

Interviews

Preparation

- *Know yourself.* Have a 30 second elevator pitch in answer to the question, “Tell me about yourself.” Prepare answers to the questions: Why are you the best candidate for the job? What can you bring to this organization? What are your strengths/weaknesses? Why are you interested in this job? Focus on why *you* are unique.
- *Know your interviewer.* Do your research beforehand on the organization you want to work for. Know what they do, who they work for, and what their mission statement is. Identify who will be conducting the interview, and research on LinkedIn to learn more about their position/title and background.
- *Tailor your resume.* Have a full understanding of the job description and make sure your resume accentuates your qualities that are most relevant to the position.
- *Stay informed!* Know the company, industry, major products and services, history, mission and values, and any current events relevant to the company or industry.
- *Do your research.* You can search the company online, through LinkedIn, local newspapers, and the like. Set up a Google Alert for the company so you receive updates.
- *Confirm the place and time of the meeting and get directions to the location.* If possible, make a trip there beforehand to check the travel time and places you can park. If you are utilizing public transportation, ensure you are taking the most efficient route possible. Either way, allow enough time for snags in your plan (traffic congestion, late trains, etc.).
- *Schedule a mock interview!* Career Advising and Development offers practice interviews. It’s important to be prepared, and the best way you can prepare for an interview is to practice being interviewed! Do this as soon as possible.
- *Practice, practice, practice.* Once you have crafted well thought out answers, continue to practice out loud to a friend or even in front of mirror.

The Day of the Interview

- Be well rested! Make sure to get 8 hours of sleep the night before. This will help you be more alert, relaxed, and personable.
- Shower, style your hair in an appropriate style, use deodorant/anti-perspirant.
- Eat a good breakfast: something protein-rich to give you a healthy boost of energy!
- Dress appropriately! Keep your outfit conservative and professional. Dark colors such as black, navy blue, or gray are always safe bets—nothing garish or neon! Keep any accessories simple and understated. You want *you* to be the focus of your interviewer,

not your chunky necklace or cartoon tie. Brush your teeth and avoid onions and the like before the interview.

- **Business Formal**
 - Suit jacket and matching pants/skirt with a collared blouse in white or a pastel color, skin tone hosiery, flats or low-heeled pumps that match suit
 - Matching two-piece suit, tie with a conservative pattern, long-sleeved button-down collared shirt in white or light blue
 - **Business Casual**
 - Cardigans or sweaters with dress slacks, OR knee-length dresses, close-toed flats or low heels. All skirts or dresses should cover your thighs when you sit down
 - Collared button-down shirt and slacks, a sport jacket and/or a tie is nice but not required
 - Avoid strong perfumes, aftershave, or cologne: the interviewer may be allergic
 - Any makeup should be natural, not too bright or heavy, this includes nail polish.
 - Facial hair should be clean shaven or neatly trimmed
 - Choose a belt that matches your shoes
 - Dark dress socks similar to the color of your suit—NO WHITE GYM SOCKS
 - Cleaned and polished dress shoes
- Look clean and polished: take care of the details! Iron your clothes, trim your nails, and make sure your hair is presentable.
 - Bring several copies of your resume, a professional-looking notepad to write notes during the meeting, copies of any relevant work, and the names/addresses/phone numbers of your references.
 - Bring a padfolio or professional-looking purse and stay organized.
 - Mentally review your self-assessment and 30 second pitch, and be prepared to talk about your accomplishments using specific examples.
 - **Arrive early!** You should be there about 10 minutes early so you have time to use the restroom, check your appearance, and calm your nerves. It also shows enthusiasm for the job.

During the Interview

First Impressions

- Greet your interviewer with a firm handshake, good eye contact, and a smile.
- Make upbeat small talk. Do not start by complaining about anything! Wait for the interviewer's cue to begin the actual interview.
- Show your confidence. If you can, choose a seat closest to and opposite the interviewer.
- Be polite, enthusiastic, confident, and calm.

- Body language is important! Sit up straight, be aware and in control of your nervous habits (hand wringing, leg shaking, etc.), have a pleasant expression and make lots of eye contact. Smile to convey friendliness, and nod to show attentiveness.

Question and Answer

- Concentrate and listen to the questions carefully. Don't get so lost thinking about what to say next that you miss part of the question.
- Observe your interviewer's body language and adjust as appropriate. Be open and attentive to nonverbal clues--they are just as valuable as the verbal ones!
- Be honest! Do not attempt to exaggerate. Be aware that you don't know what the interviewer already knows about you.
- Remember, however, not to be overly negative in your comments. Red flags may be raised if you appear to gossip or whine.
- Be specific and confident about your accomplishments.
- Give concrete examples! The STAR method is a good format to follow:
 - **S- Situation:** describe the role you were playing and the variables involved, setting the stage for your interviewer. What were you doing? Who were you working with? What was the project you were working on?
 - **T- Task:** give a description of the challenge you faced, the problem you were trying to solve, or the circumstances and how they changed.
 - **A- Action:** discuss the specific steps you took to address the problem.
 - **R- Result:** what was the outcome of your idea and action that you took? Quantify it if possible.
- Pause to think about your answers. Taking a minute to compose a response will sound better than a quick answer fraught with "um," "like," and "you know." If you need to buy yourself some time, repeat the question or say "now, let me see," or "I'm glad you asked that question."
- Treat every question as important. Even the smallest questions can be an opportunity to give the interviewer positive information about yourself!
- Be prepared to interview the interviewer. You will likely have time at the end to ask them two or three questions. Don't be caught off guard by this! Think beforehand about questions about the organization, position, and application process. Use these questions to show the employer how interested you are in the position!

