

QUICK TIPS

Interviews

{ THE CONVERSATION }



Think of your interview as a formal conversation. Be open and talk about your strengths, experiences, and how you plan to make a lasting impact within the company or organization. Give key examples of your accomplishments. Let them know you want the job.

Interviews are...

- A two-way street for communication
- A learning opportunity
- A way for the employer to see if you are a good fit and for you to see if the organization is a good fit for you

{ COMMON TYPES OF INTERVIEWS }

Telephone (20-60 minutes)

Screens for minimum qualifications. You will have an advantage as you can easily refer to your resume and notes.

Informational

Learn from someone employed in the field of interest.

Behavioral Based

Interviewer tries to determine how you will react in prescribed situations.

Case

Used by management consulting firms and investment banks to solve interesting business problems.

{ INTERVIEW PREPARATION }

Self-Assessment

Think about your key strengths. Which of your strengths and skills best fit the job or internship? What achievements do you want to highlight? Will the experience assist with your career goals?

Research

You will want to learn as much about the nature of the job as you can. This will allow you to tailor your responses throughout the interview. Many employers will ask you, "Tell me what you know about our company." Just as you hope to gauge the employer's interest and enthusiasm for you, the employer is trying to gauge your interest and enthusiasm for the company.

Here are some things you should be looking for:

- Array of product line or type of service
- Potential new markets, products, or services
- Who are the customers and competition
- Size of firm within its industry
- Geographic locations
- International operations
- Present price of stock (if available)
- Typical career path in your field
- Annual report from the company's website (if available)
- Direction of the company and any current media coverage
- Trends of the field/market

Practice

Schedule a Mock Interview with a counselor in Career Services. Review and practice answering the sample questions on the back of this guide. PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE!

Materials

Collect the following materials to bring with you to the interview: resume and cover letter, portfolio, business cards, transcripts, references, pen, and professional pad.

Find Location

Make sure you know and are familiar with the location of the interview. Arrive 10-15 minutes early. Never arrive late!

{ EMPLOYER ASSESSMENT }

The employer will consider the following in evaluating your interview:

- Your handshake, attire, eye contact, motivation, energy, etc.
- Awareness and enthusiasm of the company/organization
- Active and responsive listening
- A fit between company needs and your talent/skills
- Demonstrated ability to work as a team player
- Attitudes towards work, self, and others
- Ability to lead, supervise and manage programs

Employer Assessment Adapted From: UNCW

REMEMBER:

First impressions count!
You should ALWAYS wear a business professional suit to an interview.

SCAN THE QR CODE FOR ADDITIONAL CAREER SERVICES RESOURCES



CAREER SERVICES

North Carolina Central University | 1801 Fayetteville Street | PO Box 19585 | William Jones Building, Lower Level
Durham, North Carolina 27707 | (919) 530-6337 | nccucareerservices@ncsu.edu

Interview Tips

{ NIGHT BEFORE THE INTERVIEW }

- Review your research notes and documents (resume, cover letter, job description, etc.)
- Pack your bag and print multiple copies of your resume
- Review the directions to the interview site
- Try on your interview attire and inspect it for wrinkles, stains, loose threads, tags, etc.
- Set your alarm and allow yourself plenty of time to get to the interview without feeling rushed
- Be sure to get a good night's sleep

{ DAY OF THE INTERVIEW }

Be on time: Arrive 10-15 minutes early.

Look professional: It is expected that you wear a business suit to the interview. Black, gray, navy skirt or pant suit is acceptable. You should wear a neutral color shirt, minimal jewelry, and basic shoes.

Be honest: Do not claim skills and knowledge that are not yet developed. Being honest does not mean that everything should be revealed; focus on the aspects of your experience and background that relate to the position.

Be aware of body language: Posture, eye contact, hand gestures, and tone and clarity of voice are all important.

Request business cards from the interviewer: This will make sure you have their correct contact information for your thank you note.

Turn off all mobile devices.

Be enthusiastic!

{ AFTER THE INTERVIEW }

- Send a thank you letter within 24 hours of the interview. Consider mailing a thank you note to supplement your thank you email.
- Fulfill all requests as presented.
- Reevaluate if the job is right for you.

REMEMBER:

- ◆ Give examples/highlight your SKILLS
- ◆ Give honest answers
- ◆ Thank the interviewer for the opportunity

Telephone Interviews



A telephone interview is often your first interview with an employer. Employers use telephone interviews to screen for minimum qualifications and to narrow down their pool of applicants. They can also be used to interview out-of-town applicants. During a phone interview you have the advantage of referring to your resume and preparatory notes.

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL PHONE INTERVIEW

- **Schedule a time for your phone interview.** Sometimes, an employer may call and take you by surprise. Ask if you can schedule a time to answer their questions so that you will be well prepared.
- **Confirm the details.** Be sure you know the person with whom you will be speaking and who will be initiating the phone call.
- **Take the call in a quiet, comfortable, and private space.** Avoid distractions and areas with poor phone reception. If possible, consider taking the call on a landline.
- **Do not smoke, chew gum, or eat during the call.** You may wish to have some water available.
- **Put warmth in your voice.** Sound energetic and enthusiastic. Smile as if you were talking to the employer in person.

TELEPHONE INTERVIEW ETIQUETTE

- Answer the phone professionally. Make sure you are the person to answer the call if it is a shared phone. Answer by stating your name: "Hello, this is ____."
- Ask if the interviewer can easily hear you. Adjust your volume if necessary.
- After the interview, send a thank you email or note.
- Listen carefully and avoid interrupting the interviewer.

Webcam Interviews

(Skype, Facetime, iChat)

This type of interview is becoming increasingly popular. Treat a webcam interview just as you would an in-person interview as the interviewer is able to see your clothing, facial expressions, and body language. You will need a webcam, microphone, video conferencing software, and a reliable and fast internet connection.



WEBCAM INTERVIEW ETIQUETTE

- Place the webcam at eye level. The screen should show your head and torso.
- Look at the screen when the interviewer is talking. Look at the webcam when you are talking to simulate making eye-contact.
- Be conscious of your background. It should be neat and not distracting.
- Lighting is important. Experiment with various options in the room before the interview.
- Be online early to ensure your connection is working properly and that there are no unexpected technical problems.
- Send a thank you email or note within 24 hours of your interview.

Adapted from Columbia University Center for Career Education

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QUICK TIPS

Interview Questions

{ SHOOT FOR THE S.T.A.R. }

Use the S.T.A.R. method to give the employer an inclusive illustration of your achievements. When discussing key accomplishments you want to provide a clear and concise example.

SITUATION: Describe the context in which the behavior or action took place.

TASK: What task(s) did you identify in response to this situation?

ACTION: What action did you take? What did you do to solve this problem?

RESULTS: What was the final outcome of your contribution? How did it help the organization/group? Explain your results even if you weren't as successful as you'd hoped, it's important to make it clear that you understand the implications of the outcome and why it happened.

S = Situation

T = Task

A = Action

R = Results

{ TRADITIONAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS }

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why did you select your major and how does it fit with your career goals?
- Why should I hire you?
- What are your strengths? Weaknesses?
- Why do you want to work for us?
- What are your long-term goals?
- Describe your working style.
- How do you prefer to be supervised?
- Give some examples of your initiative, willingness to work, and leadership skills.
- How well do you work under pressure?
- Do you have any questions for me/us?
- What are you looking for in terms of career development?
- How would you describe your work style?
- Give me an example of ideas you have implemented?
- What techniques and tools do you use to keep yourself organized?
- Describe yourself in 3 words?
- What is your personal mission statement and how does it relate to our mission?
- Tell me the difference between good and exceptional?
- What is the last book you read?

{ HOW TO ANSWER TOUGH QUESTIONS }

Question: Tell me about yourself?

This innocent sounding question is one of the hardest interview questions to answer. What is the employer looking for? However, this is one of the best questions to be asked. At no other time will you be given so much latitude to answer a question, but with a clear, quick, and focused response. This response should focus on "fit" for the position in the organization. The employer is not looking for a life story. Choose information pertaining to your education, work experience, extracurriculars, goals, and future aspirations. It is not repetitive to discuss points that are already on your resume. Then, you should explain how you believe you can help the employer.

Question: What are your strengths/weaknesses?

Be careful. Now is not the time to confess a major flaw that would disqualify you from further consideration. You should answer honestly, but of course, be selective about the weakness you discuss. Be able to discuss demonstrable steps towards improvement. Be prepared for several follow up questions: Why is this a weakness? What are you doing to improve upon this weakness.

Question: Why should I hire you?

You should focus on the combination of skills and experience you have that set you apart from others and why that combination is of interest to this particular employer.

Question: What salary are you looking for?

Do your research! At this point, you should give the employer a salary range that they will be comfortable with but that also matches the going rate for the position in this particular industry.

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{ BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS }

Leadership

- In which activity on campus have you had the greatest impact?
- Give an example of a time when you were in a position to delegate responsibilities.
- Tell me about the most successful team you've been a part of.
- Of the recognition you received on campus which has been the most meaningful?
- Describe a situation where you took on a leadership role.
- Describe a difficult team member/situation. What was the situation? How did you resolve it?

Initiative

- Talk about a situation where you went above and beyond the call of duty.
- Give me an example where things were not going well and you turned it around.
- What is the most difficult task you have had to learn on the job?
- What club at school is better because you were involved in it?

Stress Tolerance

- Under what condition and in what environment do you work best?
- What has been your greatest academic obstacle?
- Give an example of when your work was criticized.
- Describe to me your toughest week of final exams.
- Talk about a project where you had an unrealistic deadline. How did you handle it?
- Describe a situation that best demonstrates your ability to think on your feet?

Adaptability

- Describe a situation that best demonstrates your ability to be flexible and adaptable to a new situation.

Analytical Thinking

- Give me an example of a time in one of your jobs where you identified a problem, gathered information, and recommended a situation.

Persuasiveness

- Give me an example of convincing a person to do something your way.
- Give me an example of driving an idea through an organization.
- Give an example of when you convinced a professor to extend a deadline.

Professionalism

- Describe a situation where you had to demonstrate your professional credibility.
- Tell me about your most recent supervisor.

S = Situation

T = Task

A = Action

R = Results

{ YOUR TURN! QUESTIONS FOR THE INTERVIEWER }

Every employer will conclude the interview by asking, "Do you have any questions?" Your answer should always be a very cheerful, "Yes!" Use what you have learned through your research to draft questions that are specific to the company and the position. It is NOT appropriate to ask questions about salary, benefits, hours, etc. at this time. You ask these questions only when the employer makes you an offer.

You should plan to ask the interviewer at least 2-3 questions. These questions should be well thought out and should not be something you can find out on your own.

- What is the typical daily routine for an individual in the position for which I am applying?
- What type of professional development is encouraged and offered by your organization?
- What do you like about working for this company?
- How would you describe the corporate culture?
- How does technology impact your business and work culture?
- Where is the company strong and where does it need to be strengthened?
- What needs to be accomplished in this position in the next 6-12 months?
- How do you (the supervisor) like to operate in terms of assignments, delegation of responsibilities and authority, general operating style, etc. ?
- With whom will I be interacting most frequently and what are their responsibilities and the nature of our interaction?
- What is the natural career progression for employees with my skill set?
- What are the skills and attributes you value most for someone being hired for this position?
- Where have successful employees previously in this position progressed to within the company?
- When can I expect to hear back from you? What are the next steps?



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