

# Interview Guide



Consider the following to prepare yourself for an in-person, phone, or video interview.

## Prepare



- Do your research on the organization holding the interview. Know what the organization does, who its clients are, and what its mission is. Identify who will be conducting the interview, research him or her on LinkedIn, and learn more about his or her role in the company, career journey, and other details relevant to the conversation.
- You can search the company online, through LinkedIn, local newspapers, and general Google searches. Set up a Google Alert for the company so you receive updates. You can also schedule an informational interview with an alumnus or network connection to conduct your research.
- Know yourself. Have a 30-second elevator pitch in answer to the prompt: "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 and weaknesses? Why are you interested in this job? Focus on *why you* are unique.
- 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 to compensate for snags in your plan (traffic congestion, late trains, etc.).
- **Schedule a mock interview!** The Office of Career Advising and Development offers practice interviews. It's important to be prepared, and the best way to prepare for an interview is to practice. Do this as soon as possible.
- Practice common interview questions, SEE QUESTIONS SECTION of this guide. Continue to practice out loud to a friend or even in front of mirror. Ensure you are removing "relaxed language" (like, ums, yeah ...) from your answers.

# In-Person Interview

## The Day of the Interview

- Be well rested! Make sure to get eight 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/antiperspirant. Do not wear perfume/cologne.
- Eat a good breakfast - something protein-rich to give you a healthy boost of energy.
- Dress appropriately! [SEE HOW TO DRESS GUIDE](#).
- Bring several copies of your resume, a professional-looking notepad to take notes during the meeting, copies of any relevant work, and the names/addresses/phone numbers of your references.
- Include all of this in a padfolio or simple folder.
- Mentally review your 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. However, do not check in with the receptionist more than 10 minutes in advance.

## 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.

### 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.
- Stay clear of negative comments regarding past experiences and employers. These are red flags to the employer interviewing you.

# During the Interview

- 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.

## STAR Method

**STAR** method is a structured way to answer behavioral based interview questions. Behavioral questions focus on specific examples of past actions which will predict future behavior. Use the **STAR** method to structure your answers.

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 on the project?

**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.

## Behavioral Questions

### ABILITY TO HANDLE STRESS

- What has been the most stressful situation you have ever found yourself in at work?  
How did you handle it?
- What have you done in the past to prevent a situation from becoming too stressful for you or your colleagues to handle?

### ADAPTABILITY

- Tell me about a time when you had to adjust to a colleague's working style in order to complete a project or achieve your objectives.
- How was your transition from high school to university? Did you face any particular problems?  
How did you handle them?

# Behavioral Questions

## **ANALYTICAL SKILLS / PROBLEM SOLVING**

- Tell me about a time when you had to analyze information and make a recommendation. What kind of thought process did you go through? Was the recommendation accepted? If not, why?
- Tell me about a situation where you had to solve a difficult problem. What did you do? What was the outcome? What do you wish you had done differently?

## **CREATIVITY**

- When was the last time you thought "outside the box" and how did you do it? Why?
- Tell me about a problem that you've solved in a unique or unusual way. What was the outcome? Were you happy or satisfied with it?

## **DECISION MAKING**

- Give me an example of a time when you had to be quick in coming to a decision. What obstacles did you face?
- What is the most difficult decision you've ever had to make at work? How did you arrive at your decision? What was the result?

## **INITIATIVE**

- Describe a project or idea (not necessarily your own) that was implemented primarily because of your efforts. What was your role? What was the outcome?
- Tell me about a time when your initiative caused a change to occur.

## **LEADERSHIP**

- What has been your greatest leadership achievement? Talk through the steps you took to reach it.
- What is the toughest group that you have ever had to lead? What were the obstacles? How did you handle the situation?

## **PLANNING AND ORGANIZATION / TIME MANAGEMENT**

- How do you prioritize projects and tasks when scheduling your time? Give me some examples.
- When has a project or event you organized not gone according to plan? What happened? Why? How did you feel?

## **TEAMWORK**

- Tell me about a time when you worked with a colleague who was not doing their share of the work. How did you handle this?
- Tell me about a time when you had to work on a team that did not get along. What happened? What role did you take? What was the result?

# Behavioral Questions

## QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR EDUCATION

- 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.)
- In what extracurricular activities did you participate? What did you learn from them?
- If you could change anything about your college experience, what would it be and why?

## QUESTIONS ABOUT YOU

- 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.) When talking about a weakness, pick one that is not a critical flaw and be prepared to tell the interviewer how you are trying to improve upon that weakness.
- Have you had any failures? How have you learned from them?
- What accomplishments have made you most proud?
- What do you know about our organization?
- Who are your role models and why?
- Why are you interested in this position/company?
- What do you think you would bring to our organization?
- Why should I hire you?
- What do you see yourself doing 5 years from now?
- What motivates you to put forth your best effort?
- How would a former supervisor/former co-workers describe you?

# Questions

## QUESTIONS ABOUT JOB/COMPANY/INDUSTRY

- Why are you interested in this field/particular organization?
- What do you think you'll be doing in this position?
- 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 joining?
- What are the most important rewards you expect in your career?

## QUESTIONS FOR 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?
- 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.**

# Types of Interviews

## 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 eliminated, 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 not being face-to-face 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 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.
  - Be enthusiastic! Phone interviews tend to dampen one's personality, so act as pleasant as possible.

# Types of Interviews

## 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. Determine whether you are interviewing with a person or if it is a pre-recorded set of questions.
- ▶ 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.
- ▶ Remove distractions. Make sure you are the only living thing in the view of the camera.
- ▶ Look at what will be behind you, make sure it's not distracting. Make sure there is not a bright light behind you.
- ▶ 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 slowly and strongly. 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.
- ▶ 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!



# Thank You Note

- ▶ You aren't done with your interview when you leave the room or hang up the phone. 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 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.
- ▶ 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.
- ▶ 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 12.")
  - Thank the interviewer for his or her 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.

