

Interviewing Guide

Securing a spot as a top candidate and receiving an invitation to interview is an exciting, but likely the most nerve racking, part of the job search. Moreover, there are various types of interviews and different styles of questions you will likely encounter. To help you navigate all the possibilities, this guide is designed to offer information and tips regarding what to do before, during, and after the interview.

Before the Interview

Just like exams, the best way to ace your upcoming interview is to prepare as soon and as thoroughly as possible; do not procrastinate! Following the five Ps, **proper preparation prevents poor performance**, is the most effective way to make sure you are ready for the interview.

Understand the Position

The very first step to your preparation is to be sure that you understand the position. If you do not yet have a complete job description, including the required and preferred qualifications, be sure to ask for this document. You will be expected to understand and share your knowledge of the position during the interview. Research typical starting salaries by geographic region as well using the Bureau of Labor Statistics and professional association salary surveys. Also, inquire about the interviewing type(s) for which you should prepare and who will be joining your interview.

Research the Employer

The interviewer(s) will expect you to know information about the organization, such as their mission, programs, services, products, clients, and the industry in which they operate. Use the employer's website, information on the Internet (LinkedIn and Google search), and the organization's marketing material (including social media) to gather information. The organization's annual report may also be posted online and is an excellent resource for reviewing achievements, goals, and areas for growth and improvement. Also, be sure to research information about the professional interests and accomplishments of your interviewers.

Complete a Self-Assessment

Answering interview questions will become easier if you have a thorough knowledge of yourself. Be prepared to share information within the following areas:

- **Skills and abilities** - identify those that reflect what the employer is seeking, and be ready to discuss those which may require some additional development
- **Experience** - explain how your work, internship, skilled volunteer, and student organization experiences support the job description
- **Career goals** - include short and long term goals and your desire to grow within the organization
- **Values and interests** - discuss what motivates you professionally
- **Education** - relay how your degree and classroom experiences will help you succeed professionally
- **Online presence** - ensure your "brand" and online presence highlights you in a professional manner

Practice Interviewing

With your research in place, understanding the different interview types and practicing answering common interview questions will help ease your nerves and build your confidence. Be sure to also practice non-verbal elements, like maintaining eye contact, smiling when appropriate, sitting up straight, leaning forward to convey interest, and offering a firm handshake. To help you, The Center for Career and Professional Development offers in-person and virtual mock interviews, as what you say can be as equally important as how you say it.



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[@UCcareerdevelop](#) (Twitter and Instagram)

[The Center for Career and Professional Development at Utica College](#) (LinkedIn)

<https://utica.joinhandshake.com/login> (Handshake)

Types of Interviews

Most interviews have numerous phases and usually begin with a phone, or increasingly, an online webcam interview. This screening interview may then be followed by an in-person interview with one or multiple candidates and/or interviewers. Below are some interview types with which to be familiar.

TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS:

More often than not, you will have a telephone interview with one or multiple interviewers before any other type of interview. Designed to screen large numbers of applicants for minimal cost and maximum efficiency, phone interviews allow employers to establish a foundation for the possibility of an in-person interview. If you will be using a cell phone, be sure you have a strong connection and are sitting at a desk in a quiet place without the possibility of distraction. Believe it or not, dressing professionally will also help keep you in a professional mindset and will encourage you to maintain professional tone and language. One benefit of a phone interview is your ability to access your notes about the company, the interviewers, or your practice answers (without noisily shuffling through papers). Do not, however, use this as an excuse to under-prepare.

ONLINE INTERVIEWS:

The ever-changing world of technology has allowed the interview process to move to a virtual format over recent years. Online interviews allow employers to interview anyone in the world with only a webcam and without having to budget for transportation and other costs. Programs such as Skype and Google+ Hangouts are being used to employ this style of interviewing. Some employers may also ask candidates to log in to a portal to record and submit interview answers. Here are a few things to keep in mind:

- Have a professionally appropriate video screen name, profile photo, avatar, etc.
- Test your audio and video equipment before the interview
- Place the equipment in a brightly lit room with a neat and organized background
- Dress professionally from head to toe
- Look directly at your computer screen, not above at the webcam
- Make sure you speak clearly and slowly; you never know when there might be a delay in the connection

BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEWS:

Questions asked in behavioral interviews are based on the premise that past actions and behaviors are the best indicators of future performance. Behavioral interviews require you to explain specific experiences and skills using a story telling format, known as the STARR technique (Situation - Task - Action - Result - Relate). Your answers will provide the interviewer(s) with an understanding of why you are the right candidate for the position. While some employers will exclusively ask behavioral questions, others will undoubtedly use them during other interview styles as well.

