

Interviewing Success

(804) 289-8547 | careerservices.richmond.edu

Office Hours: M-F, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. | Walk-in Hours: M-F, 2 to 4 p.m.



Alumni &
Career Services

THE INTERVIEW BEGINS WHEN YOU FIRST MAKE CONTACT WITH AN EMPLOYER!

Organizations interview because they have a problem—they have an open position and work is either not being done or someone is being overloaded to do it. Your goal in the interview is to convince the interviewer that you are the solution to that problem. The interview is your opportunity to call attention to how your experiences, education and accomplishments relate to the requirements of the open position.

ASK YOURSELF BEFORE AND AFTER THE INTERVIEW

1. Can you do the job?
2. Do you want to do the job?
3. Will you fit in?

THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

1. Employers will collect resumes, cover letters and possibly other application materials
2. Application materials are reviewed
3. Candidates are selected for an interview
4. The official interview is conducted (phone, Skype, in person)

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Factors that impact first impressions include dress, grooming, handshake and the ability to project a friendly, professional, and relatively relaxed demeanor. See our *Dress for Success* handout.

HOW DO YOU PREPARE FOR THE INTERVIEW?

- Know yourself: your skills, interests, values, and what you can contribute to the organization
- Know the organization: products/services, key people, structure, target markets, mission and goals
- Know the position for which you are interviewing: job requirements, duties/responsibilities, needed skills
- Practice, Practice, Practice! Use InterviewStream on SpiderConnect or schedule a mock interview in Career Services

INTERVIEW FORMATS

On Campus Interviews (OCI)

Each year, Career Services hosts representatives from a variety of organizations who conduct interviews on campus in the Career Services interview rooms on the third floor of Tyler Haynes Commons. These interviews are usually 30 minute screening interviews and may be accompanied by an information session the night before the interview. Students in all majors can participate in on campus recruiting (OCR). For more information or to apply, log in to SpiderConnect and search "Opportunities."

Phone

Phone interviews are typically used to narrow down the candidate list to a manageable number for face-to-face interviewing. In these interviews, the interviewer is looking for reasons to weed out weaker candidates—don't give him or her any reason to reject you. Generally, they last less than 30 minutes. To be successful in phone interviews, you will want to find a quiet space to speak to the employer at the appointed time. Use a land line if possible. Just because the employer cannot see you does not mean that your clothes will not make a difference in how you present yourself on the phone so wear something that makes you feel confident. The interviewer will be taking notes and you may not get any audio cues as to how your answer was received. The lack of visual clues may also make it hard to judge how the interview is going. Do not worry about filling in the quiet. Provide strong examples using the STAR technique outlined in this handout and speak slowly and clearly. Avoid "um," "I mean," "you know," and other distracting verbal fillers. Though you can't see your interviewer, you should still maintain enthusiasm and energy in your conversation. Practice beforehand with a friend or a Career Services advisor.

On Site Interviews

On-site interviews allow you to see the culture of the organization and meet different people who work for the organization. These interviews can be one hour or last a full day depending on the industry. You may interview with one person or a variety of people throughout the interview.

Panel Interviews

Panel interviews are often rapidly paced with questions coming from a variety of individuals. To achieve rapport during this type of interview, remember to maintain eye contact with and involve each person on the panel. Get a list of all those in attendance for thank-you notes.

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INTERVIEW QUESTION TYPES

Traditional: Most interviews contain at least some “traditional” questions.

EXAMPLES OF TRADITIONAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	ANSWER STRATEGIES
Tell me about yourself.	This is your opportunity to summarize your major skills and experience as they relate to the job. This is NOT your life story or a regurgitation of your resume.
What are your strengths and weaknesses?	It is helpful to include an example of when you have used your strength. When you identify a weakness include how you compensate or strengthen and make sure it does not relate to the job description.
Why should we hire you?	What unique qualities do you bring to the position? What makes you stand out from the other candidates?
What interests you about our organization?	Do your research. Be specific!!
What have you learned from your mistakes?	Use examples to show how you have developed skills from past mistakes.

Behavioral: These questions are based on the premise that the best predictor of future success is past success.

Specific competencies that employers look for in college students/graduates include:

- Analytical skills
- Problem solving
- Time management
- Critical thinking
- Ability to deal with challenging situations
- Planning and organizing
- Teamwork
- Communication skills
- Motivation and energy

EXAMPLES OF BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	ANSWER STRATEGIES
Tell me about a time when you demonstrated excellent analytical skills.	<p>Use the S.T.A.R. Technique to formulate your answers:</p> <p>S/T – Situation/Task: describe a specific situation</p> <p>A – Action: describe the specific action you took</p> <p>R – Result: explain the result of your action</p>
Give me an example of a tense situation at work or school, and how you resolved it. Looking back, what could you have done differently? What did you learn?	
Describe a time when you completed a specific task which you did not find interesting or perhaps even resented doing. How did you proceed? What was the outcome?	
Give me a specific example of a time when you sold your supervisor (or professor) on an idea or a concept. How did you proceed? What was the result?	

Case: Case questions present a problem and ask the candidate to propose logical steps to solve it. See separate handout on case interviews.

POTENTIAL QUESTIONS TO ASK THE INTERVIEWER

Be prepared to ask the interviewer at least one or two questions that you cannot get the answer to from their websites.

Example of questions:

- How would you describe the culture of the office/department?
- What have you enjoyed most about working for this organization?
- What are the next steps in this process?

INTERVIEW FOLLOW-UP

- Take notes on high and low points
- Follow up promptly with a thank you note (email or handwritten – see Thank You Tip Sheet) to everyone who participated in your interview process
- Evaluate and consider the position and the organization – is this a good choice for you?
- Practice – learn from your experience