

Interviewing E-GUIDE

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OVERVIEW

- An interview is a meeting in-person, by phone, or internet video-chat between a candidate and an employer
- It is performed to determine if an opportunity is a good fit for the candidate
- You need to articulate your personal brand, value, and relevance to the employer
- You must be an expert on the job and the company to which you are applying
- Know how to communicate the things you want to highlight about yourself in a clear and concise manner
- Be prepared for a variety of potential questions

TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

Screening

- Get a quick read on a candidate's ability to do the job
 - Verify relevant information from the resume
 - Are you a viable candidate?
- Over the phone
- Conducted by Human Resources or Recruiter
- Short (about 15 minutes)
- Not scheduled

Personal/Individual/1st Round

- Getting to know you and what you have to offer
- Why are you interested in this position and this organization?
- Conducted by Human Resources or a member of the team
- One-on-one exchange in person or over the phone
- Length is typically 30-45 minutes
- Is there enough of a match for you to interview with hiring manager?

On-site/Decision/Final Round

- Are you the best candidate for the position? Are you fully qualified?
- Conducted by the person making the hiring decision
- Length of interview and number of interviews vary
- On-site
- How do your personality, work style, and values match the company's values and culture?
- Resulting in an offer or a decline

Task

- Industry specific (demonstrate your ability to perform, a coding test for an IT position as an example)
- Test to evaluate your technical knowledge and skills

INTERVIEW FORMATS

Phone Interviews

- Be sure your phone is fully charged, you can hear it when it rings, and you answer
- Prepare just as you would prepare for an in-person interview
- Have copies of all paperwork:
 - Resume, application, cover letter
 - Previous correspondence
 - Company literature
 - List of questions to ask
- Find a quiet place to conduct the interview
 - Limit distractions

- Ask roommates/housemates to remain quiet during the interview
- Pay attention to your tone
 - Interviewer can only hear, cannot see your body language
- Listen very carefully
- Ask for clarification or to repeat a question, if necessary
 - Bad connection or during teleconferencing
- Smile
 - It will come through in your voice
 - Nervous giggles give an impression of immaturity and lack of self-confidence
- Give succinct, articulate responses, speak clearly
- Do not talk too much
- Do not be afraid of silence or pauses which may seem exaggerated on the phone
- Do not take another call or put the interviewer on hold
- Send a thank you note to your interviewer

Skype/Webcam Interview

- Know your technology
 - Make sure you know how to use it
 - Check the speaker and microphone volume
 - Check the picture quality
 - Know how to use the screen sharing functions
 - Know how to set up a multi-person web conference
- Must have a fast and reliable internet connection
- Control your environment
 - Eliminate distractions
 - Shut down all applications
 - Environment is appropriate and visually clear
- Log in 10-15 minutes beforehand
 - Have notes ready to reference
- Do not get up and move during the interview.
- Be ready with a Plan B just in case the technology fails
- Prepare questions to ask interviewers
- Turn off and do not check your phone
- Send a thank you note to all interviewers

Panel Interview

- Several employees interview one candidate at the same time
- Make sure you know who and how many will be on the panel
- Provide equal eye contact to all interviewers
- Make sure you have prepared questions to ask the interviewers
- Prepare responses to commonly asked questions
 - "Tell us about yourself"
- Turn off and do not check your phone
- Arrive 10-15 minutes early
- Send a personalized thank you to each panel member

Group Interview

- Multiple candidates for the same position interviewed at the same time
- Arrive 10-15 minutes early
- Act courteously to the other interviewees

- Listen to their responses
- Integrate their thoughts into your unique responses
- Be gracious to your “competition”, demonstrate your ability to be an effective team player
- Have a mini-introduction of yourself ready
- Nod your head when the employer speaks
 - Good listener
 - Take in information quickly
- Be the first to speak a few times.
 - Demonstrates leadership ability and initiative.
 - Be aware of looking too aggressive and over-speaking
- Do not interrupt another candidate or interviewer
- Turn off and do not check your phone
- Ask questions in the end
- Send a thank you note to the interviewer