PANEL INTERVIEWS:

During panel interviews, you will be answering questions posed by more than one person in the room and maybe even individuals from different departments within the organization. These types of interviews allow for interviewers to be more objective and share their different perspectives regarding the candidate. These are the most common type of interview today, and most candidates should expect to meet with more than one person for an interview. Treat these interviews just like you would if you were interviewing with only one person.

GROUP INTERVIEWS:

These are becoming more common in larger organizations who have many equally qualified candidates applying for a position. During these interviews, employers will simultaneously meet with multiple candidates and are not only focused on your responses to questions, but they are also evaluating the interaction between you and the other candidates. Your verbal and nonverbal interactions will offer the employer insight to skills and behaviors in areas of communication, leadership, teamwork, and more.

ASSESSMENT INTERVIEWS:

As companies become more savvy about the costs of hiring the wrong candidate, additional time may be invested to find the right candidate through assessment interviews. This style of interviewing gives the employer a chance to evaluate various aspects of your qualifications in applied situations. These might include testing, presentations, role playing, using equipment associated with the position, and working with other candidates on larger projects. These interviews can take the whole work day or even span over more than one day.

Typical Interview Questions

Conversational questions are open-ended and encourage free-flowing, back and forth discussion. Answer questions with sufficient detail, providing examples and other supporting information when appropriate.

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why are you interested in our organization?
- What do you know about what we do?
- What is your impression of our mission?
- Tell me about your experiences that specifically support this position's requirements.
- What impact are you hoping to make in this industry?
- Tell me about three top trends in this field.
- What is your greatest accomplishment to date?
- What short and long term career goals do you have?
- How do you plan to achieve these goals?
- How do you personally define success?
- What do you think it takes to be successful in this career?
- Rate your interpersonal, verbal, and written communication skills.
- Do you find yourself to be more of an introvert or extravert? In what kind of situations?
- Is your thought process more systematic and analytical or more abstract and "big picture?"
- What motivates you to do your best work?
- What is your greatest strength/weakness?
- If I asked a boss or professor to describe you, what would he or she say?
- How has your education prepared you for this position?
- What were your favorite/least favorite classes? Why?
- Is your GPA an accurate reflection of your ability?
- Do you have any plans for further education?
- What qualities do you seek in a supervisor?
- What criteria are you using to evaluate the organization for which you hope to work?
- What are your salary expectations?

Behavioral questions require you to explain specific experiences and skills using a story telling format, known as the STARR technique (Situation - Task - Action - Result - Relate).

- Tell me about a time when you took the initiative to improve organizational efficiency, expand your knowledge base, etc. without being prompted by a supervisor or professor.
- Describe a time when you successfully pitched an idea to a supervisor.
- Walk me through a situation when you used your analytical skills to identify and solve a potential problem.
- Share a creative solution you used to address an issue.
- Identify a specific experience you've had in working with conflicting, ambiguous, or delayed information. How did you navigate that experience?
- Tell me about a time when you dealt with multiple, concurrent project deadlines.
- Give me an example of a situation when you had to deal with interpersonal conflict.
- Explain a time when you were flexible to meet others' needs or expectations.
- Tell me about your success in building team camaraderie as a leader.
- Give me an example of your use of delegation.
- Tell me about your most successful speech or presentation.
- Tell me about the writing experiences you've had that you think will contribute to your ability to succeed at this job.
- Describe your experience editing written documents.
- Share with me a task or project that required you to generate a report using your skills in quantitative literacy.
- Give me an example of when you had to analyze and manipulate numerical data.
- Tell me about a time when your understanding of organizational culture and professional etiquette helped you achieve a desired result.
- Explain a time when you were objective in spite of your emotions.
- Describe a significant professional mistake you have made.
- Identify a time when you failed at a task or project.

Case questions require you to apply your expertise and skills to respond to scenarios or cases that interviewers present. Originating from the banking and consulting industries (where a couple case questions may take an hour to answer), they can be easily modified to relate to any field/industry.