Example Questions

- **Traditional Questions**
 - Tell me about yourself (the 30 second elevator pitch).
 - Describe your past work experience.

- What are your greatest strengths/weaknesses? Describe your skills. (Use these to your advantage by making your answers relevant to the position.)
 - Have you had any failures? How have you learned from them?
 - What accomplishments have made you most proud?
 - What were the three most important decisions of your life? What decisions have you most regretted? Why?
 - How did you like your previous job? What did you get out of it? What did you learn about yourself? Why did you decide to leave it?
 - Why do you want to be a _____?
 - What do you think you would bring to our organization?
 - Why should I hire you?
- **Behavioral Questions**
 - How do you think former supervisors/former coworkers would describe your work and attitude?
 - How do you handle pressure/deadlines? Give an example of a time in which you worked under deadline pressure.
 - Give an example of a goal you reached and explain how you achieved it.
 - Give an example of a time you experienced conflict in a group and how you overcame it.
 - How do you handle constructive criticism?
 - How do you handle difficult clients/customers?
 - How do you transform good ideas into successful practices?
 - How would you handle a task or project that you felt unqualified for?
 - What motivates you to put forth your best effort?
- **Education Questions**
 - Why did you choose Le Moyne College? Were you satisfied with your education?
 - Why did you choose your major? Given your career interests, why didn't you major in _____? How has your field of study prepared you for this position?
 - What was your favorite/least favorite class? Why?
 - What academic projects have you done that would contribute to your performance in this position?
 - Do your grades accurately reflect your academic ability? Why or why not?
 - Do you have plans for continued study or an advanced degree? (Be careful how you answer this, depending on the position for which you are applying.)
 - What extracurricular activities did you participate in? What did you learn from them?
 - If you could change anything about your college experience, what would it be and why?
- **Job/Company/Industry Questions**
 - Why are you interested in this field/particular organization?
 - What do you think you'll be doing in the position you're applying for?
 - How do you judge a company when you're looking for a job?
 - What sources did you use to find out about us?
 - In your research into our company, did you see any specific problems that we have? Is there any division in our organization that you are most interested in?
 - What are the most important rewards you expect in your career?

- **Interviewing the Interviewer**

- Ask the interviewer about things that you are interested in based on your research.
- What kind of assignments might I expect during the first six months on the job?
- Where does this position fit into your organizational structure?
- How do you feel about creativity and individuality?
- Describe a typical work day.
- What is the retention rate for people in the position for which I am applying?
- What types of training programs do you have for employees?
- What are the opportunities for growth in your organization?
- What makes your company different from its competitors?
- What characteristics does a successful person at your company have?
- Do you need any additional information from me that might help you make a decision?
- Do you have any doubts about my qualifications for this job? (This may not seem like a good question, but it gives you a chance to address any hesitations your interviewer has, and it shows that you can take constructive criticism.)
- What are the next steps in the interviewing process?
- When do you expect to make a decision?
- **Ask the interviewer for their card so you have their contact information.**

Telephone Interviews

In the case of a telephone interview, prepare yourself as you would for any other interview! The pressure of seeing the interviewer face-to-face may be taken off, but you should still prepare all the answers and questions that you would for a normal interview. In some ways, phone interviews are harder because you are missing the face-to-face connection. Here are some tips to make your phone interview just as effective as a face-to-face:

- Take advantage of being alone to do what makes you most comfortable. If you think better on your feet, give yourself space to walk around.
- Pre-arrange notes on your desk so that you can easily find what you need. When you are alone, you have the advantage of being able to arrange them any way you want.
- You may want to dress up for this interview, even though the interviewer won't see it, to put yourself in a professional state of mind.
- Look in the mirror when you talk and remember to smile! Your expression is reflected in your tone of voice, so it's just as important in a phone interview.

Video Interviews

Again, prepare yourself as you would for any other interview with respect to the questions and getting rest! You will still want to dress up, because your employer will be able to see you. This may be a video interview, but you still need to keep it professional.

- Look into the camera. If you fixate on your image on the screen, it will appear as though you are not making eye contact. Take a moment to make sure you look good, then focus on looking into the camera.

