



INTERVIEWING

Before you begin, remember: Interviewing is not a “test” or competition, but rather an exchange of accurate information between the interviewer and interviewee. The purpose is for both parties to find a good fit.

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

Research the company/organization and position for which you are applying.

- Explore the company website to learn mission, locations, and products/services.
- Conduct informational interviews with professionals, and alumni to gain insights.
- Use CareerShift, LinkedIn, Glassdoor, and similar resources to learn more.

Research the position.

- Examine the job description and use LinkedIn to learn more about the role.
- Find out a realistic salary for this position range using Salary.com and Glassdoor.com.
- What is the advancement potential for this position?
- Identify additional skills needed for this type or role using onetonline.org¹.

Know yourself.

- Compile a list of skills and experiences where they were demonstrated by you.
- List your accomplishments and awards and be able to discuss them clearly.
- Identify your strengths (Clifton Strengths) with an example of each.
- Think about your career goals and your “story” to capture attention and explain interest.

*Connect the position and company back to yourself. How can you communicate your “fit” with the company?
Why do you want this position?*

Find out the basics:

- Who will be conducting the interview? Find out names and job titles.
- When will the interview occur? Plan to arrive 10 minutes early if in person.
- Where will the interview take place? Ask exact location and parking information.
- What type of interview will it be? (see next section for tips on each type)

Put together an appropriate outfit. Business professional is typical, but plan to dress one to two steps above what is worn on the job daily.

- Visit the Campus Career Closet to acquire up to 4 items of professional clothing per academic year for FREE.

DURING THE INTERVIEW

Here are some of the most common interview types and tips for each-

PHONE

- Be in a room with no distractions with a hands-free headset if possible.
- Dress up!
- Have your application documents and a pen & paper with you to take notes
- Speak slowly and listen closely to pick up on non-verbal cues.
- Keep answers shorter than you would for an in-person interview.
- Use the interviewer’s title (Mr., Ms., Dr.). Only use a first name if instructed.

VIRTUAL

- Practice beforehand to ensure equipment works properly.
- Look into the web-cam, not at yourself on the screen. Eye contact is key!
- Be in a room with no distractions, background noises, or inappropriate backdrops.
- Make sure cheat sheets are off camera at eye-level.

IN-PERSON

- Bring several copies of your résumé printed on résumé paper offer to each interviewer. Get 10 free sheets printed for free at the University Career Center.
- Bring a nice padfolio or folder to hold your documents, a pen, and a way to access your online portfolio.
- Wear professional attire appropriate for your industry.
- Find a way to connect with your interviewer(s) and maintain eye contact
- Set your phone and smart-watch to silent
- Be polite to every person you encounter and shake hands if appropriate.

GROUP (multiple interviewees) AND PANEL (multiple interviewers)

- Find a way to connect with each interviewee and/or interviewer.
- Maintain eye contact with each person and listen attentively.
- Remember how you act toward others in the room is being examined.
- Shake hands and collect all business cards to write thank you letters later.

DINING

- Keep conversation professional and continue to highlight skills.
- Refresh yourself on eating etiquette and avoid talking with food in your mouth.
- Keep cell phone out of sight and avoid alcohol.
- Stay clear of hard-to-eat or messy meals and do not ask for a box to-go.
- Allow them to pick up the check.

BODY LANGUAGE AND NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

- Arrive 10 minutes before and avoid going over answers in your head.
- Relax and breathe!
- Maintain good posture and eye contact with the interviewer(s).
- Some hand gestures are acceptable as long as it is not distracting.
- Nod while listening to show you are interested and paying attention.
- Show enthusiasm and infuse personality and humor into your responses.
- Try to avoid fidgeting. Clicking a pen or a shaking leg is distracting and a sign of nerves.

ANSWERING QUESTIONS

Employers want to know if you have the skill set needed to perform successfully on the job and contribute positively to their company/organization. Understanding the job description gives you insight on what types of questions you may hear.

In addition, review the top 8 career readiness competencies sought by employers across all industries according to NACE (National Association of Colleges and Employers):

1. Critical Thinking
2. Communication (oral and written)
3. Teamwork
4. Technology
5. Leadership
6. Professionalism
7. Career Ownership
8. Cross-Cultural Fluency

Think of ways you have gained and demonstrated these competencies.

If you are lacking in any area, speak with a career counselor to determine how you can develop them before your interview.

COMMON INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND ANSWER STRATEGIES

Tell me about yourself.

- This really means, “Tell me about yourself in relation to this position.” Do not share how many siblings you have, your favorite foods, hobbies, etc.
- Focus on the essentials:
 1. The Past – what about your past is relevant to this role?
 2. The Present – what experiences/skills have you gained recently to prepare you for this role?
 3. The Future – what’s next for you and what do you want to accomplish?
 4. The Fit – how does your past, present, and future fit into the company?

Why do you want to work for our organization?

- Highlight the research you have done and share specific aspects that stand.

What is your greatest strength?

- Think about what makes you stand out from the crowd and avoid overused and vague strengths (passionate, hardworking, dedicated, etc.). Be unique and share an example if you can, connecting it back to the position.

What is your greatest weakness?

- Choose an actual weakness you have identified within yourself, but avoid red flags such as laziness, dishonesty, etc. Remember – perfectionism is NOT a weakness!
- Share what specific steps you have taken/ are taking to improve and any progress or success you have seen as a result.

Briefly tell me about the highlights of your educational and work experiences that are relevant to this job.

- Summarize the most related experiences – avoid going into too much detail – and connect it back to why it will help you in this position.
- If you do not have related experience at this time, get involved/volunteer/shadow to diversify your strengths. Also, think of how the experience you DO have can translate to this position.