- Your first patient of the day has a C6 spinal cord injury. What kind of function and sensation would you expect? What kind of treatment plan might you implement?
- You are working with a client whom you suspect has anxiety issues, and she makes a vague reference about harming someone. How do you respond?
- I spend a third of my money on a house, half the rest on a car and a quarter of what I then have left on furniture. What proportion of my original money do I have left?
- Your corporate client is a ski resort. Natural snowfall has been reduced by 50% over the last 5 years. The client is concerned. What should they do and why?
- You are a new teacher and more than half your class failed your last exam. You are already behind in your lessons due to several days of school closings. What do you do?
- You are on the public relations team of a credit card company whose data has just been hacked, affecting millions of customers. What is your short term strategic communication plan and long term PR campaign?

Practicing the STARR Technique

To help with preparing for behavioral questions, the STARR technique (Situation, Task, Action, Result, Relate) can help you exemplify your experiences and stories, while keeping the anecdotes you're sharing concise and relevant. The grid below may be used to help you brainstorm possible answers to behavioral questions.

| Situation/Task | Action | Result | Relate |
|---|--|--|--|
| Describe a specific situation you encountered or task you were responsible for completing. Be sure your example provides sufficient detail for the interviewer to understand the context of your example. | Indicate the action you took to respond to the situation or task. This is the time to emphasize qualities and/or skills the interviewer is seeking in an employee. | Identify the result of your actions, showing your achievement. If possible, quantify your result to highlight the scope of your success. If you were asked to share an example that might paint you in a negative light (ie: tell me about a time you were unsuccessful in meeting a goal), always follow up with what you have learned or how you will improve in the future. | Conclude your example by connecting how this story relates to the position and/or to the organization. This will ensure that the interviewer understands why your story is particularly relevant, and you may have the ability to highlight your knowledge about the organization. |
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Questions for the Employer

In addition to preparing for the interviewer's questions, you must also develop questions of your own to ask. Questions that reflect your knowledge of the position and organization are the best, but be sure not to ask questions that may easily be answered on the organization's website. As a general rule, questions about salary and benefits are not asked during the first interview but may typically be asked during the second interview or when you have been offered the position.

A list of questions you may like to ask is provided below:

- What are your immediate expectations for the person who would fill this position?
- What do you anticipate to be the most challenging aspect about this position?
- How will my work be evaluated and how often?
- What aspects do you enjoy most about working here?
- Can you elaborate about the _____ ?
- Given your organization's mission to _____, how is success measured?
- In what area is your organization hoping to grow?
- I noticed _____ in your annual report, what role would this position play to respond to that?

During the Interview

Arriving for the Interview

At this point, you should know with whom you are meeting, where you are going, how you will get there, and where you will park if you are driving. Mapping out a route and going on a dry-run is the best way to keep you from being late. If, in the unforeseen event you are running late, be sure to have the interviewer's telephone number so you can call ahead. Generally speaking, arriving 10 minutes early allows you to have some time to collect your thoughts and indicates to the interviewer that you are a punctual person.

Making a Good First Impression

The first few moments are often considered to be the most crucial during an interview, as the interviewer will use this time to evaluate your appearance, personality, and professionalism. Begin the interview with a confident stride, firm handshake, good eye contact, and express gratitude for the opportunity to interview. Be prepared to also engage in some pleasant small talk.

Etiquette and Appearance

Generally speaking, interview etiquette suggests you follow the lead of the interviewer. Wait to be invited to sit, or seat yourself after the interviewer has done so. Observe the tone and personality of the interviewer and adjust your tone and mannerisms accordingly. Other etiquette tips include turning off your cell phone, not chewing gum, bringing extra copies of your résumé, your questions, a pen and paper in a padfolio, and being friendly to everyone you encounter.

For most professional interviews, men and women are expected to wear conservative business suits. Consider the purchase of your suit as a professional investment. Be sure your suit is properly tailored. Don't forget to remove all tags, and cut the stitching to open the vents in the back of suits and suit skirts.

Additional tips for men and women are listed below:

Women:

- Wear a dark or neutral color suit that is tailored to fit you. Spending extra money for a suit with higher quality fabric is a good idea.
- If you choose to wear a skirt, it should be knee-length and not form fitting with a revealing back vent. Hosiery should be worn.
- Shirts may be button-down or pull-over but should never be sheer, show cleavage, nor show midriffs. Provocative clothing is never professional.
- Be sure shoes are flats or low heels and are closed-toe. Beware of wearing new shoes for the first time, as blisters may form and will cause discomfort.
- Avoid excessive, dangling, or flashy jewelry.
- Conceal tattoos, remove facial piercings, minimize perfume, and avoid brightly colored nails and makeup.
- Style hair in a professional, hassle-free manner away from your face.



