

# INTERVIEWING & JOB OFFER EVALUATIONS

## 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.

### 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 to describe how your specific experiences relate to the job. Utilize Big Interview\* for practice.

*\*Please refer to [undergradