Gonzaga Career Center & GAMP

Interview for Success

Preparation and practice is essential to having a successful interview. Planning for the interview and practicing your answers to commonly asked questions will help you acquire the skills and confidence needed to have a prosperous interview and ultimately receive a job offer. Following this timeline will make your interview less stressful and hopefully help you to be offered the position of your choice.

Before:

• **Research**: Spend some time researching the company. Employers are interested in candidates who have spent time getting to know the company and are able to engage in conversation concerning the field, job description and organization and have intelligent questions.

• **Practice**: Brainstorm questions, think about answers, have a friend interview you, and participate in a speed mock interview. These are all great ways to prepare for an interview and polish your communication skills.

• **Be prompt and prepared**: Arrive 10 minutes early. Bring extra copies of your resume, list of references, letters of recommendation, and your list of questions that you will ask the employer.

During:

• **Act professionally**: First impressions count! Dress appropriately and ensure you look professional. Give a firm handshake, a smile, and be friendly.

• **Converse**: Answer questions thoroughly and ask thoughtful questions. The purpose of the interview is for both the employer and the candidate to learn more about each other.

• **Be enthusiastic**: Let the interviewer know you are excited about the position and have the energy and enthusiasm for the job.

After:

• **Follow-up**: Send a thank you note to the interviewer(s) within 48 hours. If you interview with a committee send thank you notes to the entire group. This can be emailed or mailed and should be brief but reiterate your interest in the position and gratitude for the interviewer(s) time.

• **Review the interview process and your performance**: Directly after the interview, review how the process went. Record the name(s) of individuals you interviewed with, major discussion topics and future contact information.

• **Evaluate**: Consider if the job is right for you. Your perception of the job and/or company may change after an interview. Determine if the position is right for you and whether you would be happy. Things to consider: Do the employees seem happy and enthusiastic? Do you like the management style of the supervisor? Did the organization’s values coincide with your own?
Typical Questions

Tell me a little bit about yourself.
This is an open-ended question usually asked to help “break the ice.” The key thing to remember is to keep your response related to the job. Be specific and do not ramble. Your answer should be about two minutes in length.

Why are you interested in working for this organization?
This will show the employer that you have done your homework. Be specific and state how what you have learned through your research relates to your career goals.

What is your major strength/weakness?
Be sure your major strength is directly related to the position. As for your major weakness, put a positive spin on it and make sure it is not related to what is necessary in the position.

Give an example of a problem you encountered in school or at work and explain how you solved it.
Be logical. State the problem and then illustrate the step-by-step process you used to correct the problem. Usually the employer is more interested in the process and your problem solving abilities rather than the outcome.

Where do you see yourself in three years?
Tell the interviewer that you hope to be with the company in whatever capacity you can make the greatest contribution, based on the skills and experiences you have gained over the course of the preceding years.

Describe an experience in which you worked as part of a team.
Being able to both contribute to and lead a team are very important qualities. Give this question serious consideration and develop answers for both situations before the actual interview. Use examples from school projects or membership in a club/organization and talk specifically about YOUR contribution.

Do you have any questions for me?
This is a question you can always anticipate. As a result of your research, you should always have several appropriate job and/or company specific questions to ask.

Questions for the Employer

You should always have questions for the employer. This shows that you have researched the position, organization, and field and are committed to learning more. Questions should be specific to the company and reflect your previous research.

- What aspects of the job are most important for the success?
- What are some of the company’s short term and long term goals?
- What other departments and positions will I be interacting with on a daily basis?
- Please describe the training process and evaluation period.
- How often will my performance be reviewed and by who?
- What is the next step in the hiring process? Will there be additional interviews?