

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Major Functions of an Interview

Communicate genuine interest in and knowledge of the position and organization

Presentation of accomplishments and relevant qualifications to a prospective employer

Enable the employer to determine if you are the best candidate to fit within the company and fulfill the needs of the organization

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE?

While your resume will help you get interviews, the interview process will help you get the job. This process provides you with a face-to-face opportunity to set yourself apart from your competition, to expand on the information the employer already has about you from your resume, and for you to describe how you can add value to their company or organization, if they hired you.



This is your
OPPORTUNITY
to market
yourself

MARKET YOURSELF!

View yourself as a product that needs to be sold to the employer. Analyze your strengths, qualifications, interests, and abilities and relate them to the positions for which you are applying. As a well-prepared candidate, you can use the interview process to send the message, "I am the best person for this job," in everything you say and do.

To succeed in today's job market, not only must you do more than be able to demonstrate evidence of talents and skills; you must also be prepared to sell yourself. This requires you to have a thorough understanding of who you are, including your short and long-term goals, what motivates you, and what you believe sets you apart from the competition.

ASSESS JOB FIT

The only way to determine if this is a position that matches your career goals is if you have sufficient information. Ask questions. Do you believe you will fit in and be able to contribute to the organization? Will the job enable you to fulfill your goals? How does the job match with your desires for personal growth? Travel? Flexibility? Advancement? Geographic area?

THE TYPICAL INTERVIEW

A) Introductory Stage

The interviewer will establish rapport and create a relaxed, though businesslike, atmosphere. This is where the interviewer gets the very important first impression of you.

B) Review of Your Background and Interests

This usually takes the form of "what," "why," "where," and "when" types of questions. Focus on what you are like, what you have accomplished, your academic and work background, and your goals. One objective here is to see if your qualifications match your declared work interests. Give concise, but thorough responses to questions.

C) Matching Begins

Assuming you have the necessary qualifications, the interviewer will begin the process of determining whether the employer has job openings that match your interests and qualifications. If there seems to be a match, the interviewer will probably explain job details to see how interested you are in the position.

D) Conclusion

In this stage, the interviewer should explain what the next steps are in the application process. Be sure you understand them. Promptly provide any additional information requested. There should be ample opportunity for you at this point to ask any questions you have.

18 Tips on Job Interviewing

Interviewing is a skill that can be learned. Like any other skill, it takes practice and determination. These tips will help you in developing your interviewing skills. Many of these tips will be explained in more detail throughout this interviewing guide.



1) Don't be late. You should arrive ten to fifteen minutes early for the interview. This will give you time to relax and catch your breath.

2) Go alone to the interview. Do not bring friends or relatives with you to the interview.

3) Bring the following with you in a briefcase or folder:

- Pen and paper
- Social Security Number
- Extra copies of resume printed on resume (bond) paper
- List of references (Include full names, business titles, business addresses, and telephone numbers of at least three individuals who will serve as references for you. You must ask these individuals for permission, informing them that an employer may contact them. Use adults whose references would be of value to you– supervisors, professors, etc.)

4) Consider your appearance in making a first impression. Do not overdress or under dress. If you are not sure, ask advice from Career Services, a professor, or a friend employed in a similar job. Dress for your interview as you would for a very important occasion. The key is to be conservative. Look professional!

5) When you meet the interviewer, be prepared to shake hands and introduce yourself. Know the interviewer's name and how to pronounce it, using "Mr." or "Ms." Stand up until asked by the interviewer to sit down. Do not slouch.

6) Be aware of your nonverbal communication. Your posture, eye contact, hand gestures, and facial expressions are all very important.

- Sit up straight in your chair, leaning forward slightly to indicate your interest
- Maintain appropriate eye contact with the interviewer
- Use hand gestures to emphasize a point but don't gesture wildly or nervously; avoid tapping your fingers or other nervous habits
- Be courteous and polite to everyone, not just the interviewer
- SMILE!!

7) The interviewer will be interested in information such as:

- Your education and previous work experience
- Your attitude toward people and work– very few jobs do not deal with people either as co-workers or customers
- Your future career plans as they relate to the job– your direction & motivation.



