



CITRUS COLLEGE
CAREER/TRANSFER CENTER



INTERVIEW GUIDE

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Interview Guide

INTERVIEW DO'S AND DON'TS

Once you get to the interview stage of the application process, you have succeeded in convincing an employer to invest time in meeting you. When you developed your resume and cover letter, you already:

- analyzed the job description
- identified and conveyed your skills and accomplishments most relevant to the position
- learned more about the employer
- explained what attracted you to the organization and/or position

However, there is more to do before the interview so you are prepared to answer questions on the spot and articulate what makes you a truly compelling candidate.

DO - BE SURE TO DO EMPLOYER RESEARCH

If you want to impress your interviewer and stand out from the rest of the candidates they interview that day, one surefire way of doing that is showing you really know the company you are applying for. You hopefully demonstrated this in your cover letter, resume, and other application materials, but here are some tips to get started.

- Visit the company or organization's website and get a feel for the company mission, vision, projects, services, and employees. You can also read about this if there is an "About" section on the website.
- Also note the number of years the employer has been in business, the different office locations or sites, how many people the company employs, and any notable clients.
- Be sure to get a sense of the backgrounds of managers or leaders in the organization.
- Reading a company's website can also help you get familiar with their language or corporate speak. For example, if a company refers to "customer service" as "client relations," you can then change one or two key words in your interview to make it sound like you understand the culture and speak their language. It may give the sense to the interviewer that you "already belong" and can set a comfortable or familiar tone for the rest of the interview.

Interview Do's and Don'ts

What if there is not much information about the company on their website?

Be creative! Search online for social media sites for the organization. Smaller companies tend to have Facebook or Instagram business profiles. Another great source of company information comes from articles and stories published in web-based secondary sources and various media outlets such as Glassdoor, Vault.com, Forbes, Fortune, and Better Business Bureau.

How can I avoid making a huge mistake during the interview?

There are 10 mistakes that can instantly destroy your chances in an interview. According to a 2018 Career Builder survey, half of employers know within the first five minutes of an interview if a candidate is a good or bad fit for a position, and only 8 percent give the candidate at least a half hour before they make up their mind. Even if you are the best candidate for the job, a potential offer may not come to fruition by making avoidable mistakes.

DO - AVOID THESE INTERVIEW DEAL BREAKERS

The following are the results of a 2017 survey conducted online within the U.S. by The Harris Poll on behalf of CareerBuilder among 1,014 hiring and human resource managers ages 18 and over, including 888 in the private sector.

- Caught lying about something - 71 percent
- Answer a cell phone or text during the interview - 67 percent
- Appear arrogant or entitled - 59 percent
- Appear to have a lack of accountability - 52 percent
- Swearing - 51 percent
- Dress inappropriately - 50 percent
- Talk negatively about current or previous employers - 48 percent
- Know nothing about the job or company - 45 percent
- Have unprofessional body language - 43 percent
- Know nothing about the industry or competitors - 35 percent



Interview Do's and Don'ts

DO - BE MINDFUL OF YOUR BODY LANGUAGE

Body language is important. Sometimes your body language communicates more to another person than what you say or the tone of your voice. When asked to identify the biggest body language mistakes job seekers make during an interview, hiring managers named the following:

- Failure to make eye contact - 68 percent
- Failure to smile - 38 percent
- Playing with something on the table - 36 percent
- Fidgeting too much in his/her seat - 32 percent
- Bad posture - 31 percent
- Crossing their arms over their chest - 31 percent
- Playing with hair or touching one's face - 26 percent
- Handshake that is too weak - 22 percent
- Using too many hand gestures - 13 percent
- Handshake is too strong - 8 percent



DO - GO IN WITH AN INTERVIEW STRATEGY

The Muse is the go-to destination for the next generation workforce to research companies and careers. Review Interview Strategy articles from The Muse:

<https://www.themuse.com/tags/interviews>



Preparation

Preparing well before your interview day will help you feel organized and confident. The following pages have recommended steps to giving your best interview:

