

How to Prepare for Your Upcoming Interview

Getting ready for an upcoming job interview is about a lot more than showing up at the time and place you agreed to. Follow these steps to prepare yourself to answer interview questions with confidence.

Do Your Research

Employers want to know that you have an understanding of their organization and the job description during the interview(s). This understanding instills confidence in the employer that you are a viable candidate and will help you to prepare for the interview in a more productive and proactive way.

Review the Job Description

It's important to be knowledgeable as to what the job responsibilities, skills, and qualifications include. If the job description is not detailed enough, research the career field using the LCCC Career Center Online Resource Library.

Research the Organization/Company

- What is the mission, goal, or purpose of the organization?
- What does the "About Us" section of their website say about the organization?
- What topics do you see posted on their social media (if applicable)?
- Are they in the news? If so, what information is being shared? (Remember to focus on the positive.)
- What is the organization/company demographics (size, location, organizational structure, etc.)?
- What does the Human Resources (HR) section say about the hiring process, benefits, etc.?
- If you know current or past employees, schedule a time to chat with them prior to your interview to learn more about the organization's culture and environment. Learning more about the culture and environment of an organization enables you to confirm that the opportunity aligns with your values and is a good fit for you.

Research the Interviewer(s)

- Google each interviewer to learn more about their professional background and experience.
- Look up the interviewer(s) on LinkedIn and social media.
- Review the company website and look for information that is relevant to the interviewer.

What are **five skills** that you want to highlight based on the job description and organization research?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Behavioral Questions

Now that you are familiar with background information about the organization or company, it's important to understand the kinds of questions that you will be asked. A **behavioral question** asks you about past experiences or situations, and is often worded differently than a traditional interview question.

Traditional Question: How do you work under pressure?

Behavioral Question: Tell me about a time you had to meet an unexpected deadline.

Tell Your Story: How to Answer Behavioral Questions

Before your interview you want to prepare and practice responses to behavioral questions. Because these questions require you to focus on personal experiences, it is important to tell a clear, concise story and keep it relevant.

The B.A.R. Technique

One helpful way to tell a story and keep it concise and relevant is to use the B.A.R. technique. Organizing your experiences in this manner will help your interviewing abilities regardless of the questions being asked.

Background: Specific situation that relates to the question.

Action: What you did to solve the problem or accomplish the task. (Focus on skills you want to highlight.)

Result: Positive outcome of the situation.

Background	As a Residence Hall Assistant, I am responsible for creating multiple programs/events for my hall residents to attend.
Action	In order to assess what programs my residents were interested in, I developed a paper survey and distributed it during the first week of class. After reviewing the results, the majority of residents were interested in learning more about study and time-management skills. I decided to reach out to the LCCC Student Success Center to develop a collaborative presentation that would educate students on the importance of study skill strategies. I scheduled a date, worked with catering, designed an interactive activity, marketed the event to students, and created a survey to assess the event.
Result	Every resident on my floor attended the event as well as some students from other floors. Everyone was engaged and asked a lot of questions. After I reviewed the survey and noticed that the majority of students found it extremely beneficial, I asked if we could have a follow-up program later in the year.

As you begin the job search and interviewing process, it is important to practice responding to various behavioral questions to draw from your past experiences. Experiences can be class situations, participation in student organizations, employment, internships, or anything relevant to the position. Choosing a variety of experience examples is important.

Sample Behavioral Interview Questions

- Tell me about a time you worked with a difficult person? How did you handle it?
- Tell me about a time when you received constructive criticism. How did you respond?
- Describe a new idea you had and how you implemented it.
- Give me an example of a time when you saw a need in your workplace. What did you do to fix it?
- Describe a situation in which you worked as part of a team. What role did you take on?
- Give me a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.
- Describe a time when you were faced with a problem or stresses that tested your coping skills.
- Give an example of a time when you had to be relatively quick in coming to a decision.
- Describe the most significant or creative presentation that you had to complete.
- Tell me about a time when you wish you had used better time management skills.
- Give an example of a situation where you assumed a leadership role.
- What was a specific mistake that you made, and how did you handle the situation?

Note: Think about the intent of the question as you choose how you will answer the question. Remember to keep your examples positive, and when discussing individuals, do not address them by name.

Strategies for Common Interview Questions

Tell me about yourself.

- Limit personal information. (**NO** hobbies, hometown, age, siblings, etc.)
- Focus on achievements, accomplishments, and transferable skills.
- Connect to the job description and organization. Answer the questions: “Why them?” and “Why you?”

What is your greatest weakness?

- Keep it skill-based (try to stay away from personal characteristics).
- Choose a weakness that is not central to the position.
- Discuss what steps you are taking to improve this weakness.
- Be sincere. (**NO** “I work too hard.” or “I’m a perfectionist.”)

Questions to Ask Employers

At the end of the interview, the interviewer will ask you if you have any questions for them. You should **always** prepare thoughtful questions based on your research of the company or the career field. Some examples include:

1. What is the culture of the organization?
2. What characteristics would the ideal candidate have for this position?
3. How would you describe the company’s culture and leadership philosophy?
4. What is the history of this position?
5. I read about (interesting fact) on your company’s website. Could you tell me more about this?
6. How do you see new staff contributing to the (initiative, project, etc.)?
7. What are your goals for this position in the first year?
8. What is your favorite part about working for this organization?

You can also use this formula to brainstorm customized questions prior to your interview:

*I have researched **this** about your organization or field + **this is why I care** + can you tell me more about...*

Types of Interviews



Phone



In-Person



Online/Skype



Group

Note: Career fairs, presentations, case studies, professional breakfast, lunch, and/or dinner, and networking events may also be part of the interview process.

Remember: 4 Rules of Interviewing

1. Examine Intent of the Question
2. Tell a Story
3. Be Positive
4. Keep It Relevant

The Day Has Arrived!

What to Wear and What Not to Wear

Do your research! What do people in the organization or company typically wear? Think one step above what is usually worn by employees on a daily basis.

Typical Day	Possible Interview Outfits
Jeans, t-shirt, and work boots.	Button-up shirt or blouse, sweater and/or blazer, khakis, slacks or skirt and closed-toe, professional shoes.
Scrubs and clean, non-skid shoes.	
Button-up shirt or blouse, sweater and/or blazer, khakis, slacks or skirt and closed-toe, professional shoes.	Matching suit in navy, dark gray, or black with a button-up shirt, sweater, blouse, or shell and professional shoes. <i>Note: Pant and skirt suits are each appropriate.</i>

Tips on Dress

- When in doubt, opt for more professional attire.
- Neutral and pattern-less colors for pants, skirts, and dresses.
- High-heeled shoes should have heels less than 2 inches high.
- If you choose to wear a skirt, make sure it is just above the knee or longer and covers your thighs when you sit. Always wear neutral hosiery with both skirts and dresses.
- Craft a clean and polished appearance—do not wear too many accessories; avoid unpleasant smells such as cologne/perfume, food, or smoke; and check your breath before arriving (no gum or hard candy).
- No mini-skirts, shorts, sandals, flip flops, leggings, or t-shirts.

Interview Day Checklist

- Bring a folder or notepad, copies of your resume, and a list of 3-8 questions to ask the employer
Note: You will probably not ask all your questions during the interview, but depending on the conversation you will have additional questions to ask at the end of the interview. Remember to be aware of the allotted time employers give to your interview and make sure not to go over.
- Look up the interview location address, directions, parking information, and the time you will need to get there.
- Have the office phone number with you, just in case.
- Allow plenty of time and arrive a few minutes early (no more than 10 minutes).
- Turn off your cell phone and limit the number of items that you take to the interview (avoid large bags).

Remember to:

- ☺ Be yourself and don't forget to smile. ☺ Good eye contact, posture, and a strong handshake are important non-verbal actions to use when interviewing.
- ☺ Try to limit nervous habits such as tapping your pen, fidgeting, hair twirling, or wringing your hands.
- ☺ Limit filler words ("um" and "like") and avoid unprofessional language.

Thank You Letters

- Before you leave, write down the names of your interviewers/get business cards, so you don't misspell names
- Send handwritten or emailed thank-you letters to each interviewer within 24–48 hours of the interview
- Check for spelling and grammatical errors—and check again!
- Thank the interviewers for their time, show interest/enthusiasm, and mention something specific you discussed.

Contact the Career Center for additional interview help or if you need assistance obtaining professional clothing.