THE JOB/INTERNSHIP INTERVIEW

Interviews for jobs or internships are your opportunity to present yourself and your qualifications for the position you desire. To prepare for an interview you need to 1) know yourself, 2) know about the position and the organization, 3) know general interviewing guidelines, and 4) prepare for typical interview questions and plan how you will answer them.

Know yourself
- Be sure you are easily conversant on all aspects of your education and work experience, especially the ways in which they are of value to the prospective employer. Be able to "talk" your resume.
- Identify your areas of interest, your skills/abilities/strengths, and your values/priorities. Be sure you know which personal qualities you want to highlight.
- Be prepared to cite examples that give evidence of your personal qualities.

Know the job and the organization
- Understand as much as you can about the nature of the position and the qualifications needed. You can get this information from the description of the job or internship. It is also helpful to talk to other people who have held the position or a similar one in another organization. If you are unclear about what a particular type of job entails, you may also want to consult general career guides that describe the nature of the work, typical salaries, etc. for different careers. These are available in the Career Development library. The Vault Career Insider Guide and WetFeet, accessible through NACELink, is another valuable resource for industry and career research.
- Know as much about the organization itself as you can reasonably be expected to know. Most large companies print information about their products and services, the history of the company, and career opportunities within it. If you want to be extremely thorough in your research you can use on-line resources and the Business School library to find out more about particular companies. It is important to know as much about the organization as you can, and at least enough to be able to convey why you have an interest in working for them.

Know general interviewing guidelines
- Remember that an interview is basically a conversation between two human beings. The interviewer's main goal is to get to know you, not to test or trick you. If you feel comfortable in discussing your background and know something about the position and the organization, you have no reason to feel nervous.
- Always emphasize the positive. If it is necessary to discuss any negative aspects of your background (e.g. jobs or bosses you didn't like), try not to sound bitter or angry and don't make excuses.
INTERVIEW TIPS

- **Research** the company and job description thoroughly before the interview.
- **Be ready with examples** of how you have used particular skills that relate to the job.
- **Practice** answering questions (see sample question list on reverse side).
- Do a mock interview in Career Development, with the option of being video recorded.
- **Dress professionally.** Visit Career Development if you have questions about appropriate attire for your field.
- Visit the location of the interview ahead of time if possible so you can plan your travel needs accordingly.
- Arrive at an interview **10 minutes early.**
- If for some reason you are running late for an interview, call the organization.
- Do not smoke before an interview.
- **Don’t chew gum.** (Mints are ok!)
- **Turn off your cell phone** or do not bring it into the interview at all.
- **Be friendly** with everyone you meet at the organization
- Greet your interviewers formally (ex. Mr. Jones).
- Ask someone ahead of time if you are unsure how to pronounce an interviewer’s name.
- Offer a **firm handshake.**
- Maintain good **posture** and eye contact.
- Be sure to **smile.**
- Demonstrate self-confidence and positive energy, but do not be overly confident.
- Speak loud enough for everyone to hear you and enunciate your words.
- **Avoid slang and pause words** such as “um” and “like”.
- Do not bring up controversial issues or personal/family problems, or tell jokes.
- Do not give simple yes or no answers; elaborate and give examples whenever possible.
- Do not lie or exaggerate your abilities or experiences.
- Do not speak negatively about past employers or colleagues.
- Show appropriate interest- do not appear desperate for the job.
- Feel free to **take notes** during and after the interview so you remember details.
- At the end, show your appreciation for being interviewed and **ask what the next steps are.**
- Get business cards from each interviewer.
- Write thank you letters or emails to each interviewer within 24 hours.

THINGS TO TAKE TO THE INTERVIEW

- Directions to the interview, parking instructions and the phone number
- Folder or padfolio, paper and pen
- Extra resumes
- Sample work or professional portfolio
- List of questions for the interviewer
- List of references
- Mints
- Bottled water
- Professional bag, tote, or briefcase
QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEW PREPARATION

1. Tell me about yourself?

2. What are your long range career goals, when and why did you establish these goals, and how are you preparing yourself to achieve them?

3. What specific goals, other than those related to your occupation, have you established for your-self for the next ten years?

4. Why are you interested in working for our organization?

5. What are the most important rewards you expect in your career?

6. What are your greatest strengths?

7. How would you describe yourself?

8. How do you like to spend your free time?

9. How did your college experience prepare you for a career?

10. What books, magazines, newspapers, or journals do you read?

11. Why should I hire you?

12. What qualifications do you have that make you think you will be successful?

13. Why do you think you would like this particular job?

14. In what ways do you think that you can make a contribution to our company?

15. What do you think determines a person's progress in an organization?

16. Describe the relationship that should exist between a supervisor and subordinates?

17. What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction and why?

18. Do you feel that you have the best scholastic record of which you are capable?

19. Why did you choose your field of study?

20. If you could do so, how would you plan your academic study differently? Why?

21. Describe your most rewarding (college) experience?

22. Do you have plans for continued study? An advanced degree?

23. What have you learned from participation in extracurricular activities?
QUESTIONS TO ASK THE INTERVIEWER

1. Describe the work environment.

2. What are the characteristics of a successful person in your organization?

3. How would you describe the organization’s personality and management style?

4. What are your expectations for new hires?

5. Describe the typical first year assignments.

6. What are the company’s strengths and weaknesses?

7. What do you like most about the organization for which you work? What do you like least?

8. Would you describe your training program for me? ...OR... What type of training will I receive? (If you are applying for a management trainee position, you should have covered this in your research and need not ask unless you want more detailed information.)

9. How would you describe the differences between your organization and others similar to it?

10. What are your organization's promotion policies?

11. How is an employee evaluated and promoted?

12. If I were to accept this position, what would be my opportunity for advancement or personal growth?

13. What is the retention rate of people in the position for which I am interviewing?

14. What are your policies or expectations regarding continuing education for your employees?

15. What are the challenging facets of the job?

16. What are the toughest problems/decisions that the person in this position will have to deal with?

17. What are the organization’s plans for future growth?

18. What industry trends will affect this company?

19. How is this firm stronger than the competition?
Behavioral Interviewing Story

One strategy for preparing for behavioral interviews is to use the STAR Technique (often referred to as the SAR and PAR techniques as well.)

*Sample SAR story:*

**Situation (S):**
Advertising revenue was falling off for my college newspaper, *the Columbia Spectator*, and large numbers of long-term advertisers were not renewing contracts.

**Action (A):**
I designed a new promotional packet to go with the rate sheet and compared the benefits of *Spectator* circulation with other ad media in the area. I also set-up a special training session for the account executives with a School of Business Administration professor who discussed competitive selling strategies.

**Result (R):**
We signed contracts with 15 former advertisers for daily ads and five for special supplements. We increased our new advertisers by 20 percent [quantities are always good] over the same period last year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation or Task</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Situation or Task</strong></td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Action you took</strong></td>
<td>Describe the action you took and be sure to keep the focus on you. Even if you are discussing a group project or effort, describe what you did -- not the efforts of the team. Don’t tell what you might do, tell what you did.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Results you achieved</strong></td>
<td>What happened? How did the event end? What did you accomplish? What did you learn?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>