Interviewing

Congrats, you got an interview.

Regardless of the format, the goal of the interview process is the same: to determine fit.

Interviewers are looking for fit in a few main areas: skills, personality, company culture, and work ethic. The company is trying to determine your fit with the organization, job duties, and existing department, but you need to ascertain the same for yourself. In a way, they’re trying to impress you as much as you are them. Use the interview and your research to learn whether the job is right for you.

PREP

Figure out the details
What format will the interview be: phone, in-person, Skype? Where will it take place? Who will be contacting whom? Exchange relevant contact info.

Bring the goods
Print out copies of your resume. Have multiple copies—more than the number of people you’ll be interviewed by.

Get your outfit ready
It’s fine to be more dressed up than the interviewer. When in doubt, wear business formal. Cover up any tattoos and piercings (besides earrings).

RESEARCH

In a competitive job market, lack of research can be interpreted as lack of interest.

Know the company
Learn as much as you can about the organization. Talk to current employees about company culture, goals, and problems. Know the basics of who they are.

Know the position
Analyze the job posting. Understand the basic job duties.

Find the salary range for that position/location
You may not be asked your salary expectations at first, but you should know the ranges for that position, that location, and your experience.

Know your contact
Who will be interviewing you? Look them up. Understand their role in the organization, find some background info.

Know your skills
Review your resume. Know why you’re interested in the job. Be prepared to talk about yourself.

Remember details
Have specifics for each of these mini-stories about yourself. Come up with engaging (true) ways to convey them.
PRACTICE
From your resume and cover letter, they’ve already determined a basic fit on paper. Now they want to know how you will do good things for the company. It’s more important to be genuine, authentic, and engaged than tailored exactly for the position. But, if you’re asked a seemingly inane question, think about the underlying purpose of the question: what are they trying to discern?

Tell stories
Most questions will require short but elaborated answers. Usually, there is no right or wrong, and the interviewer wants to see how you communicate and problem solve.

STAR Method:
The idea is that past experience is the best indicator of future success. It’s used in behavioral interviewing. With STAR, describe the:

Situation
What was the context and problem? Who were you working with? What role did you have?

Task
Explain how the situation had changed, and how you were expected to address the change.

Action
Clarify the steps you took to address the task. What did you do to resolve the problem? How did you contribute?

Result
Explain how your actions contributed to the final product. What was the outcome? What did you learn? How did the situation end? Quantify the results if possible.

DURING the interview

Be on time
Arrive between 15-30 minutes early.

Be polite to everyone you meet
Stand up when the interviewer comes to meet you, shake hands firmly, smile, maintain eye contact. Avoid filler words (um, uh, you know, like, well). Don’t cross your arms, slouch, or fidget.

Bring copies of your resume
Don’t assume that your interviewer remembers it, has a copy of it, or has read it. Bring along a list of references. Bring a pad and pen, but only take notes during if necessary and ask permission first.

Be clean and well groomed
No gum or mint chewing during the interview. Don’t smell like smoke or drugs (legal, decriminalized, or illicit).

Listen & pay attention
Respond to the question at hand. Be engaged, ask questions, show interest.

Be positive
Don’t bad-talk any former employers, co-workers, or supervisors.

Be confident! You’ve got this!
AFTER the interview

Reflect on the interview
What went well? What could you improve upon? What surprised you? What did you learn? What did you forget to mention? How do you feel about the position now? Would you take the job if it were offered?

Send a thank you note within 24 hours
Keep it short and sweet. If you bungled the interview, this is not the place to go back and say how great you are. But, if you forgot to mention one or two things, feel free to include it here. Thank them for the interview. Address something that was mentioned. Reiterate your ability to provide further information if needed.

Close with something professionally personal (if it came up in the interview). Sending as an email is fine, but for extra oomph, send a handwritten note as well.

Follow up promptly
If you promised to provide references, samples, or further information by a certain date, make sure it’s on time.

Tell your references that someone might be in touch
Provide the name of the company, position, and interviewer.
Typical Interview Questions

EDUCATION:
- Why did you choose your major?
- Why did you choose to attend BU? In retrospect, how do you feel about that decision?
- How would your education be relevant to the work you would do with us?
- In which campus activities do you participate?
- What classes did you like best? Least? Why?
- Do your grades reflect your ability? Why or why not?
- Were you financially responsible for any portion of your college education?