Meal Interview

- Evaluating your emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills
- If you can, research the restaurant and menu in advance
 - Choose something easy to eat with a fork, without a strong odor and not the most expensive
 - Pass on sandwiches, pasta, and messy dishes
 - Do not order multiple courses unless instructed by the employer
- Order non-alcoholic drinks
 - It is still an interview and the employer is watching
- Beware the over-friendly interviewer
 - Someone around your age, with similar background
 - More relaxed approach and meal
 - Interact less formally, be extra careful of what you say
- Turn off and do not check your phone
- Let the hiring manager lead the conversation, avoid talking too much
- Do not be rude to wait staff or arrive late

INTERVIEW QUESTION TYPES AND EXAMPLES

Personal Questions

- Target your interests, qualities, goals, strengths and weaknesses
- Discussing weaknesses or failures, be honest
 - Give examples of real weaknesses
 - Focus on how you are working to improve those weaknesses, and what you learned from your failures
- When telling the employer about yourself, focus on information relevant to the position
- Examples:
 1. Tell me a little about yourself. (Keep your answer career oriented.)
 2. Why do you feel you are qualified for this job?
 3. What are your strengths? Weaknesses?
 4. What do you hope to gain from this position?
 5. What can you offer this company that someone else can not?
 6. What causes you stress and how do you handle it?
 7. Give me three adjectives that describe you.
 8. What do you consider your greatest accomplishment?
 9. Who is your role model and why?
 10. What motivates you?
 11. Why are you interested in this position?

12. Where do you see yourself in five years?
13. How do you define success? How do you define leadership?

Employer Information

- Your knowledge of the employer and your interest in the organization
- Do your research about the employer and the position
- Determine company initiatives/goals to which you can contribute given and reference them in the interview
- Understand the business model
- Examples:
 1. What do you know about our company/organization?
 2. What do you know about this position?
 3. Why do you want to work in this field and for our company?
 4. What are the most important features you are looking for in a job/supervisor?
 5. What type of steps do you take to stay informed of new developments within your career field?
 6. What can you contribute to our organization?
 7. Who are our competitors? Who are our partners?
 8. What major trends do you expect to influence this industry in the future?

Education Related

- Your classes and campus involvement
- Be prepared to explain withdrawal or failing grade
 - Take responsibility for your grades
 - Focus on what you learned from the situation
 - Discuss how you have changed your study skills or ability to prioritize
- Why did you choose to come to Marymount? Why did you choose your major?
- Do not include a student organization on your resume if you did not have meaningful participation
 - Be prepared to answer questions about everything on your resume
- Examples:
 1. How did you decide on your career/field/major?
 2. What classes have you enjoyed the most/least during college and why?
 3. How have the activities that you have been involved with during college influenced you?
 4. Do you have future plans of furthering your education?
 5. What campus activities were you involved with?
 6. Explain... (a poor grade or another failure).
 7. How did you prioritize your time as a student?
 8. Which electives did you take and why did you choose to take them?
 9. What did you learn from your internship?

Experience

- Discuss your work experience, volunteer and community service experiences, leadership roles, student organization involvement, or any other experience that is relevant to the position.
- Use specific examples to support your answers
- Avoid talking negatively about previous employers or supervisors
- Think broadly about your experience
 - Classroom experiences provide you with relevant skills and examples that support your answers
- Examples:
 1. Tell me about a time when you had to influence someone to accept your idea.
 2. Give me an example of a time when you had to make an important decision and how you came to that decision.
 3. What type of supervision do you prefer?

4. Give me an example of a time you worked successfully with a team. What role did you have?
5. Tell me about a time when you had to work with a difficult person and how you handled it.
6. Tell me about your position with _____ and the skills you learned.
7. Please give me an example where you demonstrated the ability to be an effective member of a team.
8. How would your co-workers/supervisors describe you?
9. What did you like the most and the least about your last place of employment?

