

INTERVIEWING & JOB OFFER EVALUATION

INTERVIEWING

Interviews are used for both full-time and internship opportunities, as well as service, graduate/professional school, and fellowship opportunities. They are perhaps the most significant part of the hiring/evaluation process. Both you and the interviewer have your own objectives:

YOUR GOALS ARE TO:

- Showcase your skills and interpersonal qualities
- Demonstrate that you are a match for the position through specific examples of past experiences
- Determine if the position/organization are a good fit for you

THE INTERVIEWER'S GOALS ARE TO SEE:

- If you have the skills to do the job
- If you are motivated to do the job
- If you are a fit with the organization's culture

PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

Preparation is the most important part of your job or internship interview. Lay the foundation and follow these steps to maximize success.

Conduct thorough research on the organization and industry. Employers view knowledge of their organization as a critical factor in applicant evaluation because it demonstrates the candidate's interest, enthusiasm, and seriousness about the position.

Tailor interview responses to describe experiences in relationship to the skills and qualifications the organization is seeking. Conduct a mock interview with a recruiter, Career Counselor, or former employer.

INTERVIEW SUCCESS

PRACTICE INTERVIEW RESPONSES

RESEARCH THE ORGANIZATION AND THE INDUSTRY

ANALYZE THE POSITION

Know the qualifications and responsibilities, outlined on the job description. Identify the key skills the position requires and describe a time you have used each of the skills using the STAR technique (p.50)

THE FOUNDATION - KNOW YOURSELF

Know your VIPS (Values, Interests, Personality, Skills). Practice communicating these concisely and clearly as they relate to the position, organization and industry. Review your experiences. Analyze your academic training, leadership experiences, critical thinking skills and non-academic activities in relationship to the position.

TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

RESUME/TRADITIONAL

This form of interviewing goes through your resume. Questions are about your education, prior work experience, and activities. It is very straightforward. Be ready with examples.

BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEWING

Based on the principle that the best way to predict future behavior is from past behavior, this method of interviewing is one of the most commonly used. Behavioral questions typically begin with "Tell me about a time when..." or "Give me an example of when..." You should utilize the STAR technique (p. 50) to describe how your specific experiences relate to the job. Utilize Big Interview* for practice.

**Please refer to undergradcareers.nd.edu for specific resources*

CASE

Some companies, especially those in consulting and finance, are concerned not only with your experience but also with your ability to address complex problems and reach logical conclusions. The emphasis here is on your thought process; there is not necessarily a right or wrong answer.

**Please refer to undergradcareers.nd.edu for specific resources*

TECHNICAL

Companies in financial services, accountancy, technology, engineering, or science may ask questions related to academic coursework or concepts (e.g. programming skills) and/or industry knowledge (e.g. market indices).

**Please refer to undergradcareers.nd.edu for specific resources*



FOR PROFIT

ORGANIZATION KNOWLEDGE

- Annual Report, especially the letter to Shareholders
- Company history
- Company mission statement
- Company leaders (CEO, etc.)
- Organizational structure
- Principle products/line of business
- Primary locations
- Stock price/trends; PE ratio
- Annual revenue
- Capitalization

INDUSTRY KNOWLEDGE

- Industry background/general information
- Competitors
- Relative size in industry/market share
- Industry trends and facts
- Industry jargon

CURRENT EVENTS

- New products/lines of business
- Recent news articles about company and/or industry

RESOURCES*

ReferenceUSA, IBISWorld, Business Insights Essentials, Business Source Complete, Mergent Online
 *Please refer to undergradcareers.nd.edu for specific resources

NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION

ORGANIZATION KNOWLEDGE

- Mission and services
- Population(s) served
- How the organization refers to its constituents—clients, guests, patrons, members
- Executive Director, CEO or President of local, regional, national, and/or international levels
- Income and assets; sources of funding and percentage of each to overall funds
- Local, regional, national, and world aspects of the organization
- Size of local and/or national organization
- Volunteer structure and size
- Board of Directors
- Partnerships with community, other agencies and organizations, corporations
- Initiatives, achievements, and impact measures from the Annual Report

SECTOR KNOWLEDGE

- Current size, numbers served, number of employees within the nonprofit sector
- Sector trends and current economic state

CURRENT EVENTS

- Recent news articles about the organization
- Recent articles about the topic or population of concern to the organization

