies you for this job?



WHAT THEY REALLY WANT TO KNOW IS

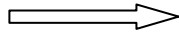
Can you take an incredible amount of information, organize it quickly in your head, and present it in a concise and articulate fashion?

What are your greatest strengths and weaknesses?



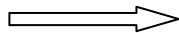
Are my perceptions of your strengths and weaknesses the same as yours? How mature are you in dealing with your weaknesses? Can you identify methods for self-improvement?

Where do you want to be five years from now?



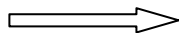
What motivates you and what do you want out of life? Is this job merely a stepping stone to something better?

Why this job? Why this organization?



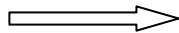
Have you done your homework? Are you analytical?

How would your peers describe you?



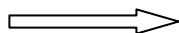
How do you see yourself? Are you a leader or follower? (A quiet confidence is needed here, not arrogance or egotism.)

What makes you think you'll succeed in this organization?



Have you accurately identified the skills and expertise needed to succeed? Can you prove you have them?

Why should we hire you? What do you bring to this job?



How are your promotion and persuasion skills? Are you believable? If you can't sell yourself, how will you be able to sell our products/company/ideas?

"I shall prepare myself and my opportunity must come" (Abraham Lincoln)

INTERVIEWING QUESTIONS

No two interviews are alike. In each interviewing experience there will be questions you were not asked in previous interviews. However, there are a number of questions that seem more common than others, and these are the questions you should think about before each interview. A majority of interviewers will steer away from standard directive questions and concentrate more on open-ended situational or behavioral questions. Common themes include applications of **analytical, problem-solving, and decision-making skills; leadership development; creativity; teamwork; and personal development.**

QUESTIONS PROFESSIONAL INTERVIEWERS MAY ASK YOU

1. Why are you interested in our organization?
2. What work experience has been the most valuable to you and why?
3. Give an example of a problem you have solved and the process you used.
4. Describe a situation in which you had a conflict with another individual and how you dealt with it.
5. What idea have you developed and implemented that was particularly creative or innovative?
6. How did you choose to attend Xavier and how did you select your major(s) in _____?
7. How do you think you have changed personally in the past (5) years?
8. Tell me about a team project of which you are particularly proud and your contribution.
9. What types of situations put you under pressure and how do you deal with the pressure?
10. Tell me about a situation when you had to persuade another person to your point of view.
11. Describe a leadership role you have held and tell me why you committed your time to it.
12. What challenges are you looking for in a position?
13. In thinking about a past position you have held, what did you do to make your duties more effective or more challenging?
14. What steps would you take to terminate an employee who is not performing adequately?
15. What three trends do you see in the future for our industry?
16. Tell me about yourself.
17. Why do you want to work in (career field)?
18. What experiences have directed you toward pursuing your degree?
19. Why do you feel you will be successful in this program?
20. What is your greatest strength/weakness and how will it affect your performance in this program?
21. Describe a team-oriented accomplishment in which you participated as a member of the team.
What did you find to be the most difficult issue or process in becoming a successful team?
22. Have you ever received a grade lower than you expected? If so, what did you do about it?
23. Describe one of the toughest competitive situations you have faced and how you handled it.
24. What are some of the most creative things you have done?
25. What has been one of your greatest disappointments and how did you respond?
26. Describe a time when you added value to an existing work process.
27. What characteristics do you think are important for this position?

28. Describe a situation in which you were criticized and how you responded.
29. How has your education at Xavier University prepared you for a _____ position?
30. Where do you see yourself in 5 years?
31. What has been your biggest accomplishment in your life?
32. What salary are you expecting?
33. Why should I hire you?

