



CAREER SERVICES PRESENTS

HOW TO INTERVIEW

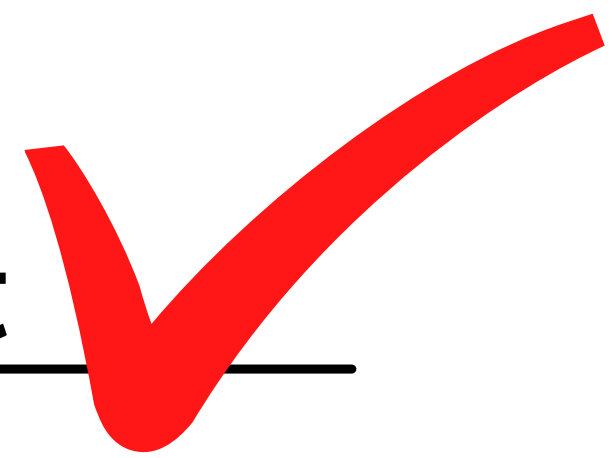
A SIMPLE GUIDE THROUGH THE
ENTIRE INTERVIEWING PROCESS

A successful interview is the result of careful preparation...

Before the Interview

A job interview is an opportunity to showcase your relevant strengths, experience, and interest in the position for which you're applying. An interview is also a chance for you to ask questions of the employer to find out if the position is a good fit for you. The secret to a successful interview is thorough preparation and effective communication.

Before the Interview Checklist



- ✓ **Know what you have to offer.** Employers desire employees who are self-aware and able to communicate clearly about what they have to offer. After reflecting on your diverse experiences, think about what have you learned and how it relates to the position for which you're applying. Write down specific examples that illustrate how you match the job description.
- ✓ **Understand the position.** If you have not been given a position description, request one from the organization. What specific qualifications are they seeking? What particular strengths are they looking for in a candidate?
- ✓ **Research the organization.** Spend time exploring the organization's website and/or informational literature. What is the organization proud of? What is their mission/vision statement? What is the primary population they serve? What is their reputation in the industry? Try to access their most recent annual report. Follow them on Twitter and LinkedIn. Employers will expect you to know background information on their organization, so be ready. If you know the name of your interviewer, check to see if he/she has a LinkedIn profile so you can view their professional background.
- ✓ **Be aware of your interviewing strengths and weaknesses.** Take advantage of the Mock Interview service through the Career Center. A career counselor will ask you a list of interview questions and provide you with feedback on your strengths and suggested areas for improvement. Don't let your first interview experience be with the actual interviewing committee - practice on us!

First Impressions Matter



Arrival Time: Arrive at your interviewing destination approximately 10-15 minutes early. This should give you some time to organize your thoughts and observe the working environment.



Cell Phones: Remember to turn off all electronic devices!



Professional Dress and Behavior: Be sure your clothes are neat, clean, and ironed. It's better to dress up than down. Avoid overdoing accessories, makeup, cologne, or perfume. Dress in neutral tones. Stand when the interviewer approaches you. Professionalism is more than how you dress; it's how you present yourself.



Firm handshake: Extend a firm handshake to your interviewers.



Eye contact: This shows confidence and engages the interviewer.



Smile: Be polite to anyone you meet. You want to come across as enthusiastic, friendly, and approachable. Avoid negativity, both verbal and nonverbal.

During the Interview

What to Bring with You

- Extra copies of your resume (on professional resume paper)
- A typed list of at least 3 references (also on resume paper)
- Approximately 8-10 typed questions you would like to ask of your interviewer(s) (samples are at the end)
- A professional-style padfolio that contains a pen and paper

Interviewing Tips

- Make sure your answers are articulate, concise, and clearly related to the position/description of the organization.
- Pay attention to your non-verbal cues. Are you conveying professionalism?
- Answer the interviewer's questions using specific examples from past experiences. Point out transferable skills. Even if the interviewer asks a simple yes/no question, be sure to expand with specific examples.
- Convey your strengths that relate to the position, and give examples to back up your claims!
- Avoid talking too much or getting off track on tangents. In general, answers should be no longer than 2 minutes.
- When addressing weaknesses, be sure to communicate how you are working to overcome them. Think of weaknesses associated with your personality type (contact the Career Center for more information on this).
- Remember that it's okay to take a moment to think rather than blurting something out prematurely.
- Be aware of the experiences listed on your resume. Many interviewers ask questions specifically related to this information.
- Always ask questions of your interviewer(s) at the end. Avoid asking questions related to salary or benefits during a first interview. Research average salaries for the position before the interview, in case you're asked about this.
- Remember to write down the names, positions, and contact information of your interviewers, or request their business cards so that you can follow up appropriately with a thank you note/email.

