

Enhancing Professional and Personal Development

# KEYS TO INTERVIEWING SUCCESS



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# Successful Interviewing

Employers seek top candidates for limited openings. Confidently and articulately communicate your skills and experience. The job interview is your first direct contact with an employer—use it to showcase why you are the best fit.

Since hiring decisions often hinge on the interview, it's crucial to know what to expect and how to prepare. Feeling nervous is completely normal! But the key to success is thorough **preparation and practice**.

## Preparation:

**Know Yourself**—Identify your values, strengths, skills, and accomplishments. Consider:

- What sets you apart from other candidates?
- How would you contribute to the organization?
- What do you hope to gain from the interview?

The better you understand yourself, the more confidently you'll respond to questions.

## **Know the Job, Company, and Industry**

- Understand the role's responsibilities and desired qualifications.
- Research the company's mission, products, competition, size, structure, and culture.

Employers value candidates who demonstrate genuine interest in the role and organization.

## Practice:

### **Enhance Your Interview Skills**

- Develop active listening to understand questions and ask for clarification if needed.
- Review sample questions and prepare confident, specific responses with examples.
- Practice with mock interviews—record yourself or get feedback. Focus on posture, eye contact, pacing, and minimizing distracting verbal ("um, like") and physical (fidgeting, hand gestures) habits.
- For Zoom interviews, use a professional username and background—your digital presence matters as much as in-person.

# Interview Questions

## Sample interview questions:

- Tell me about yourself.
- How have your educational and work experiences prepared you for this position?
- What has been your greatest challenge? What challenges are you looking for in a position?
- What makes you think you can handle this position? What can you contribute to this company?
- What work experiences have been most valuable to you and why?
- What goals have you set for yourself?
- How are you planning to achieve them?
- What interests or concerns do you have about the position or company?
- What is your most significant accomplishment to date?
- If I asked the people who know you for one reason I shouldn't hire you, what would they say?
- We are looking at a lot of great candidates; why are you the best person for this position?
- What two or three things are most important to you in a position?
- Where do you see yourself in 5 years?

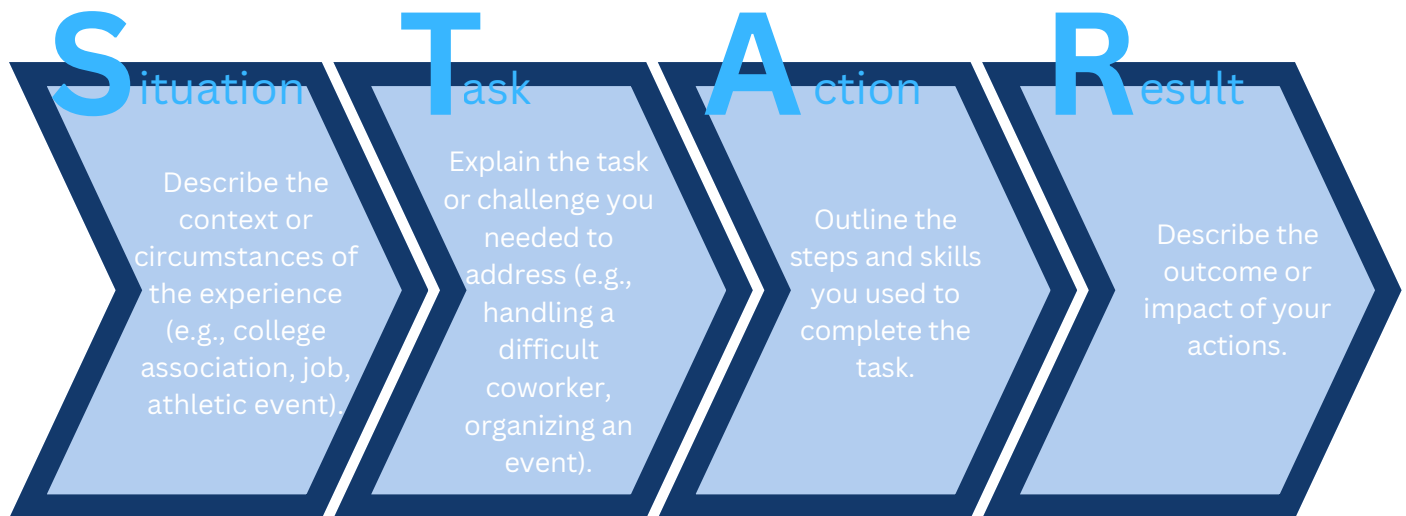
## How to answer "Tell me about yourself":

- Start with the present: School, Major, current role, and interest.
- Mention your skills and experience in any project, volunteer, or work.
- Conclude with career goals.
- Example:
  - Hi, I'm Victoria Bluejay, a senior majoring in Marketing along with a minor in Spanish and communications at Elmhurst University. I'm passionate in how strategic messaging and branding can shape consumer perception and drive engagement. Through my coursework and projects, I've gained hands on experience in areas like digital marketing, social media management, and content creation. I really enjoy combining creativity with data driven strategy to tell impactful stories and connect with audiences. I'm excited about opportunities that allow me to grow my skills while contributing to a team that values innovation and communication.

