



INTERVIEWING SKILLS

Although the interview process is an anxiety-provoking experience for many people, it is actually nothing more than a mutual exchange of information. This is your opportunity to learn about the job and the employer, as much as it is their opportunity to learn about you. Viewing the interview as a conversation, rather than as an interrogation, can help to put you at ease. It also helps to remember that the interviewer was once in your shoes and therefore can empathize with how you may be feeling.

PURPOSES OF INTERVIEWING

Be aware that the purposes of interviewing are to market your skills, and to allow the employer to discover why you want to work *there* specifically, whether or not you can do the job, and if you are a good fit. Ultimately, the goal of a first interview is to get a second interview!

PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

Preparation can make or break your opportunity, so do your research and be prepared!

RESEARCH

- **The Job/Industry** – Be familiar with the job description, and know about general industry trends.
- **The Employer** – Utilize tools like Hoovers and Vault (available on NYU CareerNet) to learn about the employer. You should also familiarize yourself with the organization’s website. Look for client information, the annual report, the company mission, and general language used, etc.
- **Yourself** – This may sound obvious, but be prepared to discuss your experiences, goals, and accomplishments. Take note of specific examples that effectively relay your expertise.

PRACTICE PRACTICE PRACTICE

It is almost impossible to practice too much. Take advantage of the Wasserman Center by scheduling a mock interview (call 212-998-4730 to schedule an appointment), utilizing InterviewStream (available on NYU CareerNet), or simply practicing with friends or in front of a mirror. The more you prepare, the more competitive you will be and the more natural you will come across in the process.

DETAILS ARE IMPORTANT

First impressions can make a big difference – so make them count!

- **Timeliness:** Be on time! Arrive about 10 minutes early (time to catch your breath and relax for a few minutes).
- **Resume Presentation:** Bring extra copies on resume paper, in a portfolio (not folded). Copies should be easy to access. Also bring a separate list of references (including name, title, organization, email and phone number).
- **Placement of your Belongings:** Turn your phone on SILENT and leave it in your bag. Place your coat and bag out of the way.
- **Professional Attire:** What IS appropriate? Attire varies by industry, but you should be conservative and dress one tier up from the typical attire for that setting. Professional business attire is a matching suit (usually of a conservative color, such as black, navy or charcoal). Depending on your gender expression, it is also appropriate to wear a tie with a suit and neutral colored stockings with a skirt. Business casual is a more relaxed version of business attire, and may include khakis with a button-down shirt and tie or mixed separates. No jacket is required, but a casual blazer is acceptable. Be careful not to wear distracting jewelry or accessories, and limit your use of perfume or cologne (your interviewer may be allergic).
- **Body Language:** Maintain good posture and be careful to eliminate nervous ticks (pen tapping, knuckle cracking, etc.). Offer a firm handshake, and always maintain good eye contact!

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ANSWERING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

When answering interview questions, there are two critical things to remember: (1) Be Relevant (2) Be Specific
In order to stay on track (especially while answering behavioral questions), use the **STAR** method:

- **S**ituation – Describe the situation you were in (e.g., the name of the internship or course you were taking)
- **T**ask – Identify the specific project you were working on and briefly discuss what it entailed
- **A**ction – This is the most important element! Specifically identify what YOUR action was related to the question that was asked
- **R**esult – Close the question by stating an outcome to your situation

Verbal Communication: Watch your “ums,” “likes” and excessive rambling. Practice will help.

Solid & Specific Answers: Be as specific and concise as possible. Content and delivery both matter. Avoid overly personal or irrelevant examples (roommates, etc.).

MOST COMMON QUESTIONS (AND HOW TO ANSWER THEM)

- **Tell me about yourself** – Have a short pitch prepared, focusing on RELEVANT information about yourself, what has led you to where you are now, and why you are interested in this particular opportunity.
- **Strengths and Weaknesses** – Be honest. Be prepared with at least three strengths and one or two weaknesses. Have specific examples to back up your claims. For the weakness question, be able to explain what you are doing or have done to improve upon the weakness. Always be positive.
- **Behavioral Questions:** (e.g., Describe a time when you demonstrated leadership / Tell me about a conflict you have dealt with and how you handled it) Use the STAR method to ensure that you include only necessary and relevant details while remaining on topic.
- **Off the Resume** – Be prepared to discuss specific experiences listed on your resume in greater detail.
- **Salary Requirements** – Do your research and be prepared to answer (payscale.com and glassdoor.com are good resources, as well as the NYU placement surveys available on our website). Give a pay scale range. Don't go below what you can actually afford, or give an unrealistically high number. Be willing to negotiate.

ADDITIONAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why should I hire you?
2. Why do you want to work for us specifically? Who else are you interviewing with?
3. What are your short and long-range goals? How are you preparing yourself to achieve them?
4. Describe how you dealt with a major challenge in your life. What was the outcome?
5. Describe a mistake you made and how you learned from it.
6. Why did you choose to attend NYU? Why did you choose your major? Why did you choose this career path?
7. In what ways can you make a contribution to our organization?
8. What accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction? Why?
9. If you were hiring a candidate for this position, what qualities would you seek?
10. What academic subjects did you like best/least? Why?
11. What have you learned from participating in extracurricular activities?
12. How well do you work under pressure?
13. What do you know about our organization?
14. Tell me about a time that you had a conflict with a supervisor and how you resolved it.

CLOSING THE INTERVIEW

- **Questions to Ask** – You should have 5-10 questions prepared to ask your interviewer, since some will likely be answered in the process of the interview. Ask questions that focus on the job, its responsibilities and its opportunities. Questions about salary, fringe benefits, vacation, etc. should not be asked until you receive an offer. Here are some good examples of questions you might ask:
 - I noticed X on your website. Can you tell me more about that? (Shows that you've done your research)
 - How often and in what format are performance evaluations conducted?
 - What are the next steps in your hiring process? (Always ask this! Gives you a time frame for a follow-up)
- **Thank You Notes** - Always send a thank you note (email or letter is fine) within 24-48 hours following the interview. Help the interviewer to remember you and distinguish you from the other candidates. This is also a good opportunity to reiterate why you are a good candidate (briefly).
- **Following Up** – it is important to follow up – just do not harass the employer! Use your judgment.