RESOURCES*

Idealist, National Council of Nonprofits GuideStar, National Center for Charitable Statistics, Nonprofit Career Core Competencies
 *Please refer to undergradcareers.nd.edu for specific resources

GOVERNMENT AGENCY

ORGANIZATION KNOWLEDGE

- Public service mission
- Top position titles and names in agency
- Level of government at which the agency functions (city, state, federal)
- Branch of government
- Size and jurisdiction of office and its parent agency
- Recruiting terminology
- Political appointments, elected, and hired positions within the agency
- Partnerships with nonprofit organizations
- Contracts and business relationships with for-profit organizations
- Relationship of government agency to other government departments or agencies; differences between focus of public services and connection between them

SECTOR KNOWLEDGE

- Sector trends and current economic state

CURRENT EVENTS

- Recent news articles about the organization
- Recent articles about topics relevant to the agency's focus and services

RESOURCES*

Index of U.S. Government Departments and Agencies, The Guardian Public Sector Careers, Government Executive News, GoGovernment, Best Places to Work in the Federal Government 2016

*Please refer to undergradcareers.nd.edu for specific resources

COMMON INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

You can't anticipate the questions you'll receive in an interview. However, common themes include applications of analytical, problem solving, and decision-making skills; leadership development; creativity; teamwork; and personal development. These should be answered using specific examples. Interviews often include a mix of different types of questions.

RESUME-BASED/QUALIFICATIONS

- Why are you interested in our organization? Industry?
- What work experience has been the most valuable to you and why?
- Why did you choose to attend Notre Dame and how did you select your major(s)?
- How do you think you have changed personally in the past (five) years?
- What challenges are you looking for in a position?
- What three trends do you see in the future for our industry?
- Tell me about yourself.
- Why do you want to work in (career field)?
- Why do you feel you will be successful in this program?
- What is your greatest strength/weakness, and how will it affect your performance in this program?
- What are some of the most creative things you have done?
- What characteristics do you think are important for this position?
- Tell me about your summer internship.
- How has your education at Notre Dame prepared you for a _____ position?
- Where do you see yourself in five years?
- What has been the biggest accomplishment in your life and why?
- Why should I hire you?

BEHAVIORAL

- Give an example of a problem you have solved and the process you used.
- Describe a situation in which you had a conflict with another individual and how you dealt with it.
- What idea have you developed and implemented that was particularly creative or innovative?
- Tell me about a team project of which you are particularly proud and your contribution.
- What types of situations put you under pressure, and how do you deal with the pressure?
- Tell me about a situation when you had to persuade another person to your point of view.
- Describe a time when you added value to an existing work process.
- Describe a leadership role you have held, and tell me why you committed your time to it.
- In thinking about a past position you have held, what did you do to make your duties more effective?
- Describe one of the toughest competitive situations you have faced and how you handled it.
- What has been one of your greatest disappointments and how did you respond?
- Tell me about a time you failed.
- Describe a situation in which you were criticized, and how you responded.
- Tell me about a time you went above the call of duty.



THE PSYCHOLOGY BEHIND COMMON INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

It is important to know that some employers ask questions that seem very simple; however, the hidden meaning behind the questions may not be simple at all.

WHAT INTERVIEWERS ASK YOU

1. Describe yourself. How does your background qualify you for this job?
2. What are your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
3. Why this job? Why this organization?
4. How would your peers describe you?
5. What makes you think you will succeed in this organization?
6. Why should we hire you? What do you bring to this job?

WHAT THEY REALLY WANT TO KNOW IS

1. Can you take an incredible amount of information, organize it quickly in your head, and present it in a concise and articulate fashion?
2. How mature are you in dealing with your weaknesses? Can you identify methods for self-improvement?
3. Have you done your homework? Are you analytical?
4. How do you see yourself? Are you a leader or a follower? (A quiet confidence is needed here—not arrogance or egotism).
5. Have you accurately identified the skills and expertise needed to succeed? Can you prove you have them?
6. How are your promotion and persuasion skills? Are you believable? If you can't sell yourself, how will you be able to sell our products/company/ideas?

STAR TECHNIQUE

The STAR technique provides a concise and thorough framework for organizing responses to behavioral interview questions. Describing specific experiences adds credibility to your responses regarding your qualifications for the position. Begin by analyzing and identifying themes within the job description. Then reflect on your experiences to identify examples of when you demonstrated the skills, qualities, and knowledge required for the position. You should draw from classroom, extracurricular, volunteering, and job/internship experiences. Think about what skill(s) you can highlight with each example (ex: teamwork, communication, analytical, etc.) as well as the questions for which you can use each example.