Tell me about what you did at ____ job/ organization.

- Be prepared to talk about anything on

your résumé, including organizations and involvement. Share the highlights and focus on how you contributed and what skills you gained.

BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Many employers ask behavioral-based interview questions to probe your past behavior in jobs, classrooms, group projects, and organizations. For an employer, past performance predicts future performance. Think about the intent of the question and identify what skill or quality they are evaluating. These questions typically sound like “Tell me about a time when...”

To answer behavioral questions, follow these steps:

1. Think of a specific example. Avoid saying, “I did that all the time at this job” or “I would usually handle it this way.”
2. Use the **STAR** Method:
 - Situation – what was the context
 - Task – what was the challenge/problem
 - Action – what did you do
 - Result – what was the outcome

Examples of behavioral questions:

Share a time when...

- You worked with a difficult person.
- You failed at something.
- You motivated others to complete a task.
- Your ethics were tested.
- You put your personal goals aside to achieve an overall goal for the group.
- You took on a significant new challenge at school, home, or a job in order to achieve personal or professional growth.
- You demonstrated leadership abilities.

- You found an innovative solution to a problem.
- You presented to a large audience.

ILLEGAL QUESTIONS

Various federal, state, and local laws regulate the questions a prospective employer can ask. An employer’s questions, whether on the job application, in the interview, or during the testing process, must be related to the job you are seeking. For the employer, the focus must be: “What do I need to know to decide whether this person can perform the functions of this job?”

Employers cannot ask you about:

- Nationality/ancestry
- Age
- Marital/Family status
- Religion
- Health/genealogy
- Height/weight
- Disabilities
- Military discharge

If asked an illegal question, you have three options:

1. Answer the question. However, you are giving information that is not related to the job, and you may be giving the “wrong” answer, which could harm your chances of getting the job.
2. Refuse to answer, which is well within your rights. Unfortunately, you run the risk of appearing uncooperative or confrontational, hardly words an employer would use to describe the “ideal” candidate.
3. Examine the intent and respond with an answer as it might apply to the job.

ASKING QUESTIONS

Always prepare 3-5 questions to ask the interviewer that demonstrate you have done your research.

Below are examples of questions to ask.

- I am excited about the job; are there any additional expectations not outlined in the job description?
- What assignments might I expect in the first six months?
- Does your company encourage further education?
- When and how will my performance be evaluated?
- What products are in the developmental stage now?
- Is your company environmentally conscious? How?
- Is this a new position or replacing someone?
- What is the largest single challenge facing your staff?
- What do you like best about your job/company?
- What qualities are you looking for in the candidate who fills this position?
- What could one do in this role that would make your job easier?
- Will I have the opportunity to work on special projects?
- What is the next course of action? When should I expect to hear from you?

GENERAL TIPS

- NEVER speak badly about a former employer/job. This makes them think you will do the same about the new employer.
- Focus on the positive of every experience or the lesson learned.

- Highlight a diverse range of skills and experiences and connect them back to the new role.
- Avoid verbal fillers (um, like, you know, I mean) and nervous laughter.
- Stay professional at all times – no profanity or irrelevant stories.
- Tell stories to demonstrate abilities.
- Do not initiate discussion about salary or benefits, but research this ahead of time. If asked, give a \$5-\$10,000 range but mention that you are open to negotiation.
- Take a few seconds to think about your answer before responding to a question. Silence is okay and preferred over rambling.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

- Shake hands and thank them for their time.
- Collect business cards to easily address and send thank you notes later.
- Establish next step and the hiring timeline.
- Send thank you letters and/or emails to each interviewer, referencing specifics.
- Once the time-line has passed, follow up to determine if a decision has been made and restate your interest.

IF YOU RECEIVE A JOB OFFER

- Do not accept right away and ask for time to make a decision.
- Discuss salary and get all of the benefits details, preferably in writing.
- Drop-in to our office for help with negotiations and making a counter offer.
- Be sure before accepting and never back out of a job after accepting the position.

PREPARE WITH US!

Practice is the best way to prepare for an interview. The University Career Center offers several services and resources to help you feel confident going into your interview.

MOCK INTERVIEW

Think of a mock interview as a dress rehearsal with a career counselor prior to your actual interview. Be prepared to share the company/organization name and the job title you are seeking. You will come to the interview dressed professionally with a résumé. After answering questions, you will receive individualized feedback and a recording of the interview.

- By appointment only – call 334-844-4744

INTERVIEWSTREAM

Create an InterviewStream account to digitally record multiple interviews, select questions to practice answering, and email videos to career counselors, professors, or employers.

You will need:

- Computer with updated software or Smart Phone with app downloaded
- Web-cam
- Auburn email address

MOCK INTERVIEW DAY

Each semester, the University Career hosts Mock Interview Day open to all currently enrolled Auburn University students. Industry recruiters and employers are invited to campus to provide practice interviews for students across all majors and industries. After you register, you will be paired to interview with an individual that works with or recruits for your major. Each interview lasts 30 minutes which includes feedback from the employer.

- Register each semester on Handshake.

CAMPUS CAREER CLOSET

The University Career Center launched the Campus Career Closet in 2017 as a way to provide students access to FREE professional attire appropriate for career fairs, interviews, networking events, and the workplace. Inventory includes suits, blazers, skirts, button-down shirts, ties, shoes, and more. Currently enrolled Auburn University students may take up to 4 apparel items per academic year, and they do not need to be returned. We accept donations on a rolling basis. To use the CCC, either:

- Come in during drop-in hours (Monday-Friday from 10:00am – 3:00pm)
- Make an appointment via Handshake