Interviewing in a Digital Age

The Set Up Process

- **Make sure you have a computer or device with a camera.**
 - If you are using a phone or tablet use a tripod, phone stand, or some other secure, hands-free way to stand the device.
- **Practice utilizing the interviewing platform before the actual interview.**
 - Knowing how to log in and move through the program will relieve stress on the day of the interview.
- **Pay attention to your background.**
 - Busy backgrounds could become distracting to the interviewers. Choose a blank or mostly blank wall/background. You want the interviewers to pay attention to what you are saying, not your background. Background noise is also something to account for, make sure you silence your phone, turn off your music, etc.
- **Pay attention to lighting.**
 - Natural lighting is always ideal, but avoid any harsh light behind you. This is where practicing with the device you plan on using is crucial.

Virtual Interviewing Tips

- **Study the company.** If you have not already done so, take time to research the company, its values, and anything else noteworthy for the interview.
- **Take Notes.** Keep buzzwords, notes on what questions you have about the program/position handy. Make sure to place them in a way where you won't have to look down much to see them. You can also take notes during the interview.
- **Dress to Impress.** Typical interview attire still applies to virtual meetings, even phone interviews. However, there are more things to consider. Many patterns and colors do not translate well on a laptop camera. A light-colored (not white) blouse and a simple necklace for women and a light-colored button-up and tie for men will often translate well.
- **Smile big.** Because you are meeting online you are missing a lot of physical cues. Make use of the ones you have at your disposal. Be personable, use a bit of humor, smile, make eye contact with the camera instead of the picture of the interviewer. Be aware of your posture as well.
- **Follow Through.** Take time to ask your interviewer questions regarding the position and company. Even though you are meeting virtually making use of a follow-up/thank you email will impress employers.

Types of Interviews

BEHAVIORAL-BASED INTERVIEWING

Employers use the behavioral interview technique to evaluate a candidate's experiences and behaviors so they can determine the applicant's potential for success. Behavioral-based questions typically start with "Tell me about a time when you..." or "Describe a situation where you..."

Behavioral-based questions are often related to skills such as innovation and creativity, teamwork, decision making, critical thinking, conflict management, leadership, flexibility, communication, and motivation. These skills can be developed through a variety of experiences – directly or indirectly related to the position; from paid or non-paid experiences. Preparation is the key to successfully answering behavioral-based questions. Try using the following strategies to help you organize your past experiences (also known as "stories") as potential examples.

Strategies:

- Make a list of skills or experiences which are relevant or transferable to the position being sought. Review any materials from the employer to help you identify the desired skills and experiences (job description, website, company reports, research, etc.).
- Think about situations in which you've utilized the desired skills. Come up with several stories from college, class projects, jobs, internships, volunteer activities, club involvement/leadership, and hobbies. Think also of situations that did not go as planned or were difficult but turned out to be a learning experience.
- Practice telling your examples to others, such as friends and family, or a career counselor.
- Make sure your examples are concise, well-told, and interesting. They should create word pictures of what you have done, learned, or accomplished that relate to the job for which you are interviewing.
- Don't hesitate to market your accomplishments; this is not the time to be too modest!
- Be aware of nonsense questions (also commonly called off-the-wall questions), such as "if you could be anyone in the world who would you be?", etc. Though these questions may seem odd, they do have a purpose. Interviewers may want to see if you have a sense of humor, or determine how well you can think on your feet, respond to pressure, or handle an unusual situation. While there is no true way to prepare for these types of questions, you can excel at answering them by not appearing rattled, and providing an honest response that is not too "abnormal" in nature.

STRESS INTERVIEWS

- Creates stress through questioning and situations to reveal how you may handle pressure on the job.
- Examples include “rapid-fire” questioning (little time to think) or using silence—the interviewer silently looks at you after you answer a question to see your reaction. If you get flustered or defensive, you lose.
- The interviewer may comment that you do not have enough experience. Your reaction is critical. In this situation, you want a confident response that connects what you have done with the job they are looking to fill. Remember that experience is not limited to paid jobs but can also include volunteer work, as well as community/campus activities.
- Once you realize that the interviewer is deliberately putting you under stress, say (to yourself), “Aha, I know what you’re doing, and I’m not going to panic, get angry, or become defensive.”