Note, when providing examples that involved a team, be sure to balance a description of the team's efforts with your specific role (see the following STAR examples). If you don't have much team experience, consider joining a club or participating in a volunteering trip!

SITUATION	Describe the context of the situation - class project, student activity, volunteer, job, etc.
TASK	Describe the task and your specific role - goal, problem to be solved, improvement to be made, etc.
ACTION	Describe the actions you took - planning and implementation done to reach goal, solve a problem, etc.
RESULT	Describe the outcomes of your action - impact, influence, change resulting from your action, etc.



STAR APPROACH IN ACTION



SITUATION: As a member of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers, a student organization with 100 members,...

TASK: ...I suggested establishing a mentoring program for area junior high school students to increase their interest in math and science and as a way for engineering students to explore careers in teaching.

ACTION: I formed a committee to research the idea and then develop procedures, policies, and marketing plans. To recruit participants, we designed an email to send to all mechanical engineering students. After presenting our proposal to a local middle school science teacher, we were welcomed into the classroom.

RESULT: Ten pairs of students were active in the mentoring program last year. As seniors, two engineering graduates entered the teaching profession and the junior high students started an engineering club after school. We have already started organizing this year's program with the same teacher.



STAR APPROACH IN ACTION



SITUATION: In the class Ethical Leadership, we discussed real world problems and the types of leadership required to address those problems.

TASK: As a team of six, we were assigned a project on habitat destruction. We were asked to develop a comprehensive project including a definition of the problem, our proposed solution, and an explanation of the type of leadership necessary to implement the solution.

ACTION: I took the initiative to make meeting plans throughout the semester before everyone's schedules became too packed. We drafted a timeline for our project, setting goals for each meeting. At every step of the project, we ensured that tasks were divided equally among the team. I sent out reminders to team members before upcoming deadlines. For the final day, we were each in charge of part of the project presentation. We each made our slides for the PowerPoint presentation, and I combined the slides to ensure the format was congruent.

RESULT: Our presentation received positive feedback from a panel of professors and our classmates. Since we each had a share of the project, we were knowledgeable in our respective sub-topics. The professor complimented us on our teamwork.

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE INTERVIEWER

Interviewers typically give you the opportunity to ask questions at the end of an interview. Make the most of this opportunity - it can be a red flag to employers if you don't ask any questions. The questions you ask will help you gain information to aid in your decision-making process. Your questions should focus on the industry, the organization, and the position.

INDUSTRY QUESTIONS

- If you were interviewing with a retail company, a good industry question might be: Despite the rise of artificial intelligence (AI) based solutions to reshape the retail workforce, only a handful of traditional brands have been effective at implementing AI strategies to drive business efficiency. In your opinion, is AI the best way to stay relevant? What else can retailers do to adapt?
- If you were interviewing with an automotive company, a good question might be: Product recalls not only affect a company's current revenues, but could also affect its long-term performance by reducing customer confidence. What steps can be taken to reduce the number of recalls, and if recalls do occur, how can customer confidence be restored?
- In what ways has this organization been most successful in terms of products/services over the past several years compared to competitors in (this industry)?
- What challenges and opportunities do you see over the next two years regarding growth in (this industry)?
- What kind of changes do you expect to see in (this industry) over the next two to three years?

ORGANIZATION QUESTIONS

- If you were interviewing with a publishing company, a good organization question might be: Could you talk about the data metrics that help drive major publishing decisions, such as when to develop an imprint?
- Could you talk about the key data that drives goal setting and strategic planning for (the organization)?
- How would you describe the culture of your organization?
- What has been the professional growth track for other students who have been recruited by your company over the past 3-5 years?
- Does your organization encourage its employees to pursue additional education?
- How do you feel my style will complement the team culture?

POSITION QUESTIONS

- Describe the rotational training program associated with this position/internship. How is employee performance evaluated during the training period?

- What career paths have others followed after completing the program?
- As an intern, what kind of projects will I receive?
- What characteristics best describe individuals who are successful in this position?
- How is job performance evaluated?
- Describe the three top challenges that I'll face in this job.
- What are the key deliverables and outcomes that this position must achieve?