- Get rid of distractions. Make sure you are the only living thing in the view of the camera. Keep children, family, and pets out of the frame during the interview.
- Make sure your connection is secure. A spotty internet connection gives the impression that you are unreliable. If possible, plug into an ethernet port. This is far more stable than wireless access!
- Close other programs on your computer. There is a time and place for browsing the internet while you're doing other things, but this is not it.
- Use headphones. This will avoid playback from the speakers.
- Dress for success. It might seem fine to wear a fancy shirt and shorts where the camera can't see, but it's safer to wear the full outfit. Dark colors with a touch of color is best for video interviews.
- Speak slow and strong. It is easy to talk over people in a video interview, so make sure you wait for your interviewer to stop speaking before you answer. Speak with clarity and make sure your microphone works well.
- Be enthusiastic. Video interviews tend to dampen one's personality, so act as pleasant as possible.
- Have a professional username. Your username and profile picture are your interviewer's first impression of you, so make sure they're something you'd want them to see!

Illegal Questions

- Know your rights! Unfortunately, some employers may be discriminatory in their interviewing or hiring procedures. If you believe you are being asked an illegal question, there are several courses of action you may take:
 - **You may answer the question**, if you feel it will not harm you. However, be aware that you are giving information that is not related to the position, which may ultimately work against you. If you volunteer personal information, such as your first language or significant other, then your interviewer may ask you more questions about that area of your personal life.
 - **You may refuse to answer the question.** This is well within your rights. Keep in mind, however, that depending on how you word your refusal, your interviewer may see you as uncooperative and confrontational, so it is important to maintain your professional demeanor if you choose this option.
 - **You may examine a question for its intent and respond in a way that applies to the job.** For example, if you are asked "Are you a U.S. citizen," that is an illegal question. You could respond instead with "I am authorized to work in the United States."
- If you feel you have been discriminated against in the interviewing and hiring process, you could consider filing charges with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). However, the burden of proving the discrimination will be on you, so in this case it is best to consult an attorney.
- Below is a list of what topics and questions are acceptable or unacceptable according to the National Association of Colleges and Employers. For more information, you can visit the NACE website's page on legal issues in interviews.
 - <https://www.nacweb.org/public-policy-and-legal/legal-issues/legal-issues-navigating-the-interview-process-and-avoiding-a-legal-landmine/>

Interview Questions

Inquiry Area	Illegal Questions	Legal Questions
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May not require an applicant's age, date of birth, or for records to prove his/her age. • Year of graduation from high school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An employer may ask whether an individual meets the minimum age requirements set by law. "Are you over the age of 18?" is an appropriate question.
National Origin/Citizenship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you a U.S. citizen? • Where were you/your parents born? • What is your "native tongue"? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you authorized to work in the United States?
Race/Color	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All questions regarding a person's race/color will be deemed illegal under state and federal laws. 	None!
Religion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any question with regard to an applicant's religious beliefs, denomination, or any questions that indicate religious customs or holidays observed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After an individual is hired, an employer may inquire about religious accommodations.
Marital/Family Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you married? • With whom do you live? • Do you plan to have a family? • What are your child-care arrangements? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would you be willing to relocate if necessary? • Would you be able and willing to work overtime as necessary?
Personal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How tall are you? • How much do you weigh? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you able to lift a 50-pound weight and carry it 100 yards, as that is part of the job?
Disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you have any disabilities? • Please complete the following medical history. • How's your family's health? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you able to perform the essential job functions? • Can you demonstrate how you would perform the following job-related functions?
Arrest Record	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you ever been arrested? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you ever been convicted of _____?
Military	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you've been in the military, were you honorably discharged? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what branch of the Armed Forces did you serve? • What type of training or education did you receive in the military?

Thank You Note

- You aren't done with your interview when you leave the room—writing a brief thank you note is a very important part of the process! A thank you note shows your interviewer courtesy and respect, demonstrates your written communication skills, shows that you are professional and serious, and will help you stand out from other applicants.
- Be prompt. Any thank you notes should be sent within 24-48 hours after your interview, to everyone you met with during the interview process. Thank you notes can be in an email or handwritten, but they must be sent right away.
- Be sure to ask for the cards of all the people you meet with while you're at the interview so you have their contact information and correct spellings of their names.
- In your thank you note:
 - Mention when and where you met with your interviewer (e.g. "I enjoyed speaking with you at Le Moyne on March 12th.")
 - Thank the interviewer for their time and comment on parts of the interview that were interesting and informative. Mention specific information about the organization that appealed to you.
 - Accentuate the points you brought up during the interview that will help them recall who you were, and clarify your interest or any points you thought were left unclear.
 - Bring up points you may have forgotten to mention in your original interview that may help you get the job.
 - Reiterate your interest in the specific position they have available and why you would be a good fit for that job.
 - Mention that you look forward to hearing from them and offer to provide them with any additional information.
 - **Proofread!** Make sure you're not sending off a thank you note that has grammatical or spelling errors in it! Make sure the last impression you leave after your interview is neat and professional.