Men:

- Wear a navy, gray, or black suit that fits. Sleeves and pant legs that are too long or short look unprofessional. Spending the extra money for tailoring is a good idea.
- Be sure clothing has no wrinkles or stains.
- Wear a long sleeve, button-down shirt in white or other light, muted color.
- Select a tie that has a conservative color and pattern; use a medium sized-knot.
- Sock color should match your suit.
- Be sure shoes are shined and scuff free. Shoes should match your belt.
- Avoid flashy jewelry.
- Conceal tattoos and minimize cologne.
- Shave or trim facial hair. For those with shorter hair, get a hair cut beforehand to keep the back of your neck neat.
- Be sure hands and nails are clean.

Leaving the Interview

As the interview comes to a close, be sure to ask for the interviewers' business cards, which will help when addressing your thank you letter. End the interview with a firm handshake and again express your thanks for the opportunity to interview. It is appropriate to inquire about a time frame regarding when you may expect to hear back about a decision.

Wait until you have left the premises to turn on your cell phone, take off your jacket, change shoes, or let your hair down. The way you exit, just as the way you came in, could be evaluated.

After the Interview

Thank You Letter

A thank you letter, e-mail, or depending on the field, a handwritten note (never a text message) should be sent within 24 hours of the interview. This communication must be without spelling and grammatical errors. If there was more than one interviewer, you may address it to the lead interviewer and extend your thanks to the others in the letter. Provided below is an explanation of the content for a thank you letter, as well as samples for your reference.

NAME
Street Address City, State Zip
(Area Code) Phone • Email
Customized LinkedIn URL

Date

Name of Addressee
Title of Addressee
Name of Organization
Street Address, Suite or Box #
City, State Zip

Dear Addressee:

Your opening paragraph should include a statement of gratitude for the opportunity to interview. A brief reflection on the interview or compliment about the organization would also be appropriately placed here.

Your middle paragraph should include a statement of your continued interest in the position and a short reiteration of your qualifications. If necessary, this is also the time to include a valuable piece of information that you did not cover during the interview.

In your closing paragraph, invite the interviewer(s) to contact you if they have any additional questions.

Sincerely,

Sign full name

Type full name

MAILED THANK YOU LETTER:

BETHANY OLSON
125 Washington Street New York, NY 10118
(212) 123-4567 • beolson@utica.edu
www.linkedin.com/in/BethEOlson

July 1, 2019

Dr. Dwayne Brown
Principal
Hudson River High School
1000 Madison Street
New York, NY 10118

Dear Dr. Brown:

Thank you for the opportunity to interview for the Calculus Teacher position you have available. I enjoyed learning more about Hudson River High School, and I am impressed with your students' recent championship in the Downstate Calculus Competition.

I welcome the possibility of becoming part of your dedicated Mathematics faculty, and I am confident my teaching experience at Utica City Schools and master's degree from Utica College have prepared me to succeed in this position.

Please extend my thanks to Ms. Clausen and Mr. Allendale as well. If you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Bethany Olson

Bethany Olson

EMAILED THANK YOU LETTER:

(Subject Line: Thank You for the Interview)

Dear Ms. Poloczak:

Thank you for setting aside time to meet with me personally on Thursday morning. After hearing more about the Event Coordinator position, I am increasingly confident in my ability to contribute fresh and creative marketing ideas to generate public interest in your events. My experience with cross promoting events and activities using multiple social media platforms will enable you to reach your targeted audience.

I sincerely hope to have the opportunity to utilize my degree in Public Relations and event planning internship experience to your department's benefit. If you should require any additional information or have questions, feel free to call or email.

Thank You,

Katrina Kimski

54 Elmwood Avenue
Syracuse, NY 13202
Kkimski@utica.edu
www.linkedin.com/in/KKimski
(315) 565-3210

HANDWRITTEN THANK YOU NOTE:

Dear Ms. Basset:

Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to meet with me about the "Get Involved in Government Fall Internship Challenge." It was fascinating to learn more about how your office acts as the legislative and administrative backdrop of Utica's City Council.