INTERVIEWING TIPS

- Arrive 5-10 minutes early. Give yourself plenty of time for travel.
- Map your route, parking, etc. in advance. Have the office phone number on hand in case you need to contact them.
- Turn cell phone OFF (not vibrate).
- Bring a notepad, extra copies of your resume, a copy of your transcript and your project, design, art, or architecture portfolio when appropriate.
- Build rapport with the interviewer(s) in the first five seconds. Greet the interviewer(s) with a smile, firm handshake, and make eye contact.
- Brief silence is OK—if you are stumped by a question, take a moment to collect your thoughts. Asking for clarification (depending on the question) may also buy you some time and/or make it more clear.
- Be prepared with thoughtful questions.
- Close the interview reiterating your interest in the organization and the position. Understand the next steps and the timetable. You may have to ask for this information.
- Ask for a business card in order to follow-up with a thank you note.
- Remember, any interaction with the organization is a part of the decision-making process (information sessions, meeting the recruiter at a tailgate, pre-nights, and talking with greeters, receptionists, or office assistants).

INTERVIEW DRESS

What you wear conveys how important the opportunity is to you. The primary goal in dressing for an interview is to feel good while projecting an image that matches the requirements of the position and organization. The professional standard is to wear a two-piece, matching suit in gray, navy, or black. If are uncertain about attire, check with a counselor at the CCD or an alumnus at the organization.

SHIRTS

Wear a long-sleeved, collared, button down shirt in white, light blue, or another calm color.



TIES

Whether stripes or small dots, patterns should be subtle.



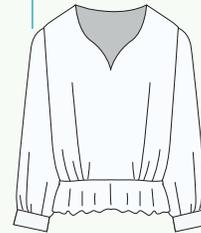
SUITS

A two-piece matching suit in navy, dark gray, or black is appropriate. A skirt and blazer combo also works.



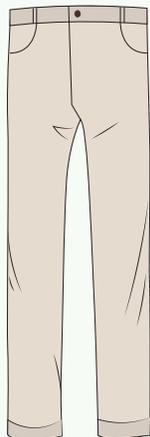
BLOUSE/TOPS

Wear a professional top in neutral or pastel colors.



DRESSES

A dress can also be worn, even under a blazer. Like skirts, the dress should be knee-length.



SHOES, SOCKS, & BELTS

Wear dress shoes, dark socks, and a belt to match your shoes

PANTS

Khaki pants fall in the category of business casual

WRINKLE-FREE

Whatever you decide to wear, make sure your attire is wrinkle-free



SKIRTS

Skirts should always be knee-length

SHOES

Coordinate your outfit with flats or low closed-toe heels in dark or neutral colors.

PANTS

Blue pants also fall in the category of business casual

BUSINESS CASUAL

Business casual is one notch down from traditional interviewing attire. When the dress code is business casual, keep in mind it's not appropriate to wear your favorite old t-shirt, ripped jeans, old sneakers, or flip-flops. Remember the "business" part of business casual, and leave your old comfortable clothes at home. Outfits should still be clean, pressed, and fit properly. Sandals or peep-toe shoes may be permissible in some offices but save flip-flops for the weekend.

NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Along with attire, non-verbal communication is also an important factor to keep in mind while interviewing.

- Be aware of your body language and smile
- Be relaxed, but exude energy; have a firm handshake
- Avoid distracting body motions, such as adjusting hair and clothes
- Make eye contact when speaking with the interviewer(s)
- Sit comfortably, but attentively with good posture

POST INTERVIEW FOLLOW-UP

A thank you note restating your interest in the position and the organization should be sent within 24 hours of each interview, to each person with whom you spoke. Make each note somewhat different and try to reference something you discussed in the interview. Take no further action until at least one week beyond the date when they said they would contact you. At that time a phone call to see if a decision has been made is appropriate.

THANK YOU NOTE EXAMPLE

It was a pleasure to meet with you about the Marketing Representative position at ABC Organization. I especially appreciated talking with you about...

If given the opportunity, I am confident I can make valuable contributions to your organization. Thank you for the time you took to interview me. I look forward to hearing from you about this position.

JOB OFFER EVALUATION

After receiving an offer, you may ask yourself: Should I take it? How do I decide between multiple offers? How do I accept or decline the offer?

SHOULD I ACCEPT ANY OFFER?