Atypical Interview Questions

- Unusual questions to see if interviewees are prepared to think on their feet
- Not very common and hard to predict
- Be flexible if you get one and do not act surprised
- Your chance to be creative and show your appropriate sense of humor
- Examples:
 1. If you were a fork, a knife, or a spoon, which would you be and why?
 2. Why are manhole covers round?
 3. Sell me something in this room, anything.
 4. If you were a tree, what kind would you be and why?
 5. If the tables were turned, how would you interview me?

CASE INTERVIEWING

Case interviewing is a technique used by employers to assess your analytical skills in a pressured real-time environment. These interviews are used by management consulting firms, investment banks, and tech companies. The questions usually involve a business scenario, logic problem or estimating exercise, to which you are asked to respond.

The objective of the case interview is not to get it right; there is often no right answer. It is designed for you to demonstrate your ability to solve complex problems and to show the interviewer how you think. The interviewer wants to see you as a colleague with whom he or she would want to work with in an engagement team. Case interviews are generally very interactive as you ask questions, seek clarification, and bounce ideas off your interviewer.

Tips for answering:

- Practice! Case interviews are not like any other interview, be sure to try a few prior to the actual interview
- Listen carefully to the question; paraphrase it back to the interviewer
- Ask for a moment to gather your thoughts before you answer
- Remember there is no "right" answer
 - Process for reaching conclusions is equally important as the conclusion itself
 - Interviewer wants to observe as much of that process as possible, "think out loud" as you are working through the case
 - Be careful of "wrong approaches" including ignoring or forgetting important facts, defending impossible ideas, and force-fitting the wrong structure onto a problem
- Don't be afraid to ask questions
 - Meant to be interactive, with back and forth, not asking questions is a fatal error
 - Questions are expected, the information provided will most likely be incomplete
 - Make sure you ask your questions in a logical progression
 - Listen carefully to the answers to your questions
 - Do not get rattled if the interviewer wants to know why, it is part of understanding your thought process
- Construct a logical framework to explore critical issues of the case
 - Porter's Five Forces, SWOT analysis, Value Chain Analysis, Four P's of marketing
 - Draw on applicable situations you've encountered

- Make sure your conclusion is grounded in action, not just theory
- Be able to explain and defend your reasoning
- Prioritize the issues and objectives
 - Don't get bogged down trying to deal with every aspect of the case
 - As you ask questions, pick up clues as to which issues are important
 - Clues might be meant to lead you back on track if you've gone astray, so listen carefully
 - Do not be afraid to take control of the conversation to get to the meat of the case
- Do not be afraid to think outside the box
 - Creativity and brainstorming may be just what the interviewer wants
- Project confidence; work the case confidently, without getting flustered or frustrated
- Demonstrate your enthusiasm
 - You feel it is fun to tackle this kind of problem, showing you will fit in with the organization
 - Your enthusiastic demeanor shows you are a person they would enjoy working with

Examples:

1. Could you tell us about what steps you would take to develop a plan of service to meet the client's social, health, emotional and economic need? (for a counseling or social work position)
2. How would you redesign an ATM machine to make it more user-friendly?
3. A restaurant owner is setting up a new restaurant and is making a decision on the facilities to place in the restrooms for customers to dry their hands. Initial research suggests that she has three options – paper towels, roller towels, and hot air dryers. She needs to decide today. What should she consider in her decision making process?
4. You have a three liter bucket and a five liter bucket. How will you measure out exactly 4 liters of water? Assume you have an endless supply of water and no markings on the buckets. (This is a logic problem)
5. Estimate the market for light bulbs in Australia. (Focus on the process, not the result)

BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEWING

Behavioral interviewing is a technique used by employers to learn about your past behavior in particular situations, as past performance is the best predictor of future behavior. Behavioral interview questions ask you to provide an example of a time you were in a particular situation or encountered a specific challenge and often start with, "Tell me about a time when..." or "Give me an example of..." Behavioral interview questions are to be expected in any interviewing situation and can be asked within any of the above topic areas. Tips for answering:

