

Interviewing

Informational Packet



Academic Success
and Career Center

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY

THE PURPOSE OF INTERVIEWING

Interviewing is a two-way exchange and/or conversation where all involved parties have specific goals:

Interviewer Goals:

- To further determine whether the interviewee can fulfill the position.
- To determine whether the interviewee is a good fit for the organization and position.

Interviewee Goals:

- This is your opportunity to determine if the position is a good fit for you and your career goals.
- This is your opportunity to gather more information about the position
- and determine whether it is in alignment with your knowledge, skills and abilities.

Tip: NO interview is ever a failure, no matter what the interview outcome. Interviews are a great networking opportunity for employers and job seekers. It allows them to gain valuable information. For any given job there may be several hundred applicants, and only a few of those might be called in for an interview, and only one of those will get the job. Just by getting the interview, you are improving your chances for future jobs. More importantly, you get experience interviewing. Like anything else, the more you interview, the better you get at it.

PREPARING FOR YOUR INTERVIEW

PREPARATION IS KEY!!! As we all know, practice makes perfect,

Tips to Help You Prepare for Your Interview(s)	
Practice Your Interviewing Skills with Others	Practice your interviewing skills with friends, family, professors, and schedule a mock interview with an ASCC career counselor at least a week before your interview.
Know Logistics	Allow plenty of time to get to the interview and, if possible, visit the site in advance and time how long it takes to get there. When scheduling your interview, ask about the interview format (discussed in the following section).
Plan Interview Attire	Dress for success! Plan your interview attire in advance and make sure your clothing is pressed, your shoes are shined, and your hair and nails are groomed.
Know Your Knowledge, Skills, Abilities, and Experiences	Be able to clearly and succinctly relate your knowledge, skills, abilities, experiences, accomplishments, and insight to the position.
Familiarize yourself with the Job Description and Employer	Become very familiar with the job description and the career field. Learn the most you can about the organization for which you would like to work. This shows initiative, leads to more insightful conversation during the interview, and distinguishes you from other candidates. <u>Tip: Develop a list of your top skills and experiences that match the job qualifications in the position description. Anticipate the questions you will be asked.</u>
Have Proper Materials	Bring a quality pen, folio with several copies of your resume, cover letter, job description, and reference sheets.

DURING YOUR INTERVIEW

Don't worry about being nervous during the interview-this is normal and will be expected. Just remember, the interviewer is looking for the person with the right qualifications and interest in the position.

There are various types of interview formats, however, the six most common interview types/formats are presented below. **Note: If possible, when scheduling your interview, inquire about the interview type/format you will be participating in.** This will help you to know how to prepare better.

Types of Interview Formats

Screening Interview	One-on-One Interview	Panel Interview	Peer Group Interview	Luncheon Interview	Second Interview
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To determine if you meet the minimum qualifications for the position• Can be conducted via phone, video or in person• Tip: Emphasize your knowledge, skills, abilities and experiences and how they fit with the position	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Most common interview format• Typically conducted in-person by the hiring professional• Tip: Highlight your qualifications and key strengths for the position	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Typically conducted in-person by a group of 3 or more people• Each interviewer will ask questions specific to their area of expertise within the organization• Tip: Respond directly to the person asking the question, but maintain eye contact with other panel members intermittently	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Typically conducted by a group of potential co-workers to assess your "fit" with other members with whom you may interact regularly within the organization• Tip: Focus on being agreeable, approachable, and a team player	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Typically a dining experience with potential non-supervisory co-workers to assess how well you can handle yourself in a social and semi-professional work situation• Tip: Review professional dining etiquette. (Look for dining etiquette events hosted by the ASCC to help you practice these skills.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Similar to the first interview, except usually longer and involving more people in order to conduct final assessment of your overall compatibility with the position and organization

Many interviewers will begin the interview with "small talk" to help you relax. This may seem irrelevant to the position, but it is still part of the evaluation process. Take these opening moments to show a great attitude by building a rapport with the interviewer and sharing interesting facts about the organization that you found during your research. You may want to ask some questions about the organization and its products/services to engage the interviewer in dialogue so you can build a rapport and pace the conversation.