“One specific is worth a hundred generalities.”
(Turkish proverb)

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR INTERVIEWER

1. To what extent will I be responsible for determining my work objectives?
2. Describe the rotational training program associated with this position/internship. How is employee performance evaluated during the training period?
3. What career paths have others generally followed after completing the program?
4. As an intern, what kind of projects will I receive?
5. What characteristics best describe individuals who are successful in this position?
6. Where could a person advance who is successful in this position? Within what time frame?
7. In what ways has this organization been most successful in terms of products/services over the past several years?
8. How is job performance evaluated?
9. What has been the professional growth track for other students who have been recruited by your company over the past 3-5 years?
10. How would you describe the culture of your organization?
11. If I work hard and prove my value to the company, where might I find myself in five years?
12. What is a typical work week for a (position) in your company?
13. How much decision-making authority is given to new employees?
14. Does your organization encourage its employees to pursue additional education?
15. What other positions/departments will I interact with the most?
16. What are the key business reasons driving the need for this position?
17. Describe the three top challenges that I'll face in this job.
18. What has to happen for you to know you've hired the best person?
19. What are the key deliverables and outcomes that this position must achieve?
20. Describe the top three initiatives for your company/department and how this position is linked to these initiatives.
21. What are the key metrics for measuring success in this position?
22. How do you feel my style will complement the team culture?

STAR IN A SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEW

SITUATION (Class project, student activity, volunteer experience, job, ...)

Example: As a member of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers student chapter ...

TASK (Goal, problem to be solved, improvement to be made, ...)

Example: ... I suggested establishing a mentoring program for area junior high school students to increase their interest in math and science and as a way for engineering students to explore careers in teaching.

AACTION (Planning and implementation done to reach goal, solve problem, ...)

Example: I formed a committee to research the topic and then develop procedures, policies, and marketing ideas. To recruit participants, we designed a direct-mail postcard to send to all mechanical engineering students. After presenting our proposal to a local middle school science teacher, we were welcomed into the classroom.

RESULT (The outcome, influences, changes, ...)

Example: Ten pairs of students were active in the mentoring program last year. As seniors, two engineering graduates entered the teaching profession, and the junior high students started an engineering club after school. We have already started organizing this year's program with the same teacher.

Interviewing: Demonstrating Skills and Strengths through STAR

Answering questions in a job interview is often daunting. The key is anticipating questions and practicing how you will respond. The best interviewees are those who can respond completely and succinctly to questions while highlighting their strengths and skills.

A framework to help you answer interview questions is **STAR** (Situation, Task, Action, Results). Using this model when answering interview questions will enable you to organize your answers in a way that showcases your skills and gives the employer the essential information needed.

Situation: Describe the situation
Task: Task involved in the situation.
Action: Action you took to solve or complete the task.
Results: What was the end result of your action?

EXERCISE:

Jot down your response to the following behavioral-based interview questions in the spaces provided below. Be prepared to share your answer.

Question 1 Tell me about a time when you were able to convince someone to take action on a matter that was important to you.

Situation:

Task:

Action:

Results:

Question 2 Describe a high-pressure situation you faced in the past year and how you handled it.

Situation:

Task:

Action:

Results:

Two other models can be used as a framework to help showcase your skills; these are PAR (Problem, Analysis/Action, Results) and SOAR (Situation, Obstacle, Action, Results).

Practice Exercises for Behavioral-Based Interview

Exercise 1: Jot down your response to the following behavioral-based interview question in the spaces provided below. Be prepared to share your answer.

Question: Tell me about a time when you were able to convince someone to take action on a matter that was important to you.

PAR

Problem:

Analyze/Action:

Results:

STAR

Situation:

Task:

Action:

Results:

SOAR

Situation:

Obstacle:

Action:

Results:

Comments:

Exercise 2: As you observe the “dissected” role-play, respond to the following question. Record the key elements of the response in the space below.

Question: Describe a high-pressure situation you faced in the past year and tell me how you handled it.

PAR

Problem:

Analyze/Action:

Results:

STAR

Situation:

Task:

Action:

Results:

SOAR

Situation:

Obstacle:

Action:

Results:

Comments:

Exercise 3: As you observe the role-play, respond to the following question. Analyze the key elements of the response in the space below.

Question: Tell me about a time when you were particularly proud of an accomplishment.

PAR

Problem:

Analyze/Action:

Results:

STAR

Situation:

Task:

Action:

Results:

SOAR

Situation:

Obstacle:

Action:

Results:

Comments:

Exercise 4: As you observe the volunteer role-play, respond to the following question. Analyze the key elements of the response in the space below and be prepared to contribute to a constructive evaluation of the scenario.

