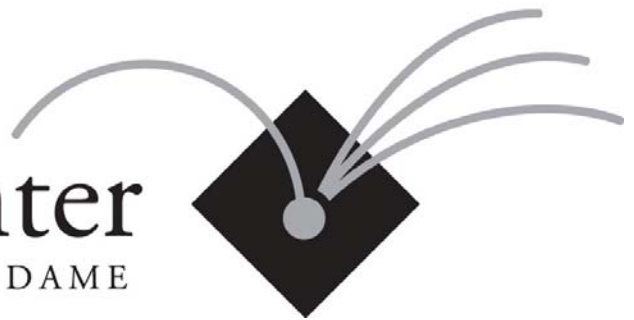


INTERVIEWING GUIDE

The Career Center
UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME



STEP 1: INTERVIEW PREPARATION

The first step for your job or internship interview is the most important: PREPARATION!!!!!! You can maximize your interview success with advance planning, personal self assessment and interview practice. Interview preparation is similar to an athlete who trains months before a long distance race, or an actor who rehearses their part in a play before theater season begins, or a musician who rehearses hundreds of hours before a recital. Create a check list of 10 planning activities before you “go live” with your first job or internship interview!

TOP 10 INTERVIEW PREP LIST

1. **Knowledge of yourself:** you must know yourself in terms of skills, interests, values, future aspirations, etc.
2. **Career direction:** well defined goals, confidence in pursuing a chosen field of interest, realistic plans for advancement
3. **Communication skills:** ability to deliver ideas, clear and concise answers, verbal animation, articulation, appropriate vocabulary
4. **Qualifications:** similar to knowing yourself, be aware of specific academic training, leadership experience, critical thinking skills, extracurricular involvement
5. **Maturity:** demonstrated by poise, optimism, appearance, tone of voice
6. **Professionalism:** communicate a strong work ethic, high moral values, integrity
7. **Execute a game plan:** prepare yourself to sell you in terms of relating your interests, skills and goals to the employer and the career opportunity available
8. **Conduct a video taped mock practice interview** with a recruiter, career counselor, former employer, or even a friend – this is the key to success!
9. **Do not memorize answers**, but know how to communicate the contents of your resume and your top reasons for pursuing the job
10. **Write down 25 words that describe you** prior to the interview – become familiar with these self descriptors and feel comfortable in delivering them in the interview: “ I am: motivated, ambitious, confident, dedicated, loyal, friendly, a problem solver, a team player, tenacious, perseverant, ethical, energetic, etc.”

STEP 2: EMPLOYER RESEARCH

Conducting thorough company research is vital to an effective job search. This process not only helps a job candidate tailor his/her resume and cover letter to a particular position, but it is especially helpful with interview preparation. Employers view researching the company as a critical factor in applicant evaluation because it demonstrates the candidate’s interest and enthusiasm for their company. Recruiters often comment that students lack company research skills. **A recent survey of 651 employers conducted by The Career Center indicated that Notre Dame students scored low on interview preparation, knowledge of career fields and lack of research prior to the interview.** As a result of this feedback, we developed a new “Prep Sheet” entitled the *Interview Checklist*. This resource will act similar to a coach’s game plan prior to an athletic contest or a musician’s sheet of notes used to practice before performing in a recital. There are three types of checklists: **For Profit checklist, Nonprofit checklist and Government Agency checklist.**



Interview Checklist
For Profit

Name of Company: _____

Organization Knowledge

Company History: _____

Company Mission: _____

Company Leaders: _____

Organizational Structure: _____

Principle Products/Line of Business: _____

Primary Locations: _____

Stock Price: _____

Stock Trends: _____

Industry Knowledge

Industry Background/General Information: _____

Competitors: _____

Position's Career Path: _____

Relative Size in Industry: _____

Industry Trends and Facts: _____

Current Events

New Products/Lines of Business: _____

Recent News Articles about Organization: _____



Interview Checklist
Nonprofit Organization

Organization name: _____

Organization mission: _____

Populations served: _____

Executive Director: _____

Local, Regional, National and World aspects of the organization: _____

Size of local, national organization: _____

Volunteer structure and size: _____

How the organization refers to its constituents – clients, guests, patrons, members: _____

