



Interview Best Practices

Presented by the Internship and
Career Services Office

Today we will provide a few concrete tips on interview best practices as well as frameworks for answering representative questions during job interviews

Lets get started!



The Agenda

1. Pre-Interview
2. Interview
3. Post Interview

Pre-Interview

- A successful interview will be the result of prior preparation and practice
- Regardless of the style of the interview (video, phone, or face-to-face) its important to prepare to sell your strengths, education, and experiences
- **Remember, you have your ICS Team here to help and answer your questions or concerns**



Pre-Interview : Preparing for the Interview

- **Know Yourself**
 - Analyze your interests, skills, accomplishments, values and passions
 - Identify examples and scenarios of success from your past experiences, how you have solved past problems, and describe scenarios relevant to the job
 - Take personality and or self assessment tests
- **Research the Organization Prior**
 - Gather key facts about the organization
 - Study their “Mission Statement”
 - Review online information (company website, LinkedIn, online news articles)
- **Review the Job Description Thoroughly**
 - What skills are required? What are the responsibilities?
 - How can you align your current skills with what the employer is looking for?
- **The Interview is a 2 way Street**
 - Your goal is to discover if the organization is a good fit for you
 - The goal of the interviewer is to assess whether or not you are a good fit for them
- **Practice Practice Practice!**
 - Practice your answers to questions out loud, with a ICS career advisor, or friends/classmates/roommates
 - Keep your answers short and precise

Pre-Interview : Important Tips

- **Cell Phones**
 - **Turn it off and put it away**
 - Refrain from texting or looking on social media while waiting for your interview
- **Plan for Unforeseen Circumstances**
 - Always have the contact phone number
 - Prepare for adverse weather, spills or stains, etc.
- **Know Where You Are Going**
 - Make sure you know exactly where you will be meeting and where to park
 - Practice a “test run” if possible
- **Take a Portfolio or Binder**
 - Carry a portfolio or binder with extra resumes, and a notebook or notepad



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Interview : Important Tips

- **Timing/Breakdown**
 - Most first-round interviews last anywhere from 30 minutes to 1 hour.
 - However, some are as short as 15-20 minute.
 - Usually, 5-10 minutes are devoted to your own questions, and the rest is split between skills/fit/behavioral (and at times technical)
- **The Questions**
 - 80% of what the interviewer thinks of you is determined in the first 20-30 seconds – Make the first impression count!
 - Your answers should not be too long winded (and/or too detailed, too dense)
 - Understand what motivates the question
 - Know your strengths and weaknesses
 - Answers have beginnings, middles, ends
 - The number of possible questions is not infinite
 - It's okay to ask for time and clarification
 - Always have good questions ready



Interview : Example Questions

- **The Question**
 - “Tell me about yourself/walk me through your resume/”
- **Motivation**
 - The interviewer wants to see how you describe yourself within a specific field, and if you can make a ideal first impression
- **Traps**
 - Thinking and speaking like a student
 - Repeating your resume
 - Too much information and jargon, too much monologue
- **Tactics**
 - Review the job description and pick out 2 or 3 of the skills the employer is looking for that you also possess
 - Brevity: Keep it between 3-4 sentences
 - Use the “Present-Past-Future” formula
- **Example**
 - “I am a currently a first year student at Butler University, and I am working towards my degree in [x]. I became passionate about the this field when I completed a recent internship at [x]. I am a detail-oriented person with solid communication skills, which is why I am excited about the [x] position, and why I am extremely interested in joining the team here at [x].



Interview : Example Questions

- **The Question**
 - “Why should we hire you?/Why do you want this job?/Why do you want to work here?”
- **Motivation**
 - The interviewer wants to know if you are a good fit, and what your career path looks like (i.e. you are not looking to just make money)
- **Traps**
 - Saying “Because I need a job”
 - Being generic
- **Tactics**
 - Express the specific things that excite you about this job
 - Link the aspects of the job to your past experience and your future career plan (as someone who has done [x], and who sees their future in [y], this opportunity is especially exciting because of...)
 - Recap any job requirements the interviewer mentioned, then match your kills, abilities, and qualifications to those items
- **Example**
 - “I think I am the ideal candidate because I have the organizational, communication, and creative skills you are looking for, along with proven leadership and internship experience to excel in this role”



Interview : Example Questions

- **The Question**
 - “What are your strengths/weaknesses?”
- **Motivation**
 - The interviewer wants to know how you narrate your life experiences. Are you sincere? Do your strengths align with the employer's needs? Can you improve?
- **Traps**
 - Not ending on a positive note
 - Responding with an answer that takes you out of the running
- **Tactics**
 - Remember that this is an exercise in self-narration
 - You're expected to choose a weakness that showcases an understanding of areas to which you are improving on, or have already improved
 - Keep story or examples of each short, details minimal
- **Examples**
 - “I think some of my strengths include my leadership skills and communication skills. In high school, I was captain of my volleyball team and president of my student council. My strengths gave me the ability to excel in these roles”
 - “I enjoy being involved on campus, but recently found that I was spreading myself too thin with the number of clubs and activities I was participating in. I tend to overcommit myself to activities or projects when I know my plate is already too full. I since have been more selective in choosing the right activities for me, and have improved my time management skills in the process”.

