

Interviewing Guide

The best way to ace an interview is to prepare answers for common questions and bring your own well-developed questions to ask at the end of the interview.

The Nine C's of Interviewing: Common interview questions tend to examine your experiences, behavior, and work styles. The best way to prepare is to focus on the 9 topics you are likely to be asked about:

- **Character:** Employers want to understand your character to determine if you are right for the job. Common questions include: *What are your strengths and weaknesses? What characteristics do you think are necessary for success in this field? What have you learned from your mistakes? What books, magazines, newspapers, or journals do you read? What do you do for fun?*
- **Company:** Demonstrate your knowledge of the organization and the position. Being able to talk about the company's mission and projects will help you answer questions like: *Why are you interested in working for our organization? What do you know about our company?*
- **Choice:** Effective decision making skills are highly valued, and you will likely be asked questions that demonstrate your skills. For example: *Tell me about a time when...*
- **Challenge:** Challenge involves your ability to solve problems and deal with challenging situations. A question that speaks to how you handle challenges could be: *Describe a time when you had a disagreement with a co-worker and how did you deal with it?*
- **Conflict:** Emotional intelligence and the ability to deal with difficult co-workers and clients are essential to success. Questions could include: *What type of person do you find most difficult to work with? How would you handle an irate customer?*
- **Change:** Your ability to handle the stress of changing situations could be a big selling point. Questions may include: *What would you do if a project/event didn't go according to plan? If this job was moved to our New York office would you still be interested?*
- **Creativity:** Employers look for candidates who can think outside of the box and take initiative. Your creativity can be demonstrated through answering: *Tell us about a time when you initiated a project. What examples do you have that demonstrate your creativity? In what ways do you think that you can make a contribution to our company?*
- **Confidence:** Your confidence in your own ability will show in your answers, but employers may look for you to sell yourself even more, through asking: *Why should we hire you? Is there anything else that we should know about you before we make a decision? What qualifications do you have that set you apart?*
- **Collaboration:** Every organization has a group dynamic and you will be asked to address how you work in a team environment and what leadership experiences you have. For example: *What have you learned from participation in extracurricular activities? What kind of supervisory style do you prefer? What type of people do you prefer to work with? What type of leader are you?*

The S.T.A.R. Approach: The best answers to interview questions will give specific examples. If you are able to provide a Situation or Task, the Action you took, and the Results you achieved for each of the C's above you will be ready for the interview. Spend roughly equal amounts of time on each.

- **Situation or Task:** Describe the situation that you were in or the task that you needed to accomplish. You must describe a specific event or situation, not a generalized description of what you have done in the past. Be sure to give enough detail for the interviewer to understand. This situation can be from a previous job, from a volunteer experience, or any relevant event.
- **Action:** Describe the action you took and be sure to keep the focus on you. Even if you are discussing a group project or effort, describe what you did -- not the efforts of the team. Don't tell what you might have done, tell what you did.
- **Results:** What happened? How did the event end? What did you accomplish? What did you learn?

Please Contact the Career Development Center to schedule a mock interview.

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Once your cover letter and resume have landed you an interview, you are one step closer to securing the position! Researching the company, reviewing the job description and preparing answers to common questions will help you make a good impression.

The Five A's of Interviewing: Employers will be evaluating you on more than just how you answer questions. The five A's of interviewing represent the key things that employers will notice.

- **Attire:** Dress professionally. Invest in a tailored gray, black or navy suit.* Do not wear any cologne or perfume, strong scents can be distracting and an interviewer could be allergic.
- **Attitude:** Be confident, show enthusiasm and demonstrate your interest in being there. Offer a firm handshake and smile when introducing yourself.
- **Awareness:** Be aware of your surroundings and the people you meet. The person you cut off in the parking lot could be the one interviewing you and the receptionist's opinion could matter more than you think. Be aware of the company. Know the company's mission, values, customers and projects to better explain why you want to work for them.
- **Ability:** Back up your resume with answers that demonstrate your ability to do the job.
- **Acknowledgment:** the key to a successful interview and career is to thank the people you meet along the way. Thank the interviewer(s) at the end of the interview and send a follow-up thank you note to each person within 24 hours. Sending an email is okay, but always send a handwritten note too. Refer to the events of the interview in your thank-you to refresh their memory and show that you appreciated their time.

Interview Musts: In addition to the 5 A's, here are some tips to keep in mind:

- Have directions and parking instructions
- Arrive 10 minutes early. Call if you are going to be late, they may prefer to reschedule
- Bring copies of your resume and references list
- Carry a professional pad folder to hold resumes, references, and questions for the employer; Bring a pen to take notes

The Elevator Pitch: Just about every interview is going to start with the employer asking you to tell them about yourself, or a variation of this question. Prepare a 30 second introduction focused on your education, experiences, and goals. Do not tell your life story, omit personal information.

- **Create a professional identity based on experiences.** *Example: I am Business student with a focus in Human Resources.*
- **Provide 2 to 3 Strengths supported by specific situations or projects.** *Example: I have strong leadership skills developed from my time as the President of Keystone College's student chapter of SHRM and strong interpersonal communication skills that helped me to be successful as a Resident Assistant, especially when resolving conflicts.*
- **Relate your background to the position.** *Example: My position as an RA also involved working with students from diverse backgrounds which will help to contribute to your company's new diversity compliance task force mentioned in the job description.*

**For specific guidelines on interview attire refer to the Professional Attire Guide*