This opportunity complements my coursework as a Government and Politics major and my interest in participating in Utica's City Council meetings. I also neglected to mention that I may be able to help you with your need to provide additional technical support to the City Council. My work experience at Utica College's Integrated Information Technology Services may allow me to assist you as a side project, if you are interested.

If I can answer any additional questions you may have, please do not hesitate to call, e-mail, or connect with me on LinkedIn using the contact information from our meeting. Again, it was a pleasure to meet you.

Sincerely,

Sebastian Saffer

After the Interview

Following Up

It is permissible to call the interviewer after a week and inquire about your status as a candidate, especially if the interviewer has not provided you with a time frame regarding when the position will be filled. Refrain, however, from repeated phone calls.

Evaluating the Interview

Hopefully, all your efforts in preparation result in a job offer. However, even with a flawless résumé, cover letter, thank you letter, and excellent rapport during the interview, only one person can be hired for the job. If that person wasn't you, use the interview as a learning experience and evaluate your performance.

A list of questions to ask yourself is provided below:

- How did the interview go?
- What went well?
- What do I need to improve upon?
- Did I seem nervous?
- Was I too talkative, not talkative enough?
- Was I too aggressive, too passive?
- Did I convey interest and enthusiasm?
- Did I highlight skills and qualifications appropriate to the position?
- Were my experiences and achievements thoroughly explained?
- How did I make myself stand out?
- Did I take the opportunity to emphasize my strengths?
- What points did I make that interested the interviewer?
- Was my knowledge of the organization evident?
- How were my questions received?

Expanding Your Network

If your interview went well, but you weren't offered the job, don't be discouraged! By meeting people in the industry, you've just expanded your network. You may be considered for other employment opportunities within the organization in the future, or your name may even be passed along to the interviewer's colleagues in other organizations with a recommendation to consider you for their positions. Thus, be sure that you are always professional, and never bad mouth interviewers or the organization - especially on social media.

The Center for Career and Professional Development is Here to Help

In addition to mock and virtual interviews, the Center for Career and Professional Development welcomes you to ask any follow up questions regarding your interview. If you need advice on answering questions posed or even want a second opinion on your interview's self-evaluation, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Check Out Our Other Services

The Center for Career and Professional Development offers a full range of services designed to help students explore how their interests, skills, and values relate to possible career paths, understand the importance of proper planning and preparation in goal setting, and assist in the successful transition from academic to professional life.

Career Counseling

Individualized assistance with career exploration, professional correspondence development (résumés, cover letters, thank you letters), interviewing, and graduate school planning is available. Stop in or call to make an appointment.

Career Assessments

FOCUS-2, an online career and education planning system, is designed specifically for college students and enables students to self-assess career-relevant personal qualities and explore career fields and areas of study that are most compatible with assessment results. More information about this and other assessments is available [online](#).

Career Resource Library

Students have access to our library of print resources including graduate program guides, graduate school entrance exam prep books, and certificate exam study guides. Our library catalog is [online](#) for students to review.

Job and Internship Postings

Utica College partners with [Handshake](#) to offer the most opportunities for students and new college grads of any job platform. It's also the only place where employers are recruiting specifically at UC. Create your Handshake profile to see jobs that are a good fit, filter and search through job roles based on your interests, and discover new career possibilities.

Meet with Employers

Programs and events including our Career Fairs, Volunteer Fairs, Networking Nights, and other on-campus recruiting events are excellent opportunities for students to directly interact with possible employers and begin networking. Information about previous employer events, including contact information and opportunities, is available on our [website](#).

Programming

Specialized programs are held throughout the year, focusing on areas including dining etiquette, personal brand development and professional use of social media, résumé development, interviewing, job search tips, transitioning from academic to professional life, and more. An updated programming calendar is always available on our [website](#) and can be subscribed to using Gmail.

Alumni/Student Mentoring Program

The mentoring program connects current students of all majors and class standings with alumni mentors. Students can access alumni's valuable career experience, guidance, and advice and in turn, enhance their own career development. More information and guidelines for the program are available on our [website](#).

Freebies

While nearly all of our services are free, students may request up to 20 complimentary business cards, have access to free résumé paper, printing, and faxing, and may use the student computer work stations in the office lobby. Other promotional and complimentary items are given away throughout the year during our programming, Résumé and Interviewing contests, and much more!