STEP 1: PREPARING FOR INTERVIEW DAY

Don't let your first interview be your first time actually answering interview questions! You never get a second chance to make a first impression so going in well-prepared is key. Consider the following strategies when preparing:

- **Write out answers to questions you think the employer will ask.** Frame your responses to show how and why you can add value to that organization instead of only focusing on why you want the job.
- **Practice saying your responses out loud.** Answering potential questions in front of a mirror can make you more aware of your facial expressions and gestures. You can also HEAR yourself and this helps with volume, pace, and most importantly, once you say it, it will flow much more smoothly in front of someone else.
- **Practice** with friends, family, or schedule an appointment with a career counselor at the Career/Transfer Center.
- **Ask for feedback on the content and organization of your answers** (completeness, level of detail, how easy to follow) **and your presentation style** (pace, voice quality/tone, energy, posture, eye contact, hand gestures).
- **Film or record your responses and review your performance using your smartphone.** Ask yourself: “Did I look/sound confident, relaxed, and enthusiastic?” “What does my body language say?” “How were my pace and volume?” “Did I smile?” “Did I look too serious?” “Did I look nervous or did my voice sound shaky?”
Remember, allow your voice tone and body language also express your genuine excitement about the opportunity. Sometimes candidates don't get job offers since the employer may get the wrong impression and question if you really want the job or if you are going to be truly committed.

Preparation

Also, find out what type of interview you will have. This will also help you prepare mentally, so it is not a surprise when you are in a room with several individuals. Types of interviews include:

1. **One-on-one:** Just you and one interviewer, the most common type of interview
2. **Panel:** You are interviewed by more than one person at the same time
3. **Group:** A group of candidates is interviewed by a panel or one interviewer
4. **Meal:** You are interviewed while eating, usually over lunch
5. **Working:** You are put to work and observed
6. **Phone or Video:** Often used as a screening tool before inviting you to an on-site interview
7. **On-Site or Second Round:** After you have made it through a screening interview, this is a more extended interview at the employer site that may include a series of different types of interviews, a site tour, and a meal.



Interview Questions

STEP 2: KNOW THE TYPES OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS TO EXPECT AND COME PREPARED WITH YOUR OWN QUESTIONS

Depending on the position you apply for, you may be asked questions from any of three different categories:

- **Traditional Questions**
- **Behavioral Questions**
- **Case and Technical Questions**

Since most interviews consist of a mix of different question types, practice responding to questions from both the traditional and behavioral categories, and add in some case or technical questions if you are entering a field that is known to use them.

Show up to interview ready with several stories or concrete examples that demonstrate your relevant skills and accomplishments. Develop them by anticipating the skills that are important for the position and reviewing your past experiences.

Accomplishments can be found in all parts of your life:

- **Academics**, such as class projects.
How did you work with others? Lead others?
- **Sports**
Will your goal-orientation transfer to your career? What did you learn about being a team player?
- **Activities**
Have you published a story, given a speech, or participated in something meaningful to you? Were you a leader?
- **Volunteer, work, or internship experiences**
When did your performance exceed expectations? Achieve something new? Make things easier? Save or make money?

Interview Questions

TRADITIONAL QUESTIONS

Traditional Questions are usually straightforward questions about your experience, background, and personal qualities. Examples:

- *Tell me about yourself.*
- *Why are you interested in this position/industry/ organization? - What do you know about us?*
- *Why should we hire you? - What can you offer us?*
- *Describe your ideal job.*
- *What are your greatest strengths and weaknesses?*
- *Tell me about an accomplishment that you are proud of.*
- *What have you learned from your failures?*
- *What motivates you to do good work?*
- *What do you see yourself doing in five years?*
- *How would a former supervisor describe you? How about your friends?*

BEHAVIORAL QUESTIONS

Behavioral Questions are helpful to an employer because they ask you to provide a real-life example of how you handled a certain kind of situation at work or in life in the past. Often, to an employer who does not know you, your past behavior may be the best indicator of future behavior so employers ask questions with particular situations to see how you dealt with them in the past or will deal with them in the future. For example, if you have shown initiative in a club or class project, you are likely to show initiative in a job or internship.