Interview : Example Questions

- **The Question**
 - “Do you have any questions?”
- **Motivation**
 - The interviewer wants to see how you see yourself fitting in and that you understand the job
- **Traps**
 - Not having any questions to ask
- **Tactics**
 - Do your homework (saying “it’s a great company” will not work)
 - Learn more about culture of the organization from someone who’s on the inside
 - Find out as much as you can about the hiring process
 - Weave things that excite you about the position into your story
 - Demonstrate your interest in building your career
- **Examples**
 - Can you describe the typical career path of a [x] in this department/organization?
 - What professional development opportunities are available?
 - What new projects have this department/organization recently undertaken?
 - Can you tell me where the interview process will go from here?
 - Can you share some examples of why you like working here?



Interview : Example Questions

- **Behavior-based Interviews**
 - Focus on experiences, behaviors, knowledge, skills and abilities that are job related
- **The CAR Method**
 - The **Circumstance, Actions, and Result** method of interview preparation provides you with a systematic way to practice and become familiar with behavior-based interviewing

Circumstance (C)

Start by providing some context about your situation. What was your role? What challenges did you face?

Action (A)

Next, share the specific action(s) you took. What skills did you use? What was your approach?

Result (R)

Finally, share your results. What did you learn? What did you achieve?

“I was on a team of 5 students in my history class and we worked on a group project. One team member was always late to our meetings, and did not put in as much effort. We were concerned as this project was 25% of our final grade”

“Because I value relationship building, I reached out to the team member and asked why he was frequently late. I learned he was working a night shift, which made him tired and the job limited his time. I shared this with the rest of the team, we agreed to shift responsibilities, and used Google Hangouts for our meetings”

“In the end, our team members had a more solid relationship with our group, and we received an A on the project and everyone was happy”

Interview : Example Questions

- **Questions about Organizational & Planning Skills**
 - Describe a situation where you had a major role in organizing an important event
 - Tell me how you normally schedule your time in order to accomplish day-to-day tasks
- **Questions about Interaction & Leadership**
 - Give me an example that best illustrates your ability to deal with an uncooperative person
 - Describe a situation which best illustrates your leadership ability
- **Questions about Assertiveness & Motivation**
 - Describe a time when you had to motivate an unmotivated person to something
 - Give me an example of a time you had to work with someone whom you felt was dishonest, and how you reacted
- **Questions about Decision Making & Problem Solving**
 - Describe a time you had to “stand up” for a decision you made, even though it was unpopular
 - Describe a situation that illustrates your ability to analyze and solve a problem



Interview : Example Questions

- **Illegal Questions**
 - Questions about national origin, citizenship, age, marital status, disabilities, arrest and conviction record, military discharge status, race, gender, or pregnancy status are illegal.
 - Any question that asks a candidate to reveal information about these topics without the question having a job related basis are a violation of various state and federal discrimination laws.
- **Your Responses**
 - You can examine the question, and then either respond or refuse/deflect
 - However if you choose to answer an illegal question, you could be giving away information that isn't related to the job, which may or may not harm your chances of receiving a offer
- **Examples of Illegal Questions**
 - Are you a U.S. citizen?
 - Are you planning to have children?
 - What does your husband/wife/partner do?
 - How old are you?
 - What is your religious affiliation?



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Post Interview – Following Up

- Follow up every interview with a **‘thank you’ email**
 - Usually within a 24 hour time frame
 - It is expected and could determine whether or not a candidate receives an offer
 - This simple gesture can go far
 - If you can send individual emails, or include all interviewers in 1 email message
 - Keep your comments clear and concise
- Consider sending hand-written thank you notes
 - Depends on job/field, interviewer, and delivery time of the mailed thank you note
- Follow up via email 1 week after the initial interview if you have not yet heard back
 - This depends on what the employer has stated during the interview regarding next steps
 - Example “I will be out of the office for the next 2 weeks on vacation, so I will contact you upon my return”





**Questions? Contact the
Internship and Career
Services office!**

<https://www.butler.edu/ics>

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