- Tell the interviewer about a particular situation rather than providing a general response.
- Keep your answer succinct and focused while providing enough relevant detail – use the STAR technique (described below) to help organize your response.
- Practice answering these types of questions in advance so that your memory is refreshed regarding your experience and achievements
- Consider selecting a few life experiences that you feel might be relevant in demonstrating a couple of different qualities/behaviors so that you have these stories easily accessible to bring forward to demonstrate the desired quality/behavior (*for example, a time when you worked with some of your peers on a group project in class could be a relevant story to demonstrate teamwork, leadership, overcoming a struggle, etc.*)

The STAR Technique

To effectively and completely answer behavioral interviewing questions, use the STAR technique.

S – Describe the Situation

T – Describe the Task you had to overcome and your Thinking process

A – Describe the Action you took (not the action the group took if describing a group interaction)

R – Describe the Result of your action (i.e.: what happened? if negative, what did you learn from this experience?)

Examples:

1. Give me an example of a time when you used creativity to complete a project, work with someone else, or develop a new idea.
2. Describe a time when you were a team leader. Who did the team consist of, and what did you do to help your team be successful?
3. Describe a time when you were assigned a task but were provided little direction for how to complete the task. What steps did you take to complete the task? What was the outcome?
4. Give me an example of a time when you had to deal with a difficult co-worker or fellow student on a project. How did you handle the situation? What were the outcomes?
5. Tell me about a time when you had to persuade someone to see your point of view. What tactics did you use? What were the outcomes? What did you learn?
6. Tell me about a time you were involved in a project with a group.
7. Give me an example of a time when you had to supervise someone.
8. Tell me about how you keep yourself organized to meet deadlines or goals.
9. Give me an example of a time where you failed to meet a goal. What did you fail to do? What were the consequences? What was the outcome?
10. Describe a time when a co-worker or student approached you and criticized your work. How did you handle the situation? What was the outcome?
11. Provide me with an example of a time when you had to motivate others. What were the outcomes?
12. Tell me about a time when you had to make a difficult decision that affected those with whom you worked. What was the outcome?

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE INTERVIEWER

- Always ask questions at the end of your interview
 - Shows interest and enthusiasm
 - See if the interviewer can “sell” you on the company and position
- Questions are to show you did your research and are prepared for the interview
- Do not ask questions answered on the company’s website or in company literature
- Ask three or four questions, prepare more since some of your questions may be answered during the interview
- Be respectful of the interviewer’s time by asking thoughtful questions
- Ask your questions at the end of the interview, or when asked by the interviewer if you have questions
- Remember to let the interviewer run the interview

Good Topics to Ask Questions About:

- Culture/philosophy of the company
- Training and learning environment
- Technology used by the company
- Leadership development
- Communication within the company
- Mentor programs
- Social, work/life balance
- Vision or future growth of the company

Sample Questions to Ask:

1. How would you describe the culture of the organization?
2. What do you like best about the company/organization environment?
3. What qualities do people seem to have who have done well in this department/organization?
4. What opportunities exist for advancement?
5. What is a typical day like in this position?
6. Is there anything else I should know that would help me understand the position?
7. Why is this position available?
8. Does this organization encourage personal and professional growth? How?
9. What are the opportunities you see for this department/organization in the next year?
10. What are the typical hours of this position? Will overtime, night or weekend work be required?

11. What new tasks or responsibilities do you see someone in this position taking on?
12. What are the challenges that need to be faced? What types of challenges does this particular position offer?
13. What type of supervision would I receive in this position?
14. How did you start with the company/organization?
15. What do you like about working for this organization?
16. What are the greatest strengths of this company?
17. How well do departments interact with each other?
18. Will the company continue to be competitive? How?
19. Is your organization quick or slow to adopt new technology?
20. What type of growth do you foresee in the next few years? Why?