Don't worry—these questions are often easy to recognize. They often have telltale openings like:

- *Tell me about a time when...*
- *What do you do when...*
- *Have you ever...*
- *Give me an example of...*
- *Describe a...*

Interview Questions

Here are more specific examples:

INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

- When working on a team project, have you ever dealt with a strong disagreement among team members or a team member who didn't do their part? What did you do?
- Tell me about the most difficult or frustrating individual that you've ever had to work with and how you approached the situation.
- Tell me about a time when you had to be assertive.

COMMUNICATIONAL SKILLS

- Tell me about a time when you had to present complex information. How did you get your point across?
- Describe a time when you used persuasion to convince someone to see things your way.
- Tell me about a time when you used written communication skills to convey an important point.
- Provide an example of when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty to get a job done.
- Tell me about a project you initiated.

CREATIVITY/INNOVATION

- Describe a time when you provided a creative solution to a problem.
- What is the most creative thing you have done?
- Tell me about a time when you influenced the outcome of a project by taking a leadership role.
- Describe your leadership style and provide an example of a situation where you successfully led a group.
- Provide an example that demonstrates your ability to motivate others.

PLANNING & ORGANIZATION

- Tell me about an important goal of yours. How did you reach it?
- Describe a situation when you had many assignments or projects due at the same time. What steps did you take to finish them?
- Provide an example of what you've done when your time schedule or plan was upset by unforeseen circumstances.

Interview Questions

FLEXIBILITY

- Describe a situation in which you overcame a “personality conflict” in order to get results.
- Describe a time where you were faced with issues that tested your coping skills.
- Describe a time when you received constructive criticism.

DECISION-MAKING

- Provide an example of when you had to make a difficult decision. How did you approach it? What kind of criteria did you use?
- Describe a time when you had to defend your decision.
- Summarize a situation where you had to locate relevant information, define key issues, and determine the steps to get a desired result.

CASE AND TECHNICAL QUESTIONS

Case and Technical Questions are especially common in business fields such as finance, consulting, and accounting, as well as in engineering, physical science, and computer science fields. Technical questions ask about discipline-specific knowledge and may be related to concepts that you learned from your coursework, industry knowledge (e.g., familiarity with financial markets), or specific skills (e.g., programming languages).

A **general principle** that applies to case questions; however, is this: **often, you won't know the answer, but you need to make an attempt.** The interviewer is evaluating how you approach a problem just as much as your answer. **Logical and reasonable thinking** is preferred over a one-line response. Keep in mind that there is often no RIGHT or WRONG answer; each candidate has their opinion and perspective on a question.

Interview Questions

PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE

You can prepare even before you step into that interview by anticipating what you may be asked. This includes developing 3-5 adaptable stories or examples from your life experience and resume RELATED to the job you are seeking.

By preparing these stories in advance, you can use them as examples and adapt them to various questions you are asked in an interview. **Remember, you need to share the details in a compelling and easy-to-understand way, without endless rambling or going off on a tangent and not directly answering the question.** For example, you can think about situations you have encountered and reflect on the context and the problem. Then explain how you took action to improve the situation and describe the outcome in quantifiable terms. This demonstrates you understand the importance and influence of your personal contributions. When in doubt, use the **STAR technique**.

THE STAR INTERVIEWING RESPONSE TECHNIQUE

The **STAR Interviewing Response Technique** can help you be successful in behavioral job interviews. The STAR interview response technique is a way to answer interview questions in a way that provides examples of your skills and experience.

It is helpful because it provides a simple framework for helping a candidate tell a meaningful story about a previous experience in a focused, concise way. STAR stands for:

- **Situation** - Set the scene and give the necessary details of your example
- **Task** - Describe what your responsibility was in that situation
- **Action** - Explain exactly what steps you took to address it
- **Result** - Share what outcomes your actions achieved

Rather than simply providing a list of skills, responses to using the STAR technique can show an employer that you have used your skills to make a positive contribution.