Question: Describe a time when you were particularly creative in solving a problem.

PAR

Problem:

Analyze/Action:

Results:

STAR

Situation:

Task:

Action:

Results:

SOAR

Situation:

Obstacle:

Action:

Results:

Comments:

INTERVIEW DRESS

Should your clothes and appearance be a consideration for whether you can perform the duties of a particular job? NO! Will your clothes and appearance be considered in evaluating you for a particular job? YES!

Your primary goal in dressing for an interview is to feel good about the way you look while projecting an image that matches the requirements of the position and company.

GUIDELINES FOR WOMEN

Suits, Dresses: Conservative business suit, pantsuit, or dress of natural or woven-blend fabric; skirt length should be to the bottom of the knee at least. Choose a soft color that complements your skin tone and hair color; beige, black, navy, gray, or brown.

Blouses: Simple style; white or soft colors. Avoid low-cut necklines or very frilly styles.

Shoes: Highly polished pumps or medium heels in color that matches your outfit. Save the three-inch heels for another time.

Stockings: Beige, tan, or natural. Avoid patterns or lacy stockings.

Purse: Not necessary, but if you bring one it should be of small or medium size in a color that goes with your outfit.

GUIDELINES FOR MEN

Suits: Preferred dark blue, gray, or muted pin-stripes. Very muted brown or black also acceptable. A quality woven blend of natural fibers looks professional. Avoid bold plaids, bold pin-stripes, contrasting slacks and sport coat, or light colors. Don't buy a size 40 regular off the rack; get alterations for a tailored fit!

Shirts: A good quality white button-down or white classic collar is preferred. Be sure it is ironed.

Ties: Conservative stripes or paisleys that complement your suit. Silk or good quality blends only. Don't shop for a deal, shop for a good tie.

Shoes: Highly polished slip-ons or laced dress shoes; brown, cordovan, or black.

For both men and women, avoid unkempt hair or far-out hairstyles. Don't draw the interviewer's attention to your hair. Also, avoid excessive perfume or cologne. It doesn't mean you can't wear it, but a little goes a long way in a closed room.

REASONS FOR REJECTION AFTER A JOB INTERVIEW

*Adapted from a careercenter.com summary of a survey conducted
by the Northwestern University Placement Center*

- Poor communication skills (excessive talking, no projection, hand over mouth when talking, poor poise/diction/grammar, indistinctive speech)
- Unable to articulate clear goals or future career direction
- No match between skills or academic background and position
- Level of technical competency insufficient for job
- Lack of general enthusiasm and energy; appears unmotivated
- Weak interpersonal skills
- Failure to demonstrate leadership or management potential
- Inadequate analytical or problem-solving skills
- No active participation in or contribution to extracurricular activities
- No pattern or history of top performance or success
- Narrow interests
- No relevant work experience part-time or summers
- Did not prepare for interview; lack of company and/or industry research evident
- Immature or lacking in self-confidence
- Arrogant, overly aggressive, or over-confident personality
- Misrepresentation on resume in regard to education, GPA, experience, or skills
- Candidate not competitive with applicant pool
- Poor personal appearance
- Unrealistic expectations; unwilling to start at the bottom; expects too much too soon
- Late to interview without good reason
- Asks no questions or very poor questions
- Overemphasis on money
- Lack of tact, courtesy, social understanding, or appropriate manners
- Condemnation of past employers
- Marked dislike for school work
- Lack of vitality; limp handshake
- Failure to look interviewer in the eye
- Indecisive
- Loafs during summer vacations
- Unhappy personal life
- Friction with parents
- Sloppy application
- Merely shopping around or wants job for short time only
- Little sense of humor
- Parents make decisions for him/her
- Cynical
- Questionable ethics or low moral standards
- Intolerant; strong prejudices
- Poor handling of personal finances
- Inability to take criticism
- Lack of appreciation for the value of experience
- Radical ideas
- Never heard of employer