The next phase of the interview consists of the interviewer asking you questions to try to determine your match to the specifications needed to fulfill the role and responsibilities of the position. The most reliable way for an interviewer to project how you would perform in the future is to examine the past. Therefore, many employers prepare behaviorally-based interview questions based on the position you are interviewing for.

By taking the time to analyze the questions asked of you, you will be able to remember more details and present your thoughts in an organized fashion. Also, pay attention to the emphasis that the interviewer(s) seem to be placing on specific skills, knowledge, personality traits and attitudes. That insight will also help you to focus your answers more easily to the employer's position.

The figure below illustrates the fundamental aspects of the two most common types of interview questions (i.e. Traditional and Behavioral Interview Questions).

Traditional Interview Questions		
Overview: Traditional interviews are an interactive process allowing you and the employer to get to know each other, build a rapport, exchange information, and evaluate whether or not there is a fit between you, the hiring officials, the organization and the position.	Employers are evaluating you: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attitude • Confidence • Appearance • Personality • And more 	Sample Questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell me about yourself. • Why are you interested in working for____? • How does this position fit into your career goals? • What can you bring to the position and organization? • What do you expect from the position/organization?
Behavioral Interview Questions		
Overview: Behavioral interviews are rapidly becoming the most common type of interview format. Behavioral interviews focus on you demonstrating specific experiences and tasks you have completed and/or engaged in that provide evidence of your skills and abilities that are pertinent to the position you are interviewing for	Employers are evaluating you: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge • Skills/Abilities • Work Experiences • Transferrable skills • And more 	Sample Questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell me about a time when you have demonstrated project management skills. • Provide an example of your communication skills and abilities. • What past experience have you had that best demonstrates your conflict management skills?

USE THE STAR METHOD

Situation

Discuss a specific situation when you dealt with a similar issue at a different time. Note: Pull from all your professional experiences (i.e. internships, school work, volunteer work, athletics, leadership experiences, etc.)

Result

Explain the results of your action(s). What impact did your action(s) have on the outcome, others involved and the overall situation? Note: Don't be afraid to discuss situations that did not result in favorable outcomes. As a matter of fact, clearly articulating a situation where you acted responsibly under stressful circumstances demonstrates your level of confidence, humility and ability to work under pressure.



Task

Explain the task you had to complete and explain the specific challenge(s) or constraint(s) involved. Challenges may include deadlines, costs or other issues.

Action

Describe the specific action(s) you engaged in to address the issue and/or solve the problem.

EXAMPLE BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEW QUESTION: Describe a recent work related problem and the actions you took to solve it.

SITUATION: Advertising revenue was falling off for the Evergreen, WSU's school newspaper, and large numbers of long-term advertisers were not renewing contracts.

TASK: My goal was to increase advertising revenues.

ACTION: I designed a new promotional packet to go with the rate sheet and compared the benefits of Evergreen circulation with other ad media in the area. I also set-up a special training session for the account executives with a professor who discussed competitive selling strategies.

RESULT: We signed contracts with fifteen former advertisers for daily ads and five for special supplements. We increased our new advertisers by twenty percent over the same period last year.

Always relate your answers to your future responsibilities and the organization's policies. Give concrete examples from your past activities as illustrations of your qualifications. Never answer with a simple "yes" or "no". Substantiate your answers whenever possible.

Your points must be:

- **Clear** to enable the employer to understand what you are trying to say.
- **Relevant** to enable the employer to determine your strengths for the particular job.
- **Adequate** to enable the employer to have sufficient information to make a good decision.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

- Express your sincere thanks for the opportunity to interview
- Send a thank you card or email within 24 hours of the interview. Be sure to mention a specific part of the interview that you enjoyed or learned something.
- Contact the interviewer to receive feedback.
- Reflect and assess how you think the interview went and what you can improve upon:
 - What questions were asked?
 - What responses of mine seemed to interest the interviewer?
 - How well did I present my knowledge, skills, abilities, and experiences?
 - What did I forget to say?