# Behavioral Interviews

Behavioral interviews are increasingly common in hiring. These questions assess how you've handled past situations, as past behavior is the best predictor of future performance. Listen carefully and respond with a specific, detailed example that directly relates to the question.

Your response should follow the S.T.A.R. rule:



Sample behavioral interview questions:

- Give an example of a time you persuaded someone to see things your way.
- Share a situation where you used judgment and logic to solve a problem.
- How do you track multiple projects and meet deadlines?
- Describe the most significant or creative presentation you've delivered.
- Tell me about a time you successfully communicated with someone who didn't personally like you.
- Describe a time you missed a deadline—what went wrong, and what did you learn?

# Graduate/Professional School Interview

Interviews are a crucial part of the application process for both jobs and some graduate or professional programs. It's important to communicate your skills, qualifications, and experiences in a clear, concise, and confident manner.

Just as the interviewer will assess your background to determine if you're a good fit for the position or program, you should be prepared to ask thoughtful questions about the company or school, its mission, culture, and future opportunities.

Your resume, application strategies, and research are all steps towards securing an interview. Given the interview's role in the selection process, it's essential to know what to expect and how to prepare. Preparation and practice are key to interview success!

## Sample questions from graduate/professional schools

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why are you pursuing this profession?
- What attracted you to this school?
- What experiences have best prepared you for this field?
- What areas or specialties are you considering pursuing?
- What changes do you anticipate making when starting graduate/professional school?
- Can you describe an impactful teamwork experience you've had?
- Which courses have you enjoyed the most or least so far?
- Tell me about a time you received feedback and how you responded.
- Provide an example of a time you creatively solved a problem.
- If you've conducted research, describe your project and its outcomes. What did you learn?
- If you're not accepted to this program, what are your plans?

## Questions for a graduate/professional school committee

- What are the standout features of this program that you are most proud of?
- Are there any special opportunities available to students during the school year or summer?
- Are there any upcoming changes at the school that will affect students' experiences?
- What networking opportunities do you offer students with professionals in the field?
- What percentage of graduates secure employment within 6 to 12 months of graduation?

# Things to Remember

An interview is a two-way conversation. While the interviewer assesses you, be prepared with your own questions to evaluate the company's culture, management style, work environment, and growth opportunities.

## Questions for you to ask the employer

Avoid discussing salary, benefits, or vacation time in the first interview. Instead, consider asking:

1. What are the key responsibilities of this role?
2. What challenges might I face in this position?
3. How is success measured in this role?
4. Why is this position currently open?

Scan for interview questions



## *Preparation*

- Be punctual—arrive at least ten minutes early.
- Show enthusiasm and motivation.
- Bring extra copies of your resume, references, and recommendation letters (if the interviewer asks for recommendation letters).
- Collect a business card from everyone who interviews you.

## *Professional dress*

- It's better to be overdressed than underdressed—what you wear can impact your attitude and confidence! Don't forget to check out the **Career Closet** in the WCCPE for professional attire.

## *After the interview*

- As soon as you leave the interview, jot down notes about what was discussed. Use these notes to highlight your strengths in a thank-you letter. Keep the letter short and send it via email within 24 hours of the interview.

## *How the WCCPE can help you:*

- Attend a Mock Interview Event.
- Practice interviewing on STANDOUT (mock video interview website).
- Arrange for a mock interview with a career advisor.
- Earn interviewing tips from Career Advice on Demand videos.
- Use LinkedIn/Handshake to research an employer.

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## *Sample thank you (note/email)*

Subject line: Thank you - Financial Analyst Interview, Victoria Bluejay

Dear Mr. Brown:

Thank you for the opportunity to interview for the Financial Analyst position at CDX International. It was a pleasure meeting with you and learning more about your company and the role.

As we discussed, my education and hands-on experience in finance have equipped me with strong skills in financial analysis and team collaboration. I have successfully worked on evaluating financial information and making cost-management recommendations, and I've gained experience maintaining accurate daily financial reports at Harris Bank.

I remain very interested in the opportunity to join your team and contribute to the continued success of CDX International. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,  
Victoria Bluejay



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