

INTERVIEW PREPARATION GUIDE



Career Development Office

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THE JOB INTERVIEW

Everything you have been doing in your job hunt – putting together a strong résumé, researching companies, developing a network of contacts, writing cover letters – has been leading to this point: the interview with a prospective employer that lands you the job!

This guide has been prepared to equip you with the tools necessary to successfully interview and reduce your level of anxiety. Here are a few things to keep in mind before you jump in:

- Remember that a moderate amount of anxiety associated with the interview process is good.
- The interviewers want you to succeed, and want to hire you.
- The best person to sell you is you. Research, reflection and practice will make you much more effective in selling yourself as the best candidate for the position.

PREPARATION

In addition to an assessment of your competencies, an interview is also an assessment of your interest and potential fit within the team, department, and overall organization. A well-prepared candidate has thoroughly researched the organization, knows how their experiences fit the job needs, and is prompt and organized.

ORGANIZATION AND POSITION RESEARCH

- Size and scope
- Products and services offered
- Latest news on growth or direction
- Duties and responsibilities for position for which you are interviewing
- Kenyon Career Network (Find alumni who work for the organization/industry and conduct an informational interview to learn more.)

PERSONAL PREPARATION

- Reflect on your skills and experiences, and how they relate to the job duties of the position for which you are applying
- Consider times of challenge, success, decision-making processes, interpersonal dynamics, and quantifiable outcomes as a result of past efforts
- Prepare to draw on a wide variety of experiences (internships, activities, volunteer work, athletics, academic experiences, campus jobs, etc.) and not rely too heavily on any one position or organization.
- Draft a list of questions you would like to ask your interviewers. Make sure these are not questions easily answered by the organization website or Google search (see pg. 4 for examples)
- Anything else asked of you by the interviewer (mock presentation, article for discussion, sample consulting case, etc.)
- It is strongly recommended that you bring notes, examples, and questions with you into the interview.

THE BEST PREPARATION FOR AN INTERVIEW IS *PRACTICE*

- Practice *out loud*, in front of a mirror or record your responses.
- Ask a roommate or friend for help and seek honest, constructive feedback.
- Don't memorize your answers. Have an outline for information you would like to cover, but answers that sound too scripted are not genuine.
- Think about how your experiences and education relate to the position.
- Plan ahead. Interview practice takes time and cramming the night before will often cause anxiety.

We strongly encourage you to schedule a mock interview with a CDO advisor prior to your first interview.

INTERVIEW DAY LOGISTICS

- Location and transportation (travel time, parking, floor and office number, etc.). Plan to arrive ten minutes prior to your interview time.
- Interview attire
 - The fail-safe choice for interview attire is a basic neutral suit with pants or skirt and a matching jacket. A tailored dress and blazer is also appropriate.
 - A shirt and tie, blouse, or light sweater are all good choices for under a jacket
 - Whatever you wear, make sure it is clean, ironed, and laid out the night before
- What to bring
 - Additional copies of resume and reference list
 - Something to write with (and on)
 - A professional bag, briefcase, or padfolio

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [glassdoor.com](https://www.glassdoor.com) (Salaries and interview questions from previous job candidates. Take the information with a grain of salt, denied candidates likely have biased opinions about the interview process)
- [readyprepinterview.com](https://www.readyprepinterview.com) (Large bank of interview questions for specific careers)

QUESTIONS YOU MAY BE ASKED IN THE INTERVIEW

NOTE: *These questions are presented as a guide, not a comprehensive or exhaustive list. We encourage you to research industry specific questions, as some of these questions may or may not be appropriate for your interviewing situation.*

1. Tell me about yourself? (You WILL be asked this question. Prepare.)
2. What do you know about our organization?
3. Why should we hire you?
4. Why did you select your college?
5. What led you to choose your major?
6. Describe your leadership style.
7. How would your colleagues describe you?
8. How would a past supervisor describe you?
9. Tell me about a time when you had to work under multiple deadlines?
10. Why do you want to work for us?
11. Give an example of a time in which you had to use data to make a decision or plan a course of action.
12. Describe a time when you had to motivate others.
13. What do you consider to be your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
14. Describe a challenging situation you had with a peer, supervisor, or coworker (be sure to address how you responded to or resolved the situation)
15. Do you have plans for continued study? An advanced degree?
16. Where do you see yourself in 5 years?
17. Do you have any question for me? (*See next column for Questions for the Interviewer that you might want to ask*).

Behavioral Interviewing is a popular style of interviewing. Employers prefer this style of interviewing because past behavior is the best predictor of future behavior. A question that begins with "Tell me about a time when....." is a behavioral interviewing question. When going into an interview, it is important to have several examples of past experiences that could answer these types of questions. Make a list and take it with you! **Focus on describing the situation, the action you took, and the result of that action.** This will help you construct a complete answer.

QUESTIONS YOU MAY WANT TO ASK THE INTERVIEWER

NOTE: *It is important that you ask questions, not only to gain important information about the position and the company, but also to show your interest in the position.*

1. Why is this position open?
2. What are some of the objectives you would like to see accomplished in this job (short and long-term)?
3. What skills do you think are most important for this position?
4. What are the major challenges in this position?
5. What freedom would I have in determining my own objectives and methods of measurement?
6. What advancement opportunities are available for the person who is successful in this position, and within what time frame?
7. Where would you like this department/organization to be in five years?
8. What accounts for success within the company?
9. How are performance evaluations conducted?
10. How would you describe the organization's work environment or culture?
11. What characteristics do your best employees have in common?
12. What education and training programs are provided?
13. How would you describe your supervisory style?
14. What is the next step?

REMEMBER: you are also interviewing the employer to determine if the organization is a good fit for you.

As you progress through the interview day, consider:

- What is the general climate of the organization? What characteristics are valued (explicitly or implicitly)? How formal is the work environment?
- How does your potential supervisor interact with other employees? How do senior employees interact with junior staff?
- What are the personalities of your potential coworkers?

LEGAL AND ILLEGAL JOB INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Employers are eager to obtain as much information about a potential candidate as possible to make the best decision for their organization. In their efforts to know more about a candidate, interviewers may accidentally or intentionally ask an illegal question during the interview. There are regulations for your protection at the federal, state, and local level as to what questions an employer may ask of you.

However, that does not mean you should not prepare for potentially illegal questions. You have three main options for response:

1. You are free to answer the question – but if you choose to do so, realize that you are giving information that is likely not job related. And, you could harm your candidacy by giving the “wrong” answer.
2. You can refuse to answer the question. By selecting this option, you'll be within your rights, but you're also running the risk of coming off as uncooperative or confrontational.
3. Your third option is to examine the *intent* behind the question and respond with an answer as it might apply to the job.

Example

Illegal question: Are you a U.S. citizen? or What country are you from?

Appropriate answer: I am authorized to work in the United States.

Following up is a necessity after the interview. To make the best impression, write and send a thank-you note or email on the same day as your interview

SPECIFIC INTERVIEW FORMATS

Interviewing is often a long and multi-step process, and you will likely interview at least twice before you can expect a job offer. Below are a few tips and expectations for some of the interview formats you may encounter during your job or internship search.

PHONE INTERVIEW

- Smile; It will come through in your voice.
- Ensure that the recording on your voicemail is appropriate.
- Choose a location without other distractions and good reception.

SKYPE INTERVIEW

- Dress as if your interview was face to face.
- Remember to look into your webcam (not at your screen) to simulate eye contact.
- Ensure that you have proper lighting in the room, and that everything behind you is appropriate for the interviewer to see (this includes your Skype profile picture).

FULL DAY INTERVIEW

- Be prepared to interview with multiple teams, departments, and individuals.
- Interviewing over a meal is still interviewing (no matter how informal it may seem).
- Tour of facilities (make sure you can comfortably walk in your shoes).

GROUP INTERVIEW

- You will likely be completing a task or project with other candidates you do not know.
- Employers will be observing how you interact with the group and what role you assume.
- Demonstrating effective team skills is more important than being “The Leader” of the group.

ADDITIONAL INTERVIEW SCENARIOS

- Preparing a presentation , sample lesson, or lesson plan
- Group discussion or project
- Situational judgment test
- Case Study
- Writing assignment or language fluency test

BACKGROUND SCREENING

EXPECT EMPLOYERS TO CHECK:

- References (most employers call, rather than relying on written reference letters)
- Employment history
- All the information you supply on an employment application. This information must be truthful or you run the risk of having the job offer rescinded.
- Criminal background check (Anything above a minor traffic offense will show on your record. If you have any questions about your history, please speak to a CDO Advisor.)

EMPLOYERS MAY CHECK:

- College transcript (verify graduation date, coursework and GPA)
- Credit history
- Driving record
- Pre-employment drug test results
- Fingerprints/FBI files

If you have any additional questions (or want to schedule a mock interview), please contact the CDO.
We are here to help!