

Interviewing Skills

An interview is a conversation to exchange information; it allows the employer to learn about you and your qualifications while giving you an opportunity to learn about the employer and the position. This can be an anxiety provoking experience, however, thinking of an interview as a conversation to learn about the role while sharing information can relieve some of the stress related to the process. The purpose of an interview is to get a second interview or the job by marketing your skills and experience to demonstrate why you are a good fit for the role and the organization.

Preparing for an interview

Being prepared can help minimize the nervousness prior to an interview, so do your research, practice your responses and be prepared.

- **Research:** It is extremely important to learn as much as possible about the position that you have applied to and the employer. Visit the company's website to learn about the organization such as the mission, current research initiative, etc. You can also look at company's social media groups/pages to see recent activity, google the company to see if it has been mentioned in the news recently. Review the job description carefully to learn as much as possible about the role. Research the industry such as Public Health to stay on top of the industry trends. It's also a good idea to look at interviewer's LinkedIn profile to learn about that individual as you may have something common in your professional backgrounds.
- **Resume:** Study your own resume to brainstorm tailored responses by tying in your experience as it relates to the position. An interviewer may ask you to elaborate on a previous responsibility, you want to be prepared for such a question by recalling your experience prior to the interview.
- **Responses:** Prepare your responses for behavioral-based interview questions by using the STAR method.
 - Situation: Describe the situation or the task that you needed to accomplish.
 - Task: Identify the project on or the goal you were working toward.
 - Action: Describe the actions you took to address the situation with an appropriate amount of detail and tie it to the question that was asked.
 - Result: Close the response by stating the outcome of your situation.
- **Practice:** Craft your responses for common and behavioral-based interview questions and practice your answers by saying them out loud. You do not need to memorize your responses but it is helpful to have a general idea of your response for common interview questions. We recommend making a coaching appointment to schedule a mock interview prior to an upcoming interview.

Things to Remember

- **Timeliness:** Arrive on time for your interview. Aim to arrive ten minutes early to catch your breath and relax before the interview begins.
- **Attire:** The recommended attire for an interview is professional business attire. This can translate to a matching suit of a conservative color (black, navy, charcoal) with a blouse or button-down shirt with tie depending on gender. A business casual attire can also work depending on the industry norms for professional attire.
- **Resume:** Bring a few copies of your resume in a folder or portfolio.
- **Phone:** Silent your phone prior to the interview and leave it in your bag.
- **Body Language:** Sit up straight to maintain a good posture. Offer a firm handshake and maintain good eye contact.

Common Interview Questions

- Tell me about yourself. (This should be a one-minute pitch, a brief summary of your relevant professional background and your interest in the position.)
- Why did you apply for this position? (Craft a response that highlights specific aspects of the organization's mission, work, and target population that appeal to you. Let the employer know that you are knowledgeable about the organization and that the position fits into your career trajectory.)
- You may be asked to elaborate on a particular experience off of your resume. (Talk about your experience by keeping it relevant to the position you have applied for.)
- What are your strengths? (Discuss your strengths by identifying your technical skills and personal characteristics that are most relevant to the employer's hiring needs. Give specific examples to support your identified strengths.)
- What are your weaknesses? (Give an honest answer but DO NOT discuss a weakness in any area that is critical to the position.)

Additional Interview Questions

- Where do you see yourself in five years?
- How are your writing skills?
- How are your analytical skills?
- How are your interpersonal skills?
- How do you manage stressful situations?
- What would your supervisors/colleagues say about you?
- Why should I hire you?
- Why do you want to leave your current job?
- What made you apply for this position?

Sample Behavioral Interview Questions

- Describe how you dealt with a major challenge in your life. What was the outcome?
- Tell me about a time when you had too many things to do and you were required to prioritize your tasks.
- Describe a situation in which you were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to see things from a different perspective.
- Describe a mistake you made and how you learned from it.
- Tell me about a specific time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.
- Can you talk about a time when you showed initiative and took the lead?
- Tell me about a time that you had a conflict with a supervisor and how you resolved it.

Closing the Interview

- Prepare at least 3-5 questions to ask the employer. Show that you have done your research and craft specific questions to ask the employer. This is your opportunity to learn about the position and the organization so it is worth spending some time to come up with questions that can help you decide if this position is a good fit for you as much as it is for the employer.
- Ask for business cards at the end of the interview and send thank you emails within 24-48 hours of the interview. Remind the interviewer by briefly summarizing why you are a good fit for the role and customize the email using the information discussed during the interview.
- Follow up with the employer generally two weeks after the interview or based on the information shared with you about next steps in the process.