Who comprises the Board of Directors: _____

CEO or President of the national and/or international levels of the organization: _____

Partnerships with community, other agencies and organizations, corporations: _____

Important information from Annual Report; nptimes.com – NPT Top 100 Report;
organization website: _____

Recent news: _____

Primary sources of funding – could be a mix of the following: _____



Interview Checklist ***Government Agency***

Bureau, agency or department name: _____

Public service mission: _____

Sector of the population to which agency's services are directed: _____

Top positions titles and person's names in agency such as Executive Director, Secretary of Department, elected positions, legislators, Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Mayor, Senators, Representatives:

Level of government at which the agency functions – city, county, township, state, region of the state, federal: _____

Branch of government – executive, judicial, legislative: _____

Counterpart to the agency at the different levels of government, for example Chicago Housing Authority is the municipal level of the state and federal department of Housing and Urban

Development: _____

Recent news articles, reports or stories involving the bureau, agency, or department: _____

Size and jurisdiction of office with whom you are interviewing; as well as size and jurisdiction of parent agency to the office: _____

Recruiting terminology, for example the federal government calls an open position a vacancy; GS level is the grade level equivalent to a particular salary range for the federal government; state and municipal levels of government may have their own specialized vocabulary for the hiring process:

Political appointments, elected and hired positions within the agency with whom you are interviewing:

Partnerships with nonprofit agencies: _____

Contracts and business relationships with corporations and manufacturing companies: _____

Relationship of government agency with which you are interviewing to other government departments or agencies; differences between focus of public service and connection between them:

Interview Checklist Resources- For Profit

In order to help you complete a game plan or “Interview Checklist” the following on-line resources will be invaluable to you when conducting research.

THE VAULT ONLINE CAREER LIBRARY

http://www.vault.com/cb/careerlib/careerlib_main.jsp?parrefer=360

- Contains insider company information, advice, and career management services. Includes an extensive selection of career, industry, and employer guides and articles.
- See the Career Center Job and Internship Databases page for login information:
<https://careercenter.nd.edu/website.php?sectionid=485>

WETFEET

<http://wetfeet.com>

- Contains company and industry research and career-related information to help students make better career decisions. Also includes job and internship opportunities.
- See the Career Center Job and Internship Databases page for login information:
<https://careercenter.nd.edu/website.php?sectionid=485>

CAREERSEARCH

<http://www.careersearch.net/v2/client>

- Provides access to a networking database of over 2 million companies nationwide. Search for information on a particular company, industry, or location using a variety of search options.
- See the Career Center Job and Internship Databases page for login information:
<https://careercenter.nd.edu/website.php?sectionid=485>

FACTIVA

- Includes company news, financial information, key competitors, and more.
- Go to: <http://www.library.nd.edu>
- Click on *F*
- Select *Factiva*
- Once in Factiva, select the *Companies/Markets – Company Quick Search* tab
- Click on the *Name* button and type in the company

MARKET INSIGHT

- Contains excellent industry information.
- Go to: <http://www.library.nd.edu>
- Click on *M* and Select *Market insight*
- Once within *Market insight*, select *Industry* from the top toolbar
- From the pull down menu, click appropriate industry and select *Go!*
- If you would like a comprehensive industry guide, click the Adobe icon under *SandP Industry Surveys*

Interview Checklist Resources- Nonprofit and Government Organizations

ACTION WITHOUT BORDERS

www.idealists.org

- Locate jobs and internships throughout the world

GUIDESTAR

www.guidestar.org

- Connecting people with nonprofit information.

