



INTERVIEWING

An interview is an opportunity for both the candidate and the employer to evaluate their fit for an organization or particular role. Interviewing is very important as it gives the job seeker an opportunity to demonstrate how effectively they could do the job, highlight skills and strengths, and set the stage for a future long-term relationship with the employer. When interviewing, you may be interviewing against individuals with similar skill sets, so it is important to make a connection and show off your personality in a professional way. An employer is not just hiring an employee, but also a potential colleague.

PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

- **Review your resume and the job description:** Throughout the course of an interview, the employer will ask you to describe your prior experiences in more detail and describe how those experiences prepared you to perform the tasks required of the role. Think about stories from each of your experiences that demonstrate your skills and strengths. Remember to think beyond just your duties, and focus on times where you added value or accomplished something.
- **Research the organization:** The candidate should be able to articulate why they want to work for an organization. Review the company's website to better understand its mission, culture, and leadership. Pay attention to major projects, contracts, or initiatives of the company.
- **Stay in the 'know':** Stay updated on trends and current events affecting the industry as they may come up in conversation or may be used as an interview question.
- **Practice, Practice, Practice:** Rehearse potential questions in the mirror, with a career advisor, or in front of a good friend.
- **Interview Stream:** Try a practice video interview with Interview Stream. You can access this resource by logging onto Handshake and then going to 'Resources'.
- **Self-reflection:** Identify your key strengths, areas for improvement, skills and values prior to the interview.
- **Logistics:** Identify the time, location, and duration of the interview. Ask for the name and titles of all of the interviewers so that you can research their role in the organization, accomplishments and background.
- **Dress to Impress:** Dress conservatively and in a neutral suit that is blue, brown, black or grey. Wear close toed shoes. Do NOT dress casually unless the interviewer explicitly asks you to do so.
- **What to Bring:** A padfolio and pen, a few copies of your resume, portfolio (if available), and anything else that the interviewer requests. Travel lightly, turn off your phone and put it away!

WHERE TO RESEARCH

- **Network with employees and alumni in the organization to learn more about the organizational culture, supervisory structure, and things like salary, benefits etc.**
 - With SMLR Career Services, you can tap into our large network of alumni by participating in events, our Student-Alumni Mentorship program, LinkedIn, or by using Rutgers Student-Alumni Career Connect: <https://rutgers.peoplegrove.com/>. Please speak to a career advisor more information.
- **Organizational Websites**
- **News Articles**
- **Glassdoor**
- **LinkedIn**

- **Vault:** Vault is a resource paid for by Rutgers University, that allows you to gain more in depth knowledge about a company. You can access this resource by logging onto Handshake and then going to ‘Resources’.

DURING THE INTERVIEW

Interviews can seem daunting, but you should view it as a way to share your experience in more depth. The more conversational the interview becomes then the more at ease you will feel. Take the interviewers cues as some employers may be more formal/informal, but always maintain your professionalism.

- **First Impressions Count:** Be mindful that your interview starts as soon as you arrive. Be kind to all staff, smile, and have some good conversation starters ready. Arrive 10-15 minutes early, maintain professionalism, and do not take out your phone.
- **Body Language & Tone:** Give a firm handshake, smile, and make eye contact. Avoid excessive hand gestures. Be mindful of your posture, and volume/tone of your voice.
- **Be Prepared to talk about your resume:** You may have to discuss gaps in employment, reasons for applying, questions about your prior experiences, and your ability to handle difficult situations.
- **Follow-up:** Ask all of the interviewers for business cards so that you can follow-up after the interview.
- **Tell a story:** You want to tell a story about your experiences to make them engaging and to help you relate to your interviewers. Make sure to give strong details and focus on results.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

- Send a “Thank You” note within 24 hours via email. Some candidates also choose to mail a hand written note.
- If you have not heard from the employer by the date he/she indicated, call or email the appropriate contact person. Tell them when you interviewed and for what position and that you are “inquiring about the status of the position”.

TYPES OF QUESTIONS

- **Personal/Traditional** – These questions help an interviewer to learn more about you. They also help to determine if your personality is a good fit for the office/team.
- **Case or Technical** – A case interview is one in which a situation, task, or problem is presented and you are expected to propose a potential solution and describe your thought process. These occur commonly in consulting interviews. Technical interview questions test your knowledge of a specific software or program.
- **Behavioral/Situational** – These questions are meant to test how you would react to a work related situation, and to learn more about your prior experience. **The S.T.A.R method** is a good way of answering these types of questions.

S.T.A.R. TECHNIQUE

- **Situation:** What was the setting/situation were you in?
- **Task:** What did you need to solve? What was the task you faced?
- **Action:** What did you do? What role did you take to respond or solve the task?
- **Result:** What happened based on your action? (If the result was negative, what did you gain from this experience? i.e. Did you develop new skills?)

PERSONAL/TRADITIONAL SAMPLE QUESTIONS

- Tell me about yourself.
- Walk me thru your resume.
- Why are you interested in this organization?
- What about this role prompted you to apply?
- Why did you choose your major?
- What is your favorite color?

- What can you do for us that other candidates can't?
- What do you know about this industry?
- What do you want me to know about you that isn't on your resume?
- What interests you or impresses you about our organization?
- How did you become interested in this field or organization?
- What is your proudest accomplishment?
- Tell me about your extracurricular activities during college.
- Tell me what you learned from your volunteer or work experiences.
- Tell me about your leadership experience.
- What was the last project you led, and what was its outcome?
- Describe the job or the activity that has had the greatest impact on your career goals.
- What are three adjectives that you would use to describe yourself and why?

BEHAVIORAL/SITUATIONAL SAMPLE QUESTIONS

- Tell me about a time when you worked under pressure.
- Tell me about a time where you had to handle a situation with a difficult coworker. What was the result?
- You are the manager of a major project. What supervisory approach would you take and how would you delegate responsibility?
- Tell me about an important goal you set in the past, and the steps you took to reach that goal.
- Tell me about a time where you had to deal with conflict on the job.
- Describe how you would handle a situation if you were required to finish multiple tasks by the end of the day.
- Tell me about a time when you used your quantitative or analytical skills.
- Describe an experience in which you showed initiative.
- Describe a time when you had to make an ethical decision and explain how you arrived at your decision.
- Give me an example of when you failed at something and what you learned from that experience.

TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF

One of the first questions you will usually get at the beginning of an interview is the "Tell me About Yourself" question. This is a great chance at the beginning of an interview to discuss your career interest, knowledge, skills and experience as it relates to the job. It is usually 1-2 minutes long and includes the following information:

- **Name**
- **Education and Career Interests**
- **How you decided on your major**
- **Experience**
- **Skills and Strengths**
- **What about your background encouraged you to apply for this current role**

Example: *My name is Scarlet Knight and I am a double major in human resources and labor relations with interests in employee engagement and retention, conflict resolution and negotiation, and labor relations. I chose these majors as I was interested in empowering employees while improving employee relations for organizations. Through my internships at the EEOC and with Atlantic Health Systems. I have gained experience working with diverse groups and communicating effectively. I am confident that these skills make me a strong fit for the role at your company, and would allow me to add value while simultaneously building new skills at this dynamic and mission-centered organization.*

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE INTERVIEWER

An interviewer will almost always ask if you have questions for them at the end of an interview. Prepare at least 5 questions to ask the interviewer in case some of your questions are answered in the interview. Asking questions shows your interest and enthusiasm for the role.

- What is the office culture like?
- How are professional development opportunities made available to staff?
- What is the supervisory structure? Who will this position report to?
- What are you looking for in an ideal candidate?
- What are your goals for this position?
- How do you define success in this role? In 6 months? In one year?
- What is your timeline for making a decision? What is the next step in the hiring process?
- What are the day-to-day responsibilities for this job?
- What do you like best about working for this organization?
- What are the main challenges within this role?

COMMON INTERVIEW MISTAKES

- Arriving Late
- Not researching the organization
- Not asking questions
- Appearing disinterested or unenthusiastic about the role
- Not dressing in proper attire
- Talking only about your needs, rather than about the company's needs
- Not following-up with a thank you note
- Badmouthing a former supervisor or organization
- Answering questions negatively or dishonestly

THANK YOU NOTE SAMPLE

Always get into the practice of sending a thank you note after an interview. It shows professionalism and consideration of the interviewer's time. This is an opportunity for you to share more information about your skills. It is important to make sure that it is a thoughtful note rather than just a general letter.

Example:

Dear Mr./Mrs./Dr.,

Thank you for taking time out of your day to interview me for [fill in the name of the position] on [insert date]. I appreciated the opportunity to [highlight something from your conversation]. As I mentioned in the interview, [restate why you are a strong candidate]. After learning about [highlight a job responsibility], I am excited about the opportunity to contribute to [name of organization].

I am confident that I have the (reiterate skill set) skills to succeed in this role. Thank you again for your time and consideration. If you need additional information, please let me know.

Sincerely,

Scarlet Knight

VIRTUAL INTERVIEWS

Virtual interviews are becoming common for employers, especially for out-of-state opportunities and with initial screening calls. These interviews should be treated just like an in-person.

TELEPHONE

- **Smile:** This technique can make you sound more personable on the phone.
- **Avoid Distractions:** Make sure that you are in a quiet space with excellent cell phone reception and minimal distractions.
- **Use notes:** Have your resume and other materials in front of you as long as you are not reading them like a script or making too much noise.
- **Don't ramble:** Since you are unable to see the interviewer's reaction, take a deep breath, answer the question, and then restate the question to help you end your thought.

VIDEO CONFERENCING:

- **Test the Equipment:** Make sure to test your camera, microphone, and connectivity prior to initiating the call with an employer.
- Silence your cell phone and the messages app on your computer.
- Look at the camera lens-not the interviewer/computer screen when answering questions.
- Dress professionally so that you are in an interview mindset.
- Maintain good eye contact, body posture, and smile!
- Have a neutral backdrop; avoid anything that might look distracting. Reach out to SMLR Career Services if you would like to reserve a conference room for your virtual interview.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- <https://www.glassdoor.com/blog/common-interview-questions/>
- <https://careers.rutgers.edu/about-us/resources-services/online-career-tools/interviewstream-mock-interview>
- <https://careers.rutgers.edu/students-alumni/pursue-your-goals/interview-preparation/interview-success-strategies>