TELEPHONE INTERVIEWING TIPS

Telephone interviewing is becoming increasingly common in today's competitive job market. Employers like this method because it is a cost-effective and impartial way of interviewing employees. To give yourself an edge it is important to keep these tips in mind:

- Keep your resume and cover letter near your phone.
- Focus on the skills you have that are most relevant to the position.
- Have a few well-formed questions prepared to ask.
- Expect to be asked "When", "why", and "how" questions regarding both your employment and educational history. These questions are commonly posed by employers to get a quick assessment of the interviewee.
- Wait until the interviewer has had a chance to set their agenda for the interview before you take control of the conversation. Typically, interviewers have information they want to impart and are more focused on talking than listening at the beginning.
- Have a brief, 45-60 second description of yourself ready to state to interviewers. You should include background, experience, and skills that validate your appropriateness for the job.
- Make sure the information you tell an interviewer does not conflict with your resume.
- Send a thank you letter after the interview.
- Remember that the interviewer will not be able to physically see you. Thus, body language cannot be used to help you make a positive impression.

SALARY NEGOTIATIONS

How to get from what they offer to what you want! First of all, let's understand the process! There are two different philosophies regarding salary negotiation and they just might make a difference to you.

"First Offer, Best Offer"

A company that has this philosophy has a handle on the employment market and is familiar with what the average compensation is for the wage and is the best offer they can offer at this time. In this philosophy, there is no conscious effort to extend an offer where negotiation is expected and have found it counterproductive to bring in an underpaid employee.

“Negotiation is OK and expected”

This philosophy can be the attitude of the hiring personnel or a reflection of the company’s culture. It could be that this is the last step in the interview process: negotiating your way into a decent offer, the final test of your aptitude for the position being offered.

- So you ask now, “How will I know which philosophy my employer has?” Good question! You can respond to both in the same manner, and it is how they answer that will let you know which philosophy they are ascribing to.
- When told of the salary offer, instead of responding with a quick OK, your response could be a thoughtful “Hmmm”. If your interviewer is of the 1st philosophy, he/she may explain how they arrived at the salary quoted and will be prepared to await your acceptance, or response.
- If your interviewer is of the latter philosophy, they might counter with a question such as: What salary did you have in mind? This is often a cue to begin the salary negotiation process.
- Sometimes entry-level applicants may think that salary negotiation is for the “big buck” positions; however, it’s often easier to negotiate at the hourly-wage level than practically anywhere else. An extra \$1-3 per hour seldom exceeds a company’s phone bill.
- In addition, remember to consider the fringe benefit package, this can often account for much more than an increase in salary. Remember- “nothing ventured, nothing gained!”

APPROPRIATE PRE-EMPLOYMENT QUESTIONS FROM EMPLOYERS
Know Your Legal Rights!

ACCEPTABLE	SUBJECT	UNACCEPTABLE
<p>"Have you worked for this company under a different name?"</p> <p>"Have you ever been convicted of a crime under another name?"</p>	Name	Former name of applicant whose name has been changed by court order or otherwise.
<p>Applicant's place of residence.</p> <p>How long applicant has been resident of this state or city.</p>	Address or Duration of Residence	
	Birthplace	<p>Birthplace of applicant.</p> <p>Birthplace of applicant's parents, spouse or other relatives.</p> <p>Requirements that applicant submit a birth certificate, naturalization or baptismal record.</p>
<p>"Can you, after employment, submit a work permit if under 18?"</p> <p>"Are you over 18 years of age?", "If hired, can you furnish proof of age?" /or/ Statement that hire is subject to verification that applicant's age meets legal requirements.</p>	Age	Questions which tend to identify applicants 40 to 64 years of age.
	Religion	<p>Applicant's religious denomination or affiliation, church, parish, pastor or religious holidays observed.</p> <p>"Do you attend religious services /or/ a house of worship?"</p> <p>Applicant may not be told "This is a Catholic/Protestant/Jewish/atheist organization."</p>
Statement by employer of regular days, hours or shift to be worked	Work Days and Shifts	
	Race or Color	Complexion, color of skin or other questions directly or indirectly indicating race or color.
Statement that photograph may be required after employment.	Photograph	<p>Requirement that applicant affix a photograph to the application form.</p> <p>Request applicant, at his/her option, to submit photograph.</p> <p>Requirement of photograph after interview but before hiring.</p>
Statement by employer that if hired, applicant may be required to submit proof of authorization to work in the U.S.	Citizenship	<p>Whether applicant, parents or spouse are naturalized or native-born U.S. citizens.</p> <p>Date when applicant, parents or spouse acquired U.S. citizenship.</p> <p>Requirement that applicant produce naturalization papers or first papers.</p> <p>Whether applicant's parents or spouse are citizens of the U.S.</p>
Languages applicant reads, speaks or writes fluently.	National Origin or Ancestry	<p>Applicant's nationality, lineage, ancestry, national origin, descent or parentage.</p> <p>Date of arrival in United States or port of entry; how long a resident.</p> <p>Nationality of applicant's parents or spouse; maiden name of applicant's wife or mother.</p> <p>Language commonly used by applicant, "What is your mother tongue?"</p> <p>How applicant acquired ability to read, write or speak a foreign language.</p>