Interview Techniques

KEY TIPS FOR USING STAR TO GIVE YOUR BEST ANSWERS

1. Find a **relevant example** (appropriate scenario and that can be expanded on)
2. **Lay out the situation** in a simple and clear way
3. Highlight **your task**
4. Share **what steps you took** to reach a goal or solve a problem to showcase your contribution
5. Focus on **how your action made an impact** (the most important part of the answer!)

HOW DOES THIS ALL COME TOGETHER?

Interviewer: "Tell me about a time when you had to be very strategic in order to meet all of your top priorities."

Your Response:

Situation: "In my previous sales role, I was put in charge of the transfer to an entirely new customer relationship management (CRM) system—on top of handling my daily sales calls and responsibilities."

Task: "The goal was to have the migration to the new CRM database completed by third quarter, without letting any of my own sales numbers slip below my targets."

Action: "In order to do that, I had to be very careful about how I managed all of my time. So, I blocked off an hour each day on my calendar to dedicate solely to the CRM migration. During that time, I worked on transferring the data, as well as cleaning out old contacts and updating outdated information."

Doing this gave me enough time to chip away at that project, while still handling my normal tasks."

Result: "As a result, the transfer was completed two weeks ahead of deadline and I finished the quarter 10% ahead of my sales goal."

Sample Responses

The following questions and sample responses use STAR Interview Technique from Live Career:

QUESTION 1: HOW WOULD YOU DEAL WITH A COLLEAGUE AT WORK WITH WHOM YOU SEEM TO BE UNABLE TO BUILD A SUCCESSFUL WORKING RELATIONSHIP?

Sample response: Typically, I pride myself on having a knack for building good working relationships at work. That said, it's certainly possible that I could encounter someone in my professional life who I find challenging to work with. One related example I can think of happened in my senior year of college, I was placed on a team that had one member that the rest of the team disliked. While this team member was a bit of an outcast, I knew we needed full commitment to make the project work. Even though I was not the team leader, I took it upon myself to forge a connection — and discovered we had a mutual passion for horses. We didn't end up being best friends but through our common interest, I was able to build enough rapport with him to engage him as a key team member. There is always something that bonds us all together — it is just harder to find with some people than with others.

QUESTION 2: HOW WOULD YOU ORGANIZE THE STEPS OR METHODS YOU'D TAKE TO DEFINE/IDENTIFY A VISION FOR YOUR TEAM OR YOUR PERSONAL JOB FUNCTION?

Sample response: I believe a good team vision starts first with a strong understanding of the organization's mission. So, my steps would be as follows:

First, I'd review my organization's vision.

Second, I would develop drafts of a team vision statement.

Third, I would call a meeting of the team and have a discussion about how our team fits with the larger organization. Then I would discuss the organization's vision and ask for ideas and suggestions for the team's mission. If asked, I would mention some of my thoughts on our team vision.

Fourth, following the meeting, I would craft a vision statement — perhaps with the help of one or two other team members — and then distribute it to the team and ask for feedback.

Fifth, I would finalize the vision statement from the comments and feedback from the team, and then post our vision statement in places where all the team members could see it on a regular basis.

Sample Responses

QUESTION 3: YOU DON'T HAVE THE INFORMATION YOU NEED TO PRIORITIZE YOUR PROJECTS. YOUR CO-WORKERS AND SUPERVISOR ARE UNAVAILABLE FOR YOU TO ASK FOR ASSISTANCE. HOW DO YOU HANDLE THE SITUATION?

Sample response: My first inclination would be to sit down and review all the projects and examine a couple of key issues – things like deadlines, potential impacts, and involvement of others. Obviously, projects that are mission-critical and have the shortest deadlines need to be addressed first. If I were still stumped – and my manager and team members were truly unavailable – rather than sitting there paralyzed, I would probably consult a mentor within the organization and seek his or her advice on how to proceed.



