

Interviewing Guide

University of Minnesota



**Office of Career
& Professional Development**
Humphrey School of Public Affairs



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Interviewing Guide



Page 2

THE EMPLOYER'S PERSPECTIVE

- Traits that employers look for
- Prove you are a match
- Identifying barriers

Page 6-7

INTERVIEW PREPARATION

- Avoiding common mistakes (page 6)
- Why you should prepare (page 7)

Page 11-13

STAR METHOD

- What does STAR stand for?
- Why STAR?
- How to STAR?
- Examples

Page 3-5

INTERVIEW PREPARATION

- Types of Interviews (page 3)
- Virtual Interviewing tips (page 4)
- What to wear (page 5)

Page 8-10

HOW TO ANSWER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- Open-ended questions (page 8)
- Answer, Evidence, Connection (page 9)
- Behavioral questions (page 10)

Page 14

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE EMPLOYER

- About the position
- About the organization
- About next steps

INTERVIEWING: FROM THE EMPLOYER'S PERSPECTIVE

WHAT TRAITS ARE THEY LOOKING FOR?

The **PADMAN** Model

Presentation

- Do you fit the organizations' image?

Ability

- Can you do the job or learn it quickly?

Dependability

- Are you loyal & trustworthy?

Motivation

- Are your goals in line with the organization?

Attitude

- Will you fit the culture?

Network

- Do you have connections that will benefit the organization?

ADDITIONAL TRAITS

- Reliability
- Communication
- Independence
- Initiative
- Collaboration
- Organization
- Conflict resolution

PROVE THAT YOU ARE A MATCH TO THEIR NEEDS

- What is the "big picture" view of you as an applicant? What do you want to highlight for the employer?
- What makes **YOU** different from other candidates who have similar skills & experiences?
- What is missing from your resume and cover letter?
 - Talk more in-depth than your application could

IDENTIFY BARRIERS & HOW TO OVERCOME THEM

- Identify the gaps between employers needs & your experience in each area
- Create solutions to overcome them:
 - 1) Learn a new skill
 - 2) Access a resource
 - 3) Craft a good answer
 - 4) Change your job target

TYPES OF INTERVIEWS & WHAT TO EXPECT



SCREENING INTERVIEWS (IN-PERSON OR TELEPHONE)

- An initial impression of your attitude, interest, and professional style
- Treat this as a "regular" interview

SELECTION INTERVIEW

- Evaluation of your qualifications through in-depth questions
- Could have more than 1 interviewer
- Establish a connection with each person you meet

BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEW

- To answer: Use the STAR method to provide examples of your behavior, personality, and character
- Think of examples ahead of time

WORK SAMPLE INTERVIEW

- Shows the employer samples of work you have done or skills you have demonstrated
- Practice describing your portfolio/skills beforehand

PEER GROUP INTERVIEW

- Meeting with potential coworkers who evaluate how well you fit in
- **Remember to: SMILE!**
- Focus on how you will work with coworkers

GROUP OR PANEL INTERVIEW

- 3+ people ask you questions, and also may include other candidates
- Be polite, introduce yourself, and maintain eye contact equally with each person there

LUNCHEON INTERVIEW (THE MEAL)

- Conducted in a restaurant to assess your social abilities
- Pick easy food to eat so you can answer without being distracted

STRESS INTERVIEW

- Questions are meant to test how you handle stress on the job
- Relax & take your time answering. Illustrate your thought process/reasoning for finding the solution

VIRTUAL INTERVIEWING TIPS



- Turn off notifications, close browsers, phone on silent
- Test your tech!
- Minimize distractions
- Pick a good location and background
- Have a notepad, pen, resume, & bottle of water

BEFORE

DURING

- Watch your body language
- Show up on time - log in early!
- Make eye contact with the camera
- Good posture
- Dress up
- Build rapport & be yourself
- State your interest
 - They can't see nonverbal cues as much

- Choosing a location for the interview
 - Quiet
 - Distractions turned off
 - Make sure your face is camera level
 - Can put sticky notes around your computer but do not read off of them
- Check internet connection, audio, and camera

OTHER TIPS

WHAT TO WEAR

Interviewing Guide



- Better to be **TOO FORMAL** than **TOO CASUAL**
- Dress how you feel comfortable
- Think about how **YOU** want to be viewed in a professional setting

[Pinterest board with examples on how to dress professionally for an interview](#)

HOW TO AVOID COMMON INTERVIEW MISTAKES



COMMON MISTAKES

- 1) Not preparing or practicing for the interview
- 2) Focusing on incorrect content for your answers
 - Presenting the problem/situation
 - Skipping what steps were specifically taken by you
 - Jumping directly to the impact or results
- 4) Too much confidence & lack of humility, leading to an arrogant portrayal
- 5) Too nervous or fidgety to answer questions properly
- 7) Lack of energy/enthusiasm

TIPS TO AVOID THESE MISTAKES

- **RELAX!** Think of the interview as a conversation about your experience.
- Research & properly prepare
- Need to give more detail in common mistake #2.
Interviewers are most interested in this step!
- Mock interviews. **PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE**
- Be yourself!

INTERVIEW PREPARATION

WHY DO I NEED TO PREPARE?

- May be asked questions in a different way
 - Be able to adapt to different questions, but still getting at the same idea
- Understand a few techniques for answering
- Prep broadly
 - Avoid only prepping for certain questions

HOW DO I PREPARE?