Applicant's academic, vocational or professional education; schools attended.	Education	Date last attended high school.
Applicant's work experience. Applicant's military experience in armed forces of United States, in a state militia (U.S.) or in a particular branch of U.S. armed forces	Experience	Applicant's military experience (general). Type of military discharge.
"Have you ever been convicted of any crime?" If so, when, where, and disposition of case?	Character	"Have you ever been arrested?"
Names of applicant's relatives already employed by this company. Name and address of parent or guardian if applicant is a minor.	Relatives	Marital status or number of dependents. "With whom do you reside?" "Do you live with your parents?"
Name and address of person to be notified in case of accident or emergency.	Notified in Case of Emergency	Name or address of relative, spouse or children of adult applicant.
"By whom were you referred for a position here?"	References	Requirement of submission of a religious reference.
Organizations, clubs, professional societies or other associations of which applicant is a member, excluding any names the character of which indicate the race, religious creed, color, national origin or ancestry of its members.	Organizations	List all organizations, clubs, societies and lodges to which you belong.
"Can you perform all of the duties outlined in the job description?" Statement by employer that all job offers are contingent on passing a physical examination.	Physical Condition	"Do you have any physical disabilities?" Questions on general medical condition. Inquiries as to receipt of workmen's compensation.

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT ASK AN INTERVIEWER(S)

INFORMATION ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION

- What makes your organization different from others?
- What are the core values of this organization?
- What do you like most about working for your current organization?
- How would you describe your organization's culture? (i.e. the norms, values, beliefs, standard practices/processes, traditions, etc. within the organization)
- What would you say is most challenging about working at your organization?
- What are your future goals, aspirations with this organization?

POSITION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

- How does the job for which I am interviewing fit in with the mission of the organization?
- What would a typical day be like in the position for which I am interviewing?
- How does this position relate to others in this department?
- Which departments would I interact with most?
- What are the criteria for measuring success for this position?
- What do you consider ideal knowledge, skills/abilities and experience for this position?
- What are the primary results you want to see from this position over the course of the next year?

ADVANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- What is the organization's policy on promotions?
- How is the position for which I am applying evaluated? How often?
- How long should a person plan, on average, to be in a position before being eligible for promotion?
- What is the organization's policy on lateral transfers?

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Is training provided for the position for which I am interviewing? How is it provided? How long is it provided?
- Are training opportunities available through the organization?
- What is the organization's policy on continuing education through colleges? Professional seminars?
- How does the organization handle days away from work to attend classes or seminars?
- Does the organization support membership and participation in professional organizations?

BENEFITS (Best to ask after an offer is made)

- Which of the following are available: medical, dental, vision, accidental death/dismemberment, company car or mileage allowance, clothing allowance, athletic/exercise facilities, bonuses, profit sharing, stock options, retirement plans?

COMPENSATION (Best to ask after an offer is made)

- What is the starting salary?
- What is the maximum salary, if any, for this position?
- How are raises awarded? According to tenure? According to merit? Cost of living?
- How often is a person eligible for a raise?

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONS AN INTERVIEWER MIGHT ASK YOU

WORK RELATED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

- Tell me about yourself
- Describe your ideal work environment.
- What kinds of rewards are most satisfying to you? How do these rewards affect the effort you put into your work?
- What did you enjoy most on your last job? Least?
- Describe the most difficult work-related situation you have ever faced. How did you react?
- What was your relationship with your supervisor?
- What qualities do you prefer in a boss?
- What relationship should exist between a supervisor and those reporting to him/her?
- Did you work alone or with other people in accomplishing the majority of your tasks?
- How important is communication and interaction with others on the job?
- Why did you leave your last job? Would they give you a good recommendation?
- Do you have a geographic preference? Are you willing to relocate?
- How do you feel about working overtime? Travel overnight?
- What are your short and long-term career goals? When and why did you establish these goals? How are you planning to attain them?

BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- Give an example of a time you took the initiative at work.
- What was the toughest decision you had to make at a previous job?
- Tell me about the most difficult person you've had to communicate with.
- Tell me about a group project that you were involved in. What was your role?
- Tell me about a time when you had to persuade someone to your point of view.
- Describe a recent work-related problem and the actions you took to solve it.
- Tell me about a time that you had to overcome disappointment.
- What is the biggest challenge you've faced in college and how did you deal with it?
- Tell me about a time when you had to resolve a conflict in a group situation.
- Tell me about a time when you followed through on a commitment, despite difficulties.
- What kind of pressure did you feel on your last job? How did you handle it?
- Describe a situation where you had to do several tasks at the same time.
- Describe a situation when you had to work with someone very different from you.
- Can you describe a time when you disagreed with a co-worker or supervisor? How did you handle it?

EDUCATION RELATED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

- What was your most rewarding college experience?
- What is the highest level of education that you have completed?
- Why did you choose your college/university?
- Why did you select your field of study? Was that your original goal as a freshman?
- Which courses did you like most? Least? Why?
- What do you hope to do with your degree?
- What was your GPA? Could your GPA have been higher? What kept it from being higher?
- Do you think your grades are a good indicator of your college achievement?
- What is your greatest educational achievement?
- How do you think your education has prepared you for your desired career?
- If you had the chance to repeat your college career, what would you do differently? Why?
- What do you feel you will have to do to remain current in your field?
- Do you plan to continue your education?

ACTIVITIES RELATED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

- How do you like to spend your time outside of work and classes?
- What extra-curricular activities did you participate in?
- Why did you select those activities?
- What opportunities did you have for leadership?
- How did these activities affect your work? Your grades?
- What goals have you set for yourself outside of work?

PERSONAL QUALITIES INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

- How would you describe yourself? How would a close friend (professor, employer) describe you?
- Give three words that describe you best.
- What is your greatest strength? Weakness?
- Why should be hired by our organization.
- What do you think would be your greatest contribution to our organization?
- How long will it take you to make a contribution to our organization?
- Do you enjoy working alone or with other people?
- What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction? Why?
- Think of a crisis situation, during which things got out of control. Why did it happen? What role did you play?
- What is your typical role as a group member?

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEWING PRACTICE ACTIVITIES & INFORMATION

The below information is provided to assist you in preparing for your upcoming interview(s) and overall career development

Activity 1: Brainstorming Exercises to Prepare for an interview

- List Your Accomplishments (include academic, work, volunteer, leadership, athletic, etc. involvement, events, activities that have directly contributed to your professional development):
- What is your career aspiration (is your career goal a niche area, what specific aspects of your intended career are most important to you?):
- Now list unique aspects of your career development. What specific knowledge, skills and abilities do you bring to the table and acquired in college, what makes you a great candidate for a job in your career field? Think about specific coursework, academic experiences, projects, volunteer and leadership activities that are not so common.

Activity 2: Career Development Activities

- Create your career vision
- Determine your short- and long-term goals and the associated “next steps” (i.e. goals you will work towards over a brief period of time (e.g. one week, two weeks or no more than a month).

Activity 3: Create a Personal Achievement Diary

- Write down everything that pops into your mind until you have a list of 20-30 or more accomplishments. As you recall each accomplishment, list a few words so you’ll know which experience you’re referring to.
- Once your list is complete, review each accomplishment and visualize the events for at least a minute. Then take 10 of your top accomplishments and write about each one. Relive the experience and put your thoughts on paper—describe the challenges you faced, your analysis of the situation and the actions you took. Then explain the results, quantifying them whenever possible.
- Identify between 4-6 skills that each accomplishment demonstrates (dedication, creativity, problem solving, team building, etc.). Whenever you want to “sell” one of your job skills, you’ll be ready with examples to support your case.