Think very carefully about the offer and don't accept until you are ready, as an acceptance must be made in good faith with an intention to honor the acceptance. Some questions to ask yourself include:

- Are the organization's values and culture in sync with mine? Did I engage well with the people I met?
- Is the work challenging? Do they provide me with quality professional development opportunities? Will it take me on my desired professional path in a reasonable time frame?
- Even if it isn't the exact position I was hoping for, will I gain skills that will positively influence my career/professional development?
- Does the compensation package (salary, benefits, vacation, health and retirement plans) meet my needs?
- Is it in a geographic location that interests me?
- How do I feel about the required level of travel?

Use the matrix on the right to help with your evaluation. If you would like to discuss your situation please contact The CCD to speak with a Career Counselor.

ACCEPTING AN OFFER

When accepting a job offer, you should do so in writing by restating your interest and the key components of your job offer. However, any acceptance (even verbal) must only be given with the full intention of honoring that acceptance.



JOB OFFER EVALUATION MATRIX

Create your own list of features that matter to you and list them in order of importance, with the most important feature appearing at the top of your list. Rate the features of each company's offer on a scale of one to five (5=excellent; 1=poor). This is one way to compare job offers. List in order of importance to you. **See the questions on the left (Should I Accept Any Offer?) for guidance.**

FEATURE	COMPANY 1	COMPANY 2	COMPANY 3
	Salary (EXAMPLE)	5	4
Opportunity to travel (EXAMPLE)	3	4	5
TOTAL RATING			

The Center for Career Development's Ethical Job & Internship Search Student Policy requires that you also notify all other organizations to whom you have applied that you have accepted an offer and wish to withdraw your name from further consideration.

You may also consider notifying and thanking all those who have helped you in your job search, including those who served as references, provided you leads, and gave advice.

WITHDRAWING/DECLINING AN OFFER

Sending an email or letter when withdrawing from the interview process or declining an offer is important to assure good relations with the organization.

- Withdraw from the interview process/decline an offer as soon as you know you are no longer interested, or immediately after accepting an offer from another organization
- Withdrawing/declining tactfully in a timely manner will not offend the organization
- Be positive—let them know it was a difficult decision, express your appreciation, and thank them for the opportunity

EXPLODING OFFERS

Exploding offers are those with short deadlines. The Center for Career Development's Employer Job Offer Policy outlines the timing required for employers to provide students to make decisions. If you are faced with an exploding offer, please contact the Center for Career Development; we can help negotiate the date if the employer recruited on campus through the Center for Career Development.

REQUESTING MORE TIME

When faced with a decision to accept an offer that you feel you can't make in the time allotted, you can consider requesting more time from the employer. You may need a phone conversation with the employer about your request to extend the offer deadline, but it's wise to provide a "heads-up" to the employer regarding the nature of your request before the call. Make sure to express your enthusiasm and gratefulness for the offer. Odds are extremely low that the recruiter will rescind the offer just for asking - and if they do, it's probably best to steer clear of the company anyway. Do not wait until the last minute to ask for an extension - a week or more before the deadline is preferred.

If you are struggling to make a decision or are feeling pressured by a company to make a quick decision, please make an appointment with the Center for Career Development - we can help you evaluate your options. See the CCD website for examples of ways to ask an employer for more time to consider an offer.

DECLINING AN OFFER

Dear Mr./Mrs. Representative:

Thank you for offering me a position as a (position title) with (name of organization). I appreciate the efforts that everyone in your organization have made on my behalf.

Deciding where to begin my career has been a difficult decision. Although your offer was very attractive, I have elected to decline the invitation to join (name of organization), and accept another position.

Again, thank you for your kindness and consideration. I wish you success in your recruitment efforts.

Sincerely,
(written signature)
(Your name typed here)

ACCEPTING AN OFFER

Dear Mr./Mrs. Representative:

Thank you for offering me a position with (name of organization) in your (location or division). I appreciate the efforts that everyone in your organization have made on my behalf.

After giving your offer serious consideration, I am confident that joining your firm will offer the challenges and rewards I seek. I enthusiastically accept your offer of employment at an annual salary of \$_____, and a start date of (date). Becoming a (position title) with (name of organization) will provide me the opportunity to make a genuine contribution and to develop professionally.

On (date) I plan to be in the area to look for suitable housing. Would you please send me any pertinent information you have available?

I want to express my appreciation again for the many courtesies you and others in your organization have extended to me. I am looking forward to beginning a rewarding career with (name of organization).

Sincerely,
(Written signature)
(Type your name here)