- 8) Listen to the interviewer.** The interviewer’s reflective questions will not only confirm your responses, but will also often give you information helpful to your presentation.
- 9) Emphasize the positive.** Be self-confident and honest, highlighting your accomplishments. However, don’t exaggerate or lie; it may come back to haunt you.
- 10) Wait for an offer to discuss salary.** Let the interviewer bring up the subject of money first.
- 11) Emphasize what you can do for the organization.** The employer is interested in the skills, knowledge, and abilities you will bring to the job.
- 12) Be prepared.** Think about how you will answer certain questions before the interview. Know your strengths, weaknesses, skills, and abilities and be prepared to discuss them. Have situations in mind to illustrate your points or to give examples of your experiences. However, don’t give “set” or “by-the-book” answers.
- 13) Never speak badly of a former employer, colleague, teacher or institution.** If there were problems with previous experiences, try to put your answers in positive terms.
- 14) Watch your grammar.** Speak up in interviews and use good voice and diction. Say, “yes” not “yeah.”
- 15) Don’t expect an offer on the spot.** Offers usually follow the interview, sometimes two or three weeks later. If you are not offered the job during the interview, ask about the next step in the employment process.
- 16) Be prepared to ask questions.** Asking questions shows that you are interested and enthusiastic about the organization and the position. It also demonstrates that you are well-prepared and willing to work. Employers appreciate applicants who have done their homework in researching the organization.
- 17) Attitude is most important.** Your attitude is shown by your smile, enthusiasm, interest, appearance, punctuality, flexibility, dependability, and preparedness.

After the Interview

Analyze the interview. Although it is not recommended that you take extensive notes during the interview, it may be helpful for you to do so immediately afterwards.

Next, write a follow-up letter. This remains one of the most neglected parts of the interview process. You can get an edge simply by being one who ALWAYS sends a note. Reaffirm your interest and include any pertinent information you may have neglected to provide during the interview.

If additional information or materials were requested, verify that it is being forwarded. Follow-up letters should be typed or printed on resume paper. Write to everyone who interviewed you and try to personalize it.

Finally, if you are told you will hear about a position by a specific date but do not, call the organization and ask about the current status of your candidacy or application.

Tips on Body Language

Body Language and Non-Verbal Communication: Body language and non-verbal communication are important aspects of your professional image. Research shows that body language, including voice, account for 38% of the overall first impression. Before the interview, practice in front of a mirror to observe your body movements and gestures. Be aware of how you look and act so that your non-verbal cues coincide with what you say. During the interview keep the following things in mind:

Posture: Walk confidently into the room, hold your head up, and offer a firm handshake. You should appear self-assured, yet approachable. During the interview, sit up straight in your chair and lean forward to indicate interest and attention.

Greeting: Express your gratitude when meeting someone for the first time. Step forward, maintain eye contact, smile, and extend your hand. Be sure your handshake is firm and positive, somewhere between limp and bone crushing. Once you've given your name, repeat the interviewer's name.

Initiate Conversation: Find an interesting approach to begin conversation. You can always comment on the weather! Be aware of the world around you so you can join in on talk of current events. Also, try to appear interested and always be an active listener.

Eye Contact: Make eye contact, but be careful not to stare. Shifty eyes are associated with deviousness. A lack of eye contact may be associated with lying. (This may vary depending on the cultural/ethnic background of the interviewer.)

Gestures: Try to control nervous gestures like hair twisting, nail biting, and/or pen clicking. Warm gestures may include leaning toward a person, smiling, and nodding expressively. Cold gestures include avoiding eye contact, not smiling, and placing your hands on your hips. Vary your gestures and make sure they look natural.

Voice: The sound of your voice should be warm and friendly. Project, speak slowly, and enunciate. Use your grammar skills to avoid misuse of verb tense, pronouns, or other grammatical errors.

Be Yourself: Try to appear comfortable during the interview and show that you are at ease in your surroundings. Don't be afraid to relax and show your natural character. You want to give the impression that you are someone they want to have around.



Dress for Success

When dressing for job interviews, it is almost impossible to be too conservative. Most employers regard conservative dress as a sign of good judgment. Be sure your clothing is clean, pressed, and in good repair. Being well groomed is essential. Good grooming indicates to the employer that you value yourself and your work. There are no specific rules regarding attire. However, you can follow some guidelines to make sure you are projecting a professional image. Also, if you are unsure about what is appropriate, call the company and ask.