Interview Tips

If you are struggling during your interview to come up with an example that fits, do not be afraid to ask to take a minute. It is OK to ask the employer for a moment so you can provide a good answer. It's OK to take a few seconds.

PHONE INTERVIEW

The phone interview is becoming increasingly more common especially with tech jobs. Remember a phone interview is NOT just a phone call. The phone interview is often used to screen for specific minimum or technical qualifications of the role.

Here are some tips for phone interview success:

- Go in a quiet room and place a "Do Not Disturb" note on the door.
- Close windows, turn off ringers or the TV, and any other potential distraction.
- Warm up your voice while waiting for the call. Sing an uplifting song to yourself or read your resume out loud.
- Tape your resume to a wall where you can view it while on the phone. It will be there for any call (planned or unplanned) and will be a constant reminder for your job search.
- Keep all of your employer research materials within easy reach.
- Have a cheat sheet with key points and examples so you can jog your memory in a pinch or if you are nervous.
- Have a notepad available to take notes.
- Stand up! Increase the enthusiasm and positive image you project over the telephone by not sitting down. Whenever you are talking with a potential employer on the phone, stand up. It gets your blood flowing, improves your posture, and improves your response time.
- Keep a mirror nearby. Why? So that you can glance into that mirror consistently throughout the phone call. And smile. You will improve your telephone presence 110 percent just by using this simple technique. You will find yourself coming across as much friendlier, more interested, more alert. If you are at all self-conscious about seeing yourself in the mirror, you can use the mirror as an occasional checkpoint. But for most people, seeing oneself reflected back gives the kind of feedback necessary to make instant modification toward a more positive presence.
- Have a glass of water handy since you will not have a chance to take a break during the call.
- While you can prepare somewhat for technical phone interviews, you need to have a solid foundation to be able to answer quickly. Reviewing some of the standard technical questions for your career and/or industry will be helpful additional preparation for this type of phone interview.

Questions

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE EMPLOYER

Bring at least five questions to all interviews to ask employers and depending on how the interview goes and the information given to you, select between one to three of your questions to ask after the interview. Asking thoughtful questions shows your interest in the position and demonstrates that you have researched the company. Avoid questions that you can find the answers to on the company's website and focus instead on questions that show you have gone above and beyond to learn about the employer through news articles, company reports, talking to company representatives, etc. It is usually appropriate to ask questions at an interview, and typically the interviewer will invite questions at the end of the interview. In addition to questions about the position or company, here are some other questions to also consider as you develop your list:

Always ask:

- May I have your business card(s)? This will give you proper contact information for thank-you letters and follow-up communications.
- What are the next steps in the hiring process? This will give you a timeline, peace of mind, and clues for any possible follow-up actions.

Don't ask:

- As a general rule, questions about salary and benefits are best left until an offer has been extended.

Other safe questions include:

- What kind of training do you offer new employees?
- When and how are employees evaluated?
- How would you describe the culture of this organization?



Pick Your Interview Outfit

STEP 3: PICK YOUR INTERVIEW OUTFIT

Here are some ideas of what to wear to your interview. How you should dress will vary somewhat depending on the industry and specific company culture, but it's better to dress up than to be too casual.

DO

- Unless otherwise directed, dress conservatively
- Choose neutral colors. For a formal job interview, men should wear a dark suit and conservative tie. Women should wear a dark or neutral tone color suit.
- For a more casual or part-time position, it may be appropriate to wear a collared shirt, slacks, and/or a polo shirt.
- Make sure your clothes are cleaned and pressed
- Wear polished conservative shoes with closed toe and small heel. Men should wear dress socks and women should wear trouser socks or if wearing a skirt, tights or nylons.
- Minimize jewelry, makeup, and fragrance. Women should wear no more than one pair of small earrings. Men and women should wear no additional body piercings.
- Try to just smell clean and fresh instead of wearing perfume or fragrance. Some people are sensitive (or allergic) to certain scents.
- Style your hair neatly and keep it off your face so it does not tempt you to play with it.