EXPERIENCE:
- What job related skills have you developed?
- Give an example of a situation in which you worked through a problem to find a solution.
- How do you think a former supervisor would describe your work and attitude?
- How would a former co-worker describe you?
- What job-related skills have you developed?
- How do you handle criticism?
- What kind of supervision gets the best results from you?
- What motivates you to put forth your greatest effort?
- Do you prefer working alone or with others?
- Describe your experience using specific software/equipment.

CAREER GOALS:
- What other types of positions are you considering?
- How do you feel about travel?
- How do you feel about the possibility of relocating?
- What qualities are you looking for in a boss?
- Are you able to work on several assignments at once?
- Where do you see yourself in five years? Ten?
- What are your career goals—both short and long term?
- How do you feel about working overtime?
- How long do you think you'll be in this position? Can you commit to two years?

PERSONAL:
- Tell me about yourself
- What are your hobbies?
- How did you hear about this organization?
- Why do you want to work for this organization?
- What other organizations have you been interviewing with?
- Why do you want this job?
- What do you find most and least attractive about this position?
- What do you know about our products/services?
- Why do you want to follow this career path?
- What distinguishes you from other candidates?
- Describe your ideal job.
- What can you offer us?
- What do you consider to be your greatest strengths?
- What would a close friend say is your greatest weakness?
- What personal development strategies have you used to overcome any of your weaknesses?
- Define success. Failure.
- What is your major accomplishment?
- Of which accomplishments are you most proud?
- Do you think you’ve achieved what you wanted to?
- What kind of decisions are most difficult for you?
- Describe how you handle stress. Give an example.
- Tell me something about yourself that is not on your resume.
- How do you keep up with trends in the field? What’s the most recent article you read?
- What was the last book you read, film you saw, or off-campus event you attended?
- Describe your personality in three words.
- Tell me a joke.
- What major problem have you encountered and how did you deal with it?
- Why should I hire you?
- How do you define leadership?
Typical Interview Questions

BEHAVIORAL QUESTIONS:
- Give me an example of a team project you completed.
- What would your marketing plan be for xxx product?
- Tell me about the most difficult customer you’ve ever dealt with.
- What is the most challenging team you’ve ever been part of? What was your role?
- Describe a situation in which you persuaded someone to see things your way.
- Tell me about a time you failed.
- Give us an example of when you’ve shown your leadership skills.
- Describe a time you had to think on your feet to extricate yourself from a difficult situation.
- Describe a time you used good judgment and logic to solve a problem.
- Convince me you can adapt to a wide variety of people, situations, and environments.
- Tell me about a decision you had to make quickly and without much information.
- Describe a specific instance that you conformed to a policy with which you did not agree.
- Tell me about an important goal you set in the past and how you attained it.
- What would you do if you saw a co-worker doing something unethical?
- Describe the most significant or creative presentation you’ve ever given.
- Tell me about a time you went above what was expected of you to get the job done.
- Give me an example of a time when you were able to communicate successfully with another person even with that individual might not have liked you (or vice versa).
- Describe a situation that required you to act under pressure.

ILLEGAL QUESTIONS:
Interviewers are not allowed to ask about race, ethnicity, religion, marital status, disabilities, age, arrest records, military discharge, sexual orientation, or citizenship.

These questions are unlikely to come up, but if they do, either try to find out the underlying cause of the question and respond to that part, or politely inform the interviewer that the question is inappropriate.

Good questions to ask the interviewer
- What is a typical day like in this position?
- What kinds of assignments might I expect in the first six months on the job?
- Will I have the opportunity to work on special projects?
- To whom would I report to in this position? Who would my co-workers be?
- Is this job an addition to the staff or a replacement of a past employee?
- Tell me about the types of projects past employees/interns have participated in.
- Tell me about immediate projects the person coming into the job will be responsible for.
- Where does the position fit into the organization?
- What distinguishes a great candidate from a good candidate for this position?
- What would you add to or subtract from the background of the previous person?
- Can you tell me more about the structure of your training program?
- Does your company encourage further education?
- What is the company culture like?
- What are the metrics you use to measure performance?
- How do you define success?
- What do you like best about your job/company?
- What attracted you (the interviewer) to this organization?
- What are your growth projects for the next year?
- What exciting or challenging directions do you anticipate over the next few years?
- What challenges are currently facing your organization/industry? What will be the role of the person you hire in facing these challenges?
- What is the next step? When should I expect to hear from you? Or should I contact you?
- When will you make your selection?

DO NOT ASK
- What does your company do?
- What can your company do for me? (focus on what you can do for them)
- What is the salary? (this will come up later)
- What types of benefits do you offer?
- How much time do I get for vacation?
- How much is the signing bonus?