INAPPROPRIATE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND DISCRIMINATION

- Federal laws prohibit prospective employers from making hiring decisions based on information unrelated to the job which may constitute discrimination under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
- Reputable employers should be asking questions that are job-related and not to find out personal information
- Questions on these topics are generally considered inappropriate and not be asked about during an interview:
 - Age
 - Disability
 - National origin
 - Family/Children
 - Race
 - Gender
 - Religion or creed
 - Relationship issues/Marital Status

Response Options

- Most interviewers are aware of inappropriate topics
- If asked these questions, it is probably because the interviewer has not been appropriately trained
 - **Option 1:** Refuse to answer or ask for the relevance of the question
 - Risk of possibility of embarrassing the interviewer
 - Risk of negatively impacting your candidacy
 - **Option 2:** Answer the question.
 - Personal decision
 - Know your comfort level with the question and the implications of answering
 - **Option 3:** Answer the "intent" or the "real" question behind the question
 - Example, if an employer asks if you plan to have children
 - Trying to determine what other responsibilities you have and if you can to commit to your career
 - Assure the interviewer you prioritize your career, been successful balancing your career with other responsibilities
 - Example, if you are asked whether you are a United States citizen (which is NOT legal to ask)
 - Respond saying you are authorized to work in the U.S., that is the question the employer is to ask you
 - **Option 4:** Answer with humor or simply deflect the question
 - If asked if you have health problems, answer with something like, "Yes – I'm a workaholic."

Important Considerations

- Ask yourself what the asking these questions question tells you about the workplace.
 - Did it seem like a genuine effort to get to know you better?
 - Do you uncomfortable enough to question the values and culture of the company?

- Remember these as you make your own assessment of organization and position

If You Feel You Have Encountered Discrimination

- Was the discrimination intentional or was the interviewer ignorant of the law?
 - Most discrimination is not intentional
- If asked an inappropriate question, it does not necessarily mean that the intent was to discriminate or that a crime has been committed
- If you believe the discrimination was intentional and you have been discriminated against by an employer, labor union or employment agency by
 - Your race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, or disability
 - Opposing a prohibited practice or participating in an equal employment opportunity matter
- File a charge of discrimination with the [U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission \(EEOC\)](http://www.eeoc.gov).

PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

Personal Preparation

- Articulating exactly why you want to work for the organization and why you want this specific position
- Explain what you have to offer the organization – what makes you unique
- Be ready to explain how your experiences relate to the position, focus on transferrable skills and knowledge
- Identify personal strengths, weaknesses, values and goals, future plans
- Read through common interview questions and prepare answers
- Prepare questions to ask the interviewer

Company Research

- Research about the position, organization, and industry
- Understand the position description, prepare questions to ask the interviewer it is not clear
- Review the organization's literature and website
 - Understand the mission and goals, values
- Be able to explain the organization's business model
- Understand industry trends, events and/or legislation that impacts your field, employer, position
 - Has it been in the news recently?
 - Focus on the positive

Practice

- Practice answers in your head and out loud and with another person
- Rehearse answers to common interview questions in front of the mirror or with friends
- Set up a practice interview with a Career Coach
- Be aware of your interview style, presentation, and body language
- You cannot predict every question
 - Develop strategies to navigate a variety of questions and scenarios
 - Effectively articulate the answers to tough questions

PROFESSIONAL APPEARANCE

- First impression you will make on the interviewer, 90% of the time we stick with our first impression
- Each industry has its own dress code
- Interview dress is business professional, unless told otherwise
 - Remember, you do not work there yet - so it does not matter what the employees are wearing
 - When in doubt, ask the recruiter

Women	Men
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservative, dark suit (knee length skirt or pants) • Avoid low riding pants and tight clothing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservative, dark suit (navy, black or gray; pinstripe or solid)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collared, button-down shirt or modest top • Avoid camisoles, low cut and tank tops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ironed shirt in a conservative color (white or blue) and tie with understated patterns
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comfortable matching shoes – flats or low heel • Plain, non-patterned hosiery if wearing a skirt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Matching belt and shoes, dark socks to mid-calf • Conservative, dress shoes; clean and polished
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservative makeup and nails • Minimal jewelry (avoid bangle/charm bracelets, large earrings) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Haircut, shaven, well groomed • Remove jewelry
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid perfume or scented lotion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid aftershave or cologne.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can bring a padfolio and a small purse/briefcase/laptop bag. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can bring a padfolio and briefcase/laptop bag.