- Prepare some examples and results of those examples
- Review job description, information about employer then determine
 - What would I like to share? What do I want them to know about me? What is my competitive advantage? (Bring in information from page above on employer's perspective)

PREPARATION EXERCISE

EMPLOYER'S NEEDS

•

WHAT YOU WANT TO HIGHLIGHT

•

EXAMPLES OR EVIDENCE

•

INTERVIEW PREPARATION

Open ended questions

OPEN ENDED - SKILLS

- What is your greatest strength?
- What can you bring to our organization?
- Why should we hire you?

Consider other ways that skills are assessed.

MOTIVATION QUESTIONS

- Why are you interested in this position?
- What do you know about our organization?
- Where do you see yourself in 5 years?

Consider other ways that motivation is assessed.

PERSONALITY QUESTIONS

- What is a weakness that you have?
- How would you deal with conflict with a supervisor or colleague?
- How do you work in a team?

Consider other ways personality is assessed.

ANSWER, EVIDENCE, CONNECTION



UNIVERSITY
OF MINNESOTA

Driven to Discover®

State an answer

What will you bring to the position?

- Identify/name your skill, strengths, knowledge, interest, value, etc. Don't just describe your answer, actually **clearly state the answer** to the question

Provide the evidence

How do you know that what you named is a skill/value/knowledge base/interest of yours? **What is your proof?**

- Provide evidence using examples
- Could come from feedback received, self-awareness, performance reviews, classes taken

Make the connection

- How does this **relate to the position** or organization you are applying for?
 - Why does it matter to the interviewer?
 - What value will it add to the position?
- What did you learn?
 - How are you going to apply that learning in the future?

EXAMPLE OF ANSWER, EVIDENCE, CONNECTION



Employer's question:
"What are your strengths?"

Example of an answer

One of my strengths is listening and synthesizing information (answer). When I work on a team, I listen to other people's ideas then I put it together to create an action plan with goals and steps. This keeps my group on track and helps us to know who is in charge of what. If people have feedback on the action plan, I make those changes.

Example of evidence

My team members told me (evidence) they greatly appreciate this as they are skilled in brainstorming not executing tasks. So I take on that role of ensuring we are meeting our goals.

Example of connection

In ____ position I will be able to balance brainstorming with also listening, synthesizing and executing tasks to keep the ____ team on track

INTERVIEW PREPARATION

Behavioral Based Questions

BEHAVIORAL-BASED INTERVIEWS

- Ask for specific situations that demonstrate when and how you have utilized the skills needed for the job
 - Past behavior predicts future performance
- "Tell me about a time when..."
- "Describe a situation in which..."
- Challenging because you need to generate a specific example
- Nearly **EVERY** industry uses behavioral questions

COMMON INTERVIEW TOPICS

- Introductory - "Tell me about yourself"
- Teamwork
- Conflict management
- Strength & weakness
- Communication skills
- Technology
- Leadership
- Interest/passion for the job
- Diversity & inclusion
- Challenge/mistake
- **Add topics to this list based on your research**



STAR SYSTEM



Interviewing Guide

**STAR STANDS
FOR...**

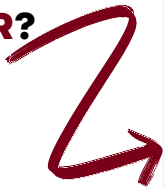
Situation = Circumstances or state of events

Task = Tasks needed to deal with the situation

Action = Actions taken to complete the task

Result = Outcomes as a result of your actions

WHY USE STAR?



- Works well when answering behavioral interview questions where you have used a skill or done an activity
- Paints a clear picture of your unique skills & how you plan to apply them
- Feel more in control of your interview
- Helps frame what you want the employer to know about you to clearly show your skills
- Talking too much or too little?
 - STAR gives you a beginning, middle, and end of your answers
 - Ensures that you give the right amount of details & examples
- Makes your answers sound more sincere by sticking to concrete facts, behaviors, and events



STAR SYSTEM

Interviewing Guide



- Research the organization, highlight the most important skills and experiences the employer is seeking
- Make a list of the top 10 things the employer needs to hear from you in order to hire you
- **For each employer on your list:**
 - Think back to your work, education, volunteer and life experiences.
 - Come up with examples for your top 10 list
 - Come up with a **STAR** story for each by using a list, mind-map, or notecards
- **Practice practice practice** telling your STAR stories until you're comfortable!
- Plan some STAR stories that include **TRANSFERRABLE** skills & qualities as well
 - Ex: Teamwork, communication, problem-solving, motivation, initiative, flexibility, work ethic, etc
- Prepare **STAR** stories about dealing with conflict
- **Keep stories less than 3 minutes**



STAR SYSTEM

Interviewing Guide



Situation/Task:

During my internship last summer, I was responsible for managing various events. I noticed that attendance at these events had dropped by 30% over the past 3 years and I wanted to do something to improve these numbers.

Action:

I designed a new promotional packet to go out to the local community businesses. I also included a rating sheet to collect feedback on our events and organized internal round table discussions to raise awareness of the issue with our employees.

Result:

We utilized some of the wonderful ideas we received from the community, made our internal systems more efficient and visible and raised attendance by 18% the first year.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS TO ASK THE EMPLOYER



Wrapping up the interview

ABOUT THE POSITION:

- How is success measured in this role?
- What type of training is necessary for this position?
- What is the most rewarding aspect of this role?
- What is the most challenging aspect of this role?

ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION & THEIR WORK ENVIRONMENT:

- Why do you enjoy working at this organization?
- What is the culture of the work environment like?
- What differentiates your organization from others in the same field?
- What does your organization do to promote a healthy work-life balance?
- Does this position offer the opportunity for advancement?

ABOUT INTERVIEWING NEXT STEPS:

- What are the next steps of the interview process?
- When will I hear from you about this position?

**For more sample questions, copy & paste
<https://z.umn.edu/sample-questions> into your browser.**