BOARD/PANEL INTERVIEWS

- Two or more people interview you simultaneously, usually taking turns in questioning.
- Each interviewer may have his/her separate agenda and the only person listening to your answer may be the person who asked the question.
- Make eye contact with each of the interviewers at the table.

SERIES INTERVIEWS

- Consecutive interviews (in one day) with several people in an organization. You may interview with someone from Human Resources, your potential boss, and some potential colleagues both inside and outside the department.
- Assumes several heads are always better than one. Combined, they see qualities that would make a candidate suitable or unsuitable for the position and come to an agreement on the strongest candidates.

After the Interview

It's not over yet! Be sure to send a thank-you note/email within two business days to each of your interviewers. This is a chance for you to thank them for taking the time to interview you and to restate your interest in the position. You may want to reiterate something that was discussed during the interview. This will demonstrate to the interviewer that you were listening carefully.

Thank you notes can be in the form of a handwritten professional-looking thank you card or a well-crafted email. If you are no longer interested in the position, you still should send a thank you, but alert them to the fact that you would like to be eliminated from the candidate pool. Unless the employer specifically requests that you do not call or write following an interview, consider following up with a phone call 1-2 weeks after the interview.

Reiterate your interest, inquire about their hiring timeline if this wasn't already discussed, and ask if they need anything further from you.

General Interview Questions

Below are sample interview questions for you to practice. Of course, not all of these questions will be asked, and you are likely to have additional questions which are directly related to the field or position.

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why are you interested in this position with this company?
- What do you know about our organization?
- Why did you select Lancaster Bible College?
- What led you to choose your major or field of study?
- What college subjects did you like best/least? Why?
- What have you learned from participation in extracurricular activities?
- In what ways have your college experiences prepared you for a career?
- What are your specific strengths, weaknesses, and interests?
- What are your long-range goals and objectives?
- In what ways do you think you can contribute to our organization? In other words, what value will you add?
- Describe a contribution you have made to a project on which you worked.
- What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction? Why?
- How do you think a friend or professor who knows you well would describe you?
- Describe a situation in which you had to work with a difficult person (student, co-worker, customer, supervisor, etc.). How did you handle the situation? Is there anything you would have done differently in hindsight?
- What motivates you to put forth your greatest effort? Describe a situation in which you did so.
- How do you determine or evaluate success?
- Describe your most rewarding college experience.
- How do you work under pressure? Give an example.
- Tell me about a time that you made a mistake and how you learned from it.
- Describe a situation in which you worked in a team. What role did you assume? What went well and what didn't?
- What two or three things would be most important to you in your job?
- What makes you a strong candidate for this position – why should we hire you?

Potential Questions to ask Interviewers

ALWAYS have questions ready to ask. Don't ask questions that you could have easily researched before the interview. However, prepare several questions to convey interest, maturity, and a grasp of the profession. Type out the questions, and take them with you to your interview! Consider which of the following questions could be tailored to your prospective employer(s). Adapt content and style as appropriate. Remember it is better NOT to bring up the subject of salary or benefits. Let the employer initiate this conversation.

- Could you explain your organizational structure?
- What are the company's strengths and weaknesses compared to its competition?
- How important does upper management consider the function of this department/position?
- What is the organization's plan for the next five years, and how does this department fit in?
- What do you see as the most significant needs of the organization to which I could contribute?
- What would you expect me to accomplish in the first 60 to 90 days?
- What are a few things that really drive results for the company?
- How will my leadership responsibilities and performance be measured? By whom?
- What are the day-to-day responsibilities of this job?
- Do you provide any training for new hires?
- Could you describe your company's management style and the type of employee who fits well with it?
- What are some of the skills and abilities necessary for someone to succeed in this job?
- What is the company's policy on providing seminars, workshops, and training so employees can keep up their skills or acquire new ones?
- What particular computer equipment and software do you use?
- What kind of work can I expect to be doing the first year?
- What percentage of routine, detailed work will I encounter?
- Who will review my performance? How often?
- What opportunities are available for professional development?
- Why do you enjoy working for this company?

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