NONPROFIT TIMES

www.nptimes.com/

- Contains the Top 100 Nonprofits; annual salary report.

INDIANA NONPROFITS

www.indiana.edu/~nonprof/index.php

- Indiana nonprofit organization database and research.

IDEALIST.ORG

www.nonprofits.org

- Internet Nonprofit Center providing nonprofit resources.

FOUNDATION.ORG

www.foundations.org

- Directory of charitable grant makers.

ALLIANCE FOR NONPROFIT MANAGEMENT CAREER BANK

www.allianceonline.org/Careers

- The Alliance Career Bank is designed to enable professionals to identify nonprofit jobs, especially in the capacity-building field.

USA JOBS

www.usajobs.opm.gov

- Official Jobsite of the United States Federal Government.

LSU Libraries Federal Agencies Directory

www.lib.lsu.edu/gov/fedgov.html

- Federal government and independent agencies and branch offices; excellent resource for researching connections between departments, agencies and bureaus, as well as branch of government.

State and Local Government on the Net

<http://www.statelocalgov.net/state-in.cfm>

- A directory of official state, county, and city government websites.

Library of Congress

<http://www.loc.gov/rr/news/stategov/stategov.html>

- State and local government information.

FIRST GOV

<http://www.firstgov.gov/>

- Covers key information on federal, state and local governments – excellent.

OMB WATHC

www.ombwatch.org

- Government search engines, government job search tips, Congress, and nonprofits.

STEP 3: THE INTERVIEW

There are several types of interview styles and techniques. Here we will discuss two typical interviews:

I. The phone interview



II. The face-to-face interview



You can expect most interviewers to utilize the following formats:

I. The Phone Interview- There are 3 Types of Phone Interviews

1. Any contact via the phone with the employer

Keep in mind that any contact you have with the employer is part of the decision making process and all interactions will affect how you are perceived.

How to prepare

- The employers first contact with you may be through your voicemail or answering machine- so make sure your outgoing message is professional
- Leave identifying information so the recruiter knows he/she has reached the correct person
- Talk to your roommates about the importance of taking messages

2. Short Pre-Screen

The recruiter may call unexpectedly to conduct a pre-screen. The purpose of the pre-screening is to ask a few key questions before going further in the interview process. The information he/she is generally looking for includes the following:

- Are you still available?
- Are you interested in the position?
- Do you have the skills for this position?
- Are you willing to relocate?
- Do you know anything about the organization?
- Do you sound professional?

The recruiter wants to ensure that you meet the basic criteria and are sincerely interested in the position.

How to prepare

- Job tracking- keep a list of the positions you are applying for along with contact names. When the employer makes contact you should be able to recall information regarding the position and what the position entails.
- Do not get put on the spot! If the recruiter calls unexpectedly to conduct a pre-screening interview but you are in a situation where you are unable to carry on the conversation (class, basketball game etc.) ask if you can call them back immediately and get to a place where you can carry on the interview without distractions.

Phone interview continued...

3. Scheduled Phone Interview

A scheduled phone interview is an in depth pre-screen before the site interview. In some cases, for example internships, the scheduled phone interview is the actual interview. If the phone interview is the actual interview, applicants are hired solely on the basis of the phone interview. Scheduled interviews can last anywhere from 15 minutes to one hour.

How to prepare

- Choose a place to conduct the phone interview without distractions (if you have roommates you may want to give them notice)
- When using a cell phone, make sure you can get a good signal in the chosen location
- Check that cell phone batteries are charged
- Turn off call waiting
- Keep your resume and job description in clear view (possibly tape it to your desk or a wall)
- Make a short list of accomplishments/things you think the employer should know about you that makes the connection between your skills and the position
- Have pen and paper ready to take notes on questions and answers immediately after the phone interview
- Practice through a mock interview or a tape recorder

During the Interview

- Get dressed and cleaned up for the phone interview-feeling like a professional will help you convey confidence
- Posture will affect how you sound- sit up or stand while conducting the interview
- Smiling can affect how you come across
- No food/drink/gum/sneezing or coughing
- Speak clearly and enunciate
- Always use the recruiters title and last name
- If you are having difficulty hearing the recruiter let him/her know
- Show that you are enthusiastic about the organization and the position
- Build rapport with the recruiter, be yourself, but always remain professional
- Follow recruiters' cues and don't ramble to fill silences
- Show that you are interested in the position

Anticipate the Interview

- Research the organization
- Review potential interview questions and come up with possible answers using examples
- Prepare questions to ask the interviewer-ALWAYS ask questions

SUCCESSFUL PHONE INTERVIEW -SUMMARY

- Demonstrate connection between your skills and the position
- Answer questions thoroughly, demonstrating you have done your research and are prepared
- Communication skills-show that you are articulate and conduct yourself professionally
- Develop rapport with recruiter and demonstrate sincere interest in the position

II. The Face-to-face Interview- The most common interview

The first few minutes are absolutely critical to interviewing success. Many interviewers will make a snap judgment about you – good or bad – and spend the rest of the interview validating the first impression. You need to be comfortable with your own style, and be prepared to present an attitude that reflects your sincere interest in getting the job. ***Exhibit confidence, enthusiasm, and a high level of interest during the first minute of the interview. Be yourself and do it your own way, but do it!***

1. THE WARM-UP (3-5 MINUTES)

- Greeting: smile, firm hand shake, look the employer in the eye, be confident
- Establish Rapport
- Explain Structure of Interview
- Verify Data on Resume, etc.

2. GATHER EVALUATION DATA (15-20 MINUTES)

- Open-Ended Questions: Prepare answers for these questions
- Behavioral Questions
- Probing Questions
- Determine Whether Match Exists: Are you right for the employer? Vice versa?
- Strengths, Liabilities, Weaknesses

3. ANSWER QUESTIONS/OFFER INFORMATION (3-5 MINTUES)

- Explain Training Program
- Describe Position
- Answer Candidate's Questions: Prepare questions in advance

4. CLOSE INTERVIEW (2-3 MINTUES)

- Learn About What Happens Next

STEP 4: INTERVIEW FOLLOW UP

One of the most forgotten “arts” of interview success involves “closing the deal” with an affirmative note of thanks that should be written to the recruiter and a confident statement that you want the job!

FOLLOW UP LETTER/EMAIL:

- Within 24 hours of the interview, write a note to the person or persons who took the time to meet with you about the job opportunity.

REAFFIRM YOUR INTEREST:

- Be specific in your follow up communication to explain why you are the right person for the job: relate your skills, interests, experience and knowledge to the job, the employer and the industry/field for which you are pursuing.

Sample Thank-you note/letter

Your Name
Your Address
Your City, State, Zip Code
Your Phone Number
Your Email

Date

Name
Title
Organization
Address
City, State, Zip Code

Dear...,

It was a pleasure to meet with you to speak about the Marketing Representative position at ABC Company. I believe my skills and personality match well with what your organization is looking for in an employee.

A Marketing Representative needs to be creative, organized, and enthusiastic which are all characteristics I obtained through my internship at XYZ Marketing. In addition to my internship, my Bachelor of Arts in Marketing has given me the knowledge to be successful in the marketing industry.

If given the opportunity, I believe I can make valuable contributions to your organization.

I appreciate the time you took to interview me. I am very interested in working for you and look forward to hearing from you about this position.

Sincerely,

Your Signature

Your Typed Name

=====

The Psychology Behind Some Common Interview Questions

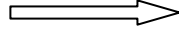
It is important to know that some employers ask questions that seem very simple; however, the hidden meaning behind the questions may not be simple at all.

Adapted from the book Money Jobs

WHEN INTERVIEWERS ASK YOU

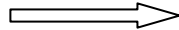
WHAT THEY REALLY WANT TO KNOW IS

Describe yourself. What in your background qualifies you for this job?



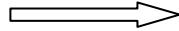
Can you take an incredible amount of information, organize it quickly in your head, and present it in a concise and articulate fashion?

What are your greatest strengths and weaknesses?



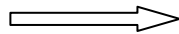
Are my perceptions of your strengths and weaknesses the same as yours? How mature are you in dealing with your weaknesses? Can you identify methods for self-improvement?

Where do you want to be five years from now?



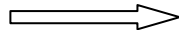
What motivates you and what do you want out of life? Is this job merely a stepping stone to something better?

Why this job? Why this organization?



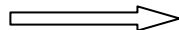
Have you done your homework? Are you analytical?

How would your peers describe you?



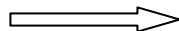
How do you see yourself? Are you a leader or follower? (A quiet confidence is needed here, not arrogance or egotism.)

What makes you think you'll succeed in this organization?



Have you accurately identified the skills and expertise needed to succeed? Can you prove you have them?

Why should we hire you? What do you bring to this job?



How are your promotion and persuasion skills? Are you believable? If you can't sell yourself, how will you be able to sell our products/company/ideas?

"I shall prepare myself and my opportunity must come" (Abraham Lincoln)

No two interviews are alike. In each interviewing experience there will be questions you were not asked in previous interviews. However, there are a number of questions that seem more common than others, and these are the questions you should think about before each interview. A majority of interviewers will steer away from standard directive questions and concentrate more on open-ended situational or behavioral questions. Common themes include applications of **analytical, problem-solving, and decision-making skills; leadership development; creativity; teamwork; and personal development.**

PREPARE YOUR ANSWERS TO THESE QUESTIONS PRIOR TO THE INTERVIEW

1. Why are you interested in our organization?
2. What work experience has been the most valuable to you and why?
3. Give an example of a problem you have solved and the process you used.
4. Describe a situation in which you had a conflict with another individual and how you dealt with it.
5. What idea have you developed and implemented that was particularly creative or innovative?
6. How did you choose to attend Notre Dame and how did you select your major(s) in _____?
7. How do you think you have changed personally in the past (5) years?
8. Tell me about a team project of which you are particularly proud and your contribution.
9. What types of situations put you under pressure and how do you deal with the pressure?
10. Tell me about a situation when you had to persuade another person to your point of view.
11. Describe a leadership role you have held and tell me why you committed your time to it.
12. What challenges are you looking for in a position?
13. In thinking about a past position you have held, what did you do to make your duties more effective or more challenging?
14. What steps would you take to terminate an employee who is not performing adequately?
15. What three trends do you see in the future for our industry?
16. Tell me about yourself.
17. Why do you want to work in (career field)?
18. What experiences have directed you toward pursuing your degree?
19. Why do you feel you will be successful in this program?
20. What is your greatest strength/weakness and how will it affect your performance in this program?
21. Describe a team-oriented accomplishment in which you participated as a member of the team.
What did you find to be the most difficult issue or process in becoming a successful team?
22. Have you ever received a grade lower than you expected? If so, what did you do about it?
23. Describe one of the toughest competitive situations you have faced and how you handled it.
24. What are some of the most creative things you have done?
25. What has been one of your greatest disappointments and how did you respond?
26. Describe a time when you added value to an existing work process.
27. What characteristics do you think are important for this position?
28. Describe a situation in which you were criticized and how you responded.
29. How has your education at Notre Dame prepared you for a _____ position?

30. Where do you see yourself in 5 years?
31. What has been the biggest accomplishment in your life?
32. What salary are you expecting?
33. Why should I hire you?

“One specific is worth a hundred generalities.”

(Turkish proverb)

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR INTERVIEWER

1. To what extent will I be responsible for determining my work objectives?
2. Describe the rotational training program associated with this position/internship. How is employee performance evaluated during the training period?
3. What career paths have others generally followed after completing the program?
4. As an intern, what kind of projects will I receive?
5. What characteristics best describe individuals who are successful in this position?
6. Where could a person advance who is successful in this position? Within what time frame?
7. In what ways has this organization been most successful in terms of products/services over the past several years?
8. How is job performance evaluated?
9. What has been the professional growth track for other students who have been recruited by your company over the past 3-5 years?
10. How would you describe the culture of your organization?
11. If I work hard and prove my value to the company, where might I find myself in five years?
12. What is a typical work week for a (position) in your company?
13. How much decision-making authority is given to new employees?
14. Does your organization encourage its employees to pursue additional education?
15. What other positions/departments will I interact with the most?
16. What are the key business reasons driving the need for this position?
17. Describe the three top challenges that I'll face in this job.
18. What has to happen for you to know you've hired the best person?
19. What are the key deliverables and outcomes that this position must achieve?
20. Describe the top three initiatives for your company/department and how this position is linked to these initiatives.
21. What are the key metrics for measuring success in this position?

STAR IN A SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEW

SITUATION (Class project, student activity, volunteer experience, job...)

Example: As a member of the Mechanical Engineering Club...

TASK (Goal, problem to be solved, improvement to be made...)

Example: ...I suggested establishing a mentoring program for area junior high students to increase their interest in science and as a way for engineering students to explore careers in teaching.

AACTION (Planning and implementation done to reach goal, solve problem, etc.)

Example: We formed committees to research the topic, develop procedures, policies, and marketing ideas. To recruit participants, we designed a direct-mail post card to send to all junior mechanical engineering students. Then we presented our proposal to a local middle school drafting class.

RERESULT (The outcome, influences, changes, etc.)

Example: Ten pairs of students were active in the mentoring program for a year. As seniors, two engineering graduates entered the teaching profession and the junior high students started an environmental concerns club after school.

STEP 5: DRESS FOR SUCCESS

Should your clothes and appearance be a consideration for whether you can perform the duties of a particular job? NO! Will your clothes and appearance be considered in evaluating you for a particular job? YES!

Your primary goal in dressing for an interview is to feel good about the way you look while projecting an image that matches the requirements of the position and company.

GUIDELINES FOR WOMEN

Suits, Dresses: Conservative business suit, pantsuit, or dress of natural or woven-blend fabric; skirt length should be to the bottom of the knee at least. Choose a soft color that complements your skin tone and hair color; beige, black, navy, gray, or brown. Make sure your clothes are not too tight or too loose.

Blouses: Simple style; white or soft colors. Avoid low-cut necklines or very frilly styles.

Shoes: Highly polished pumps or medium heels in color that matches your outfit. Save the three-inch heels for another time.

Stockings: Beige, tan, or natural. Avoid patterns or lacy stockings.

Purse: Not necessary, but if you bring one it should be of small or medium size in a color that goes with your outfit.

GUIDELINES FOR MEN

Suits: Preferred dark blue, gray, or muted pin-stripes. Very muted brown or black also acceptable. A quality woven blend of natural fibers looks professional. Avoid bold plaids, bold pin-stripes, contrasting slacks and sport coat, or light colors. Get alterations for a tailored fit!

Shirts: A good quality white button-down or white classic collar is preferred. Be sure it is ironed.

Ties are a MUST: Conservative stripes or paisleys that complement your suit. Silk or good quality blends only. Don't shop for a deal, shop for a good tie. Ties are NOT optional.

Shoes: Highly polished slip-ons or laced dress shoes; brown, cordovan, or black.

For both men and women, avoid unkempt hair or far-out hairstyles. Don't draw the interviewer's attention to your hair. Also, avoid excessive perfume or cologne. It doesn't mean you can't wear it, but a little goes a long way in a closed room. Manicure nails, clean hands, and be neat!