Guidelines for Men:

- Conservative suit - preferably navy blue, black, or medium to charcoal gray
- Pattern: solid or pinstripe
- Fabric: wool/polyester blend (year-round) or all wool (winter)
- Tie: solid color, small dot or paisley, or conservative stripe (Here is your chance to use color!)
- Shirt: long sleeve, preferably white or light blue
- Socks: long and dark (coordinate with suit); make sure no skin is visible when you sit down
- Shoes: black; NO BOOTS!
- Jewelry: very little- watch; one ring per hand
- Hair: conservative length and style
Beards and mustaches, if worn, should be trimmed and well groomed

Guidelines for Women:

- Skirted suit or pant suit – preferably navy or medium blue, medium to charcoal gray, wine, black
- Pattern: solid or pinstripe
- Fabric: linen (spring and summer), wool/polyester blend (year-round), or all wool (winter)
- Blouse: light color solid or subtle pattern; may coordinate with a silk scarf
- Shoes: plain pump, dark color, closed heel and toe, one to two inch heel
- Hosiery: natural color
- Jewelry: at most a necklace, one pair of simple earrings, a watch, and one ring per hand.
- Make-up: natural looking, conservatively applied
- Hair: neatly styled

Tips for everyone:

- Hair should be clean and neat
- No heavy cologne or perfume
- No nose, lip, eyebrow, cheek or tongue rings or studs (No visible piercings except subtle earrings)
- Shoes should be polished; make sure the heels aren't worn and scuffed
- No missing buttons
- Don't forget to remove external tags and tacking stitches from new clothes.
- Clean, manicured fingernails
- Portfolios may be easier to handle than a bulky briefcase; leave your book bags AT HOME!!
- Keep your pockets free of jingling coins, keys, or bulges
- No gum, candy, or cigarettes

Commonly Asked Interview Questions

Below are a few of the commonly asked questions and the way the interviewers may interpret your responses.

- **Tell me about yourself.**
You can't tell everything, so be brief (1-2 minutes). Keep your response relevant to the position and the organization in question. Before the interview, consider what qualities and experiences you want to emphasize. Typically these include academic background, related work experiences (paid or volunteer), and any other aspects of your background that will help the interviewer see you as potentially successful in the position.
- **Why do you want to work for us?**
The interviewer is finding out how much you know about the organization and your chosen career field. If you haven't done your "homework," this question can be devastating.
- **Why should we hire you?**
Knowing your own strengths and abilities will be the key to this question. You must be able to convince the interviewer that you can contribute to the organization. Emphasize where and how you expect to contribute, NOT what you expect the employer to do for you.
- **What is your greatest weakness?**
Don't knock yourself out of contention for the job! Whatever you mention, be sure to state how you have worked to strengthen yourself in that particular area or turn it around to be a potential strength. For example, "I am a perfectionist and like to do the best possible work, so sometimes I wind up spending more time on projects than is really necessary."
- **What are your long-term goals?**
The interviewer would like to know if you plan to stay in this career field and with this organization. General goals that confirm your commitment are best. Mentioning specific job titles and salary levels, or saying "I want to be president of the company" can sound too pretentious.
- **Which accomplishments are you most proud of?**
Be ready for this question with at least two (preferably three or four) concrete examples that illustrate your personal strengths. Ideally, these examples will illustrate qualities and abilities that will be valuable once you are on the job.

Resources Offered by Career Services

Career Services offers many resources to learn more about interviewing. Come by and check out some of our titles from our resource area:

- *The Complete Q&A Job Interview Book* by Jeffrey Allen
- *Interview Strategies that Lead to Job Offers* by Marilyn Pincus
- *Interview for Success* by Caryl Krannich and Ronald Krannich
- *The Neglected Art of Being Interviewed* by H. Anthony Medley
- *Sweaty Palms* by H. Anthony Medley

Additional Questions You May be Asked in an Interview

Personal Attributes

- Do you like to work with groups or by yourself? Why?
- Tell me about a major problem you have encountered and how you dealt with it.
- What will be the most difficult thing about making the transition from college to career? Why?
- How would a friend/family member/supervisor/professor describe you?
- What do you consider to be your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
- What is it that you do very well?
- What can you do that someone else can't?
- In what kind of work environment are you most comfortable? Uncomfortable?
- Describe your ideal job.
- Why should I hire you? What makes you a good employee?
- Give me an example of a time when you have been under pressure.
- Why do you want to join our organization?
- What other types of jobs are you considering?
- What qualities do you admire most in others?
- How do you feel about relocating/traveling/working overtime/working weekends?
- Tell me what you know about our organization.
- What magazines or books do you read? Why?
- What qualities do successful supervisors/managers have?
- Tell me about your best/worst supervisor.
- What criteria are you using to evaluate potential employers?
- What have you learned from your mistakes?
- What are your salary expectations? What do you expect to make in five years?
- Of which three accomplishments are you most proud?
- How do you spend your spare time?
- Do you prefer any specific geographic location? Why?
- Who are your role models? Why?
- Tell me about your management philosophy. Give me your definition of success.
- What kind of reference do you think your last employer will give you?
- In what ways do you think you can make a contribution to our company?
- Are you seeking employment in an organization of a certain size? Why?

Goals

- Do you have plans for further education?
- Why did you choose the career for which you are preparing?
- What are your short-term goals? Long-term?
- If you could do anything in life, and know you could not fail, what would you do?
- What do you see yourself doing in five years?
- What do you really want to do in life?
- How do you plan to achieve your career objectives?

Education

- Why did you choose your particular college major? If you were starting all over, would you choose the same one? Why or why not?
- What is your GPA? Are your grades an accurate reflection of your scholastic achievements?
- Why did you choose to attend Trinity University?
- What college classes have you enjoyed the most and why? The least?
- Tell me about your most rewarding college experience.
- If you started all over, what would you change about your education?
- How has your education prepared you for the work world? This specific job?
- Tell me about the extracurricular activities you have pursued. What have you gained through your involvement?
- What percentage of your college expenses did you earn? How?
- Which of your college years was most difficult?

Experience

- Tell me about your work experience.
- Have you had any supervisory experience?
- Have you ever spoken before a group of people? How large?
- What job-related skills have you developed?
- Have you ever quit a job? Why?
- Have you ever done any volunteer work?
- Give an example of a situation in which you provided a solution to an employer.
- Which of your jobs did you like best?

Motivation

- What do you think determines a person's work success?
- What motivates you to put forth your greatest effort?
- Who has inspired you the most in your life?
- What have you done that shows initiative and willingness to work?
- What are the most important rewards you expect from your career?

Regarding the Job or Organization

- Why do you want to work for us?
- What position in our company interests you the most?
- What do you know about our company?
- What source(s) did you use to find out about us?
- Why are you interested in this field?

Illegal Interview Questions*

- How old are you?
- When did you graduate?
- Are you married?
- How many children do you have?
- What social organizations do you belong to?
- Have you ever been arrested? (you can only be asked if you have been convicted)
- Where were you born? Are you a U.S. citizen? What is your 'native tongue'?
- Have you had any recent or past illnesses or operations?

**National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE): Jobs Choices for Business & Liberal Arts Students, 2005*

Be Prepared to Ask Questions!

Key questions for you to ask include:

- Is this a newly created job or are you filling a vacancy?
- What is a typical day on the job like?
- What personal qualities or characteristics are most important for success in this job?
- What working relationships will I have with others in the organization?
- How often will I be evaluated? What criteria will be used to measure my performance?

Questions regarding the job content include:

- How does this position relate to other positions within the organization? Where would I fit on the organizational chart?
- What happens during the training program?
- What are examples of typical first year assignments?
- What type of career paths do employees typically follow in this organization?
- What kind of supervision will I receive?
- What opportunities exist for continued training/professional development?
- What is the organization's policy regarding continuing education?
- Has your organization hired Trinity graduates before?
- What are your organization's short-term and long-term plans for the future?
- I was reading your organization's literature and I am interested in learning more about it. Can you tell me more?
- As an employee of this organization, what do you see as some of its outstanding attributes?
- What is the retention rate of people in the position for which I am interviewing?
- What type of computer equipment and software do you use?
- How would you describe your company's management style?
- How much travel is involved in this position?
- Is there a probationary period involved?
- Do you promote from within?

Generally speaking, you should not ask about salary and benefits during a first interview. Instead, concentrate on finding out about the job itself. The employer should be the one to bring up the topic of money.

Regarding your bid for the job, pay and other closing questions feel free to ask the following:

- Is there anything else I can tell you about my qualifications?
- From what I have told you, do you feel my skills will contribute to your organization?
- Can you tell me the prospects for advancement beyond this position?

If the employer does not offer a position:

- Do you know of other departments within the organization that would be interested in my experience?
- I like what you are doing here at XYZ Company. Can you please keep my qualifications on file in case there are future openings?
- If the situation changes, please let me know.
- Can you give me feedback on my interview? Can you give me suggestions on what I can do to make myself more marketable for this type of position?

Behavioral Based Interviews

What is behavioral based interviewing (BBI)?

Behavioral based interviewing is a style of interviewing that is gaining popularity in the hiring processes of many companies and organizations. The basic premise of BBI is this: **the best predictor of future performance is past performance in a similar situation**. Following this premise, many employers make a judgment about an applicant's future behavior on the job by learning about his or her past behavior in a similar job or through other experiences. Candidates are asked to give specific examples of when they demonstrated particular behaviors or skills. General answers about behavior are not acceptable; the candidate must describe in detail a particular event, project, or experience, how he/she dealt with the situation, and what the final outcome was. Information about one's past performance is obtained in the BBI by asking probing questions and discussing situations, events, and experiences.

Tips about the Behavioral Based Interview:

- Employers know before the interview which skills and qualities they are looking for in their applicants. They ask probing and specific questions to determine if an applicant possesses those skills and abilities.
- To find out which skills a certain employer is seeking, you may want to talk with alumni, read the company literature carefully, and listen closely at the company's information session.
- In the interview, your responses to the interviewer's questions must be specific and detailed. Rather than talking about a very general situation, describe a particular set of circumstances that relate to the question. Tell briefly about the situation, what you did specifically, and the positive result or outcome.
- Once you have described a situation, the interviewer may ask questions to gain more detail, such as "What were you thinking at that point?" or "Lead me through your decision process."
- Always listen carefully to the interviewer's questions, asking for clarification if necessary.

Preparing for the BBI:

- Recall examples of situations from your recent experiences where you have demonstrated favorable behaviors or actions.
- Use your resume as a guide to remembering your achievements and experiences.
- You may want to use examples from past internships, classes, projects, activities, team involvement, community service, work experience, or any other accomplishment of which you are especially proud.
- Be prepared to relate these situations to the interviewer, showing how they illustrate your skills and desired behaviors.
- Clearly illustrate a previous problem or situation relevant to the question, your response/reaction, and the end results without digressing. Use the PAR acronym as a guide to answering questions effectively.

PAR—Problem/situation, Action, Results

- Prior to the interview write out several past experiences that demonstrate characteristics that are valuable to the position for which you are interviewing.
- *Problem/situation:* Briefly, but thoroughly, explain the problem or situation that addresses the question asked by the interviewer.
- *Action:* Clearly state the action that *you* took to resolve the issue.
- *Results:* Identify the results that demonstrate you handled the problem appropriately.
- Do not use examples that yielded negative results.
- Do not speak offensively about individuals involved in the story.
- Do not digress.



Use examples with positive results.

Avoid using negative examples.

Sample Behavioral Based Interview Questions:

- Describe a situation in which you were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to see things your way.
- Describe an instance when you had to think on your feet to extricate yourself from a difficult situation.
- Give an example of a time on any job that you held in which you were faced with problems or stresses that tested your coping skills.
- Give an example of a time in which you had to be relatively quick in coming to a decision.

Sample Behavioral Based Interview Questions:

- Tell me about a time when you had to use your written communication skills in order to get an important point across.
- Describe the most significant or creative presentation that you have had to complete.
- Can you give me an example of a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done?
- Give an example of a time when you used facts and reason to persuade another person to take action.
- Give an example of a time when you were able to successfully communicate with another person even when that individual may not have personally liked you (or vice versa).
- What specifically did you do in your last job to contribute toward a teamwork environment?
- Describe a situation in which you disagreed with your supervisor and how you handled this disagreement.
- Tell me about a time when you knowingly violated a company policy to accomplish a goal.
- Give me an example of an important goal you had to set and tell me about your progress in reaching that goal.
- Tell me about a situation in the past year in which you had to deal with a very upset customer or co-worker.
- Give me an example of when you had to demonstrate good leadership.

Additional Interview Information

Telephone Interviews

There are three basic types of telephone interviews:

1. You initiate a call to the hiring manager and they are interested in your background. The call from that point forward is an interview.
2. A company calls you based upon a previous contact. You may be unprepared but it is still an interview.
3. You have a scheduled time with a company representative to speak further on the phone.

Telephone Interview Preparation

In preparing for your phone interview, there are several things you can do.

To prepare for an unexpected contact:

- Tape your resume to a wall in view of the phone. It will be there for the call and will be a constant reminder for your job search.
- Keep all of your employer research materials within easy reach of the phone.
- Have a notepad handy to take notes.
- Conduct a telephone mock interview with a friend or a Career Services staff member.

If the phone interview will occur at a set time, there are additional steps you can take:

- Place a "Do Not Disturb" note on your door.
- Turn off your stereo, TV, and any other potential distraction.
- Warm up your voice while waiting for the call. Sing a song to yourself.
- Have a glass of water handy, since you will not have a chance to take a break during the call.
- Turn off call waiting on your phone.

Company Visit/On-Site Interviews

When the interviewer indicates that you are a good candidate and that others in the organization would like to meet you in a follow-up interview, keep a level head. Get as much information about the next interview as possible. Naturally, you will need to know where and when it will take place, but getting additional details is critical. Find out:

- How long will it last? One hour? One day? Two days?
- With whom will you be interviewing? A recruiter? A manager? The president of the company?
- What kind of structure will the interview have? A simple one-on-one interview? Group/panel interviews? Testing?
- If travel is involved, how are expenses to be handled?

Remember, regardless of where you are, who you are with, or what you are doing, you are being evaluated as a potential employee. Use good taste and common sense in all that you do.

On-Campus Interviews vs. On-Site Interviews

The on-campus interview is a screening process to determine whether to extend an invitation for an on-site interview. The on-site interview often determines whether or not you are offered a job. In some instances, the first on-site interview might lead to a second. The questions asked during on-site interviews tend to be more job-specific and more technical in nature. Usually a tour of the facility is conducted and potential supervisor(s) or manager(s) are met. The interviewee has the opportunity to observe the corporate environment, ask questions, provide more in-depth information, and evaluate the company.

Interview Formats

Interviews vary in length from organization to organization. Some will schedule only an hour while others schedule up to two days. You might encounter individual interviews, group interviews (with multiple interviewers and/or multiple interviewees), testing (paper and pencil aptitude assessments, drug testing, psychological tests), meals, receptions, etc.

Interview Expenses

- Be sure it is clear before you take an interview trip whether you or the company will be responsible for your expenses. If you have any doubts, ask your contact in the organization.
- If the organization is paying for your trip, keep an accurate account of all expenses such as meals, tips, cab fare, or private auto expenses – including mileage. Receipts should be kept for all major expenses, such as transportation and hotel accommodations.
- Unless it is indicated in the invitation, you may normally select the most convenient means of public transportation. Travel by private automobile should be cleared with the organization.
- This is a business trip and your expenses should be incurred accordingly. Excessive expenditures might reduce an employment opportunity.

Refund of Expenses

The student usually pays all expenses and receives reimbursement following the trip. Generally, a written record of expenses including receipts must be sent to the employer before reimbursement will be made. Some employers may furnish forms for you to fill out when you return to campus. Otherwise, you should itemize expenses on a daily basis. If you follow these procedures, expense refunds are usually received without undue delay.

Use Your Trinity Advantage

Visit the Career Services staff in Suite 215 of the Coates University Center to learn more about interview preparation, resumes, reference lists, and follow-up letters (thank you, acceptance, rejection and withdrawal). We can also take you around the office and guide you through the various resources and services that Career Services has to offer. Plan on participating in our **Professional Practice Interview Days in late September and mid- February** to practice your interviewing skills.