DAY OF THE INTERVIEW

Logistics

- Review your resume, cover letter, job description, and any correspondence with the employer
- Know directions, parking, metro and build in time for traffic and/or delays
- Arrive 10-15 minutes early
- If you are running late, call the interviewer
 - Briefly explain why you are late, offer to reschedule
 - Do not call to say you will be late at the time of your interview, that is too late
- Bring copies of your resume, pad of paper and pen
 - If requested, bring references
- **Turn off your cell phone**
 - Do ***not*** answer a call or text message during your interview
 - If your phone rings, apologize profusely and turn it off
 - Understand if your phone does ring or text, it will severely damage your candidacy
- Carry a professionally appropriate purse/briefcase
- Make sure to ask for the business cards of all involved in the interview

Making a Strong First Impression

- Be courteous to everyone – the interview starts when you drive into the parking lot
- Think positively!
 - You are there for a reason, they selected your resume and wanted to meet you
 - Stay confident and “own” what you have done and what you know
- When the employer greets you, smile and make eye contact, offer a firm handshake
- Use people’s names
 - Helps you remember their names
 - Always use titles (Ms., Mr., Dr.) until invited to use first names
 - Err on the side of being too formal, rather than too casual
- When answering questions, use active verbs and give concise, concrete, and complete examples
- 93% of communication is non-verbal
 - Open and direct eye contact
 - Well balanced posture, upright, relaxed, forward-facing, and open
 - Lean forward slightly, it communicates interest
 - Know your nervous habits and control them

- Use your hands in a relaxed way for communicating excitement and interest
- Smile - conveys sincerity and adds a positive spin to your words
- Use a warm yet firm tone of voice
- Pause slightly before answering a question to gather your thoughts

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

Thank the Interviewer

- Reaching out with a thank you note is expected
- Opportunity to reiterate your interest and highlight information you might have forgotten to share
- Email thank you is appropriate, particularly for a first interview
- Handwritten or email notes are appropriate for final interviews or when meeting with senior members of the organization

INTERVIEW ANXIETY

- It is expected you will have some anxiety when searching for a job, and the interview tends to make people particularly nervous
- Do not try and cover your nerves with an attitude, you do not want to appear arrogant and/or not interested
- Do not stress out about being nervous at the interview – remember the interviewer has been in your shoes
- Give yourself a pep-talk
 - Thinking, “This is not going well,” “I am not going to get the job,” or “I am never going to find a job.”, is almost a self-fulfilling prophecy, if you think you will not succeed you probably will not
 - Replace with positive thoughts, “I am prepared for this interview,” “I am a strong candidate for this job,”
- Being prepared is the best way to interview when feeling anxious, it will allow you to answer the questions well
- Focus on the things you can control – diet, sleep, exercise
- Remember to breathe, deep breaths can help calm nerves

Getting Help with Anxiety

If you are experiencing overwhelming or inhibiting anxiety, contact the Marymount University Counseling Center at (703) 526-6861 or via email at counselingcenter.marymount.edu.

INTERVIEW RESOURCES

- **Mock Interviews**
 - Schedule a mock interview through Jobs4Saints, by calling 703-284-5960 or via email on career.services@marymount.edu
 - Please select Practice Interview as the Appointment Type
- **Career Services Classes and Programs**
 - Visit the website for a full list of classes and programs this semester [For an up-to-date list of upcoming workshops and events, visit our website.](#)
 - Request a class or program - email career.services@marymount.edu include:
 - Name,
 - Club/organization
 - Potential dates and times