DON'T

- Avoid short skirts, shorts, trendy outfits, or loud colors
- Avoid sandals, flip flops, or stiletto heels
- Avoid tight clothing



During the Interview

STEP 4: TIPS DURING THE INTERVIEW

ARRIVAL TIME

Know where to report to check-in and be on time. Try to arrive 5-10 minutes early. If you are earlier, use the extra time to sit in your car and prepare and calm yourself. If you will be even 5 minutes late, give the employer a courtesy call. Make sure to map out the building if possible ahead of time especially if you are prone to getting lost

WHAT TO BRING

- Bring at least 2-3 extra copies of your resume/references
- Bring a professional looking notebook to take notes or to hold your own notes (ask permission if you may do this first)

HOW TO ACT

- Turn off your cell phone and do not chew gum.
- Be respectful to everyone. Job offers have been denied based on how applicants have treated staff prior to or after the interview. Keep in mind that you never know who is watching and can have influence in the process. This includes the parking attendant or the administrative assistants.
- Build rapport in the first 5 seconds. When your interviewer comes into the waiting room and calls your name, walk toward that person with confidence, make eye contact, extend your hand for a firm handshake, and say, "Hello, I'm (insert your name here)." This should help set the tone for a successful interview.
- Do not put your belongings on the interview desk. Put them under the desk or away. Make sure they are not in your way if you have to stand to make a presentation.
- If a panel interview is part of the interview, be sure to maintain eye contact with everyone on the panel as you answer questions.
- Be prepared to answer the same question several times if you are invited to an on-site or second round interview since you will probably meet with several people over the course of the day. Stay enthusiastic and consistent in your responses.
- Remember that you are always being evaluated. In group activities and during meals, your ability to work with people and your "fit" in the organization are being assessed.
- Keep in mind that the interview is a two-way street. Be observant. What is the atmosphere like? Are employees friendly?
- Try to maintain eye contact and a friendly smile even if you are nervous.
- Try to be confident (do not slouch)

During the Interview

WHAT TO ASK

- Be sure to ask when you can expect to hear from the employer again.
- If you receive a verbal offer on the spot, it's usually better to think about the offer before accepting or declining. If you are not ready to make a decision, ask for written confirmation and tell the employer when you expect to make a decision.
- Verbally thank the interviewer for taking time to talk to you



After the Interview

STEP 5: AFTER THE INTERVIEW DO THE FOLLOWING

Within two days of the interview, send a thank-you note/email to the person in charge of the interview process with copies to the others involved. Mention what you appreciated from the interview or day's activities and reiterate your interest in the position and the organization.

A week after sending the thank-you, you may contact the employer to show your continued interest and ask if there is any additional information you can provide.

If the employer does not respond within the expected time frame, you may phone or email the person who interviewed you to ask about your status. A reasonable amount of time is 7-10 business days.



References

UC Berkeley Career Center: <https://career.berkeley.edu/Tools/Interviewing>
CollegeGrad.com: <https://collegegrad.com/phone-interview/telephone-interview-preparation#c19.7>

LiveCareer.com:

<https://www.livecareer.com/resources/interviews/questions/star-interviewing>
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theMuse.com

<https://www.themuse.com/tags/interviews>

*Survey conducted by The Harris Poll for CareerBuilder: www.careerbuilder.com

Research Method

This survey was conducted online within the U.S. by The Harris Poll on behalf of CareerBuilder among 1,014 hiring and human resource managers ages 18 and over (employed full-time, not self-employed, non-government), including 888 in the private sector between November 28 and December 20, 2017. Figures for company size and job level were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population.



QUESTIONS?

For more information or to schedule an appointment with a career counselor, visit the Career/Transfer Center at Citrus College in the Student Services (SS) Building, Second Floor, or call (626) 914 - 8639.

Hours of Operation:

Monday and Thursday, 8:00 am to 5:00 pm
Tuesday and Wednesday, 8:00 am to 7:00 pm
Friday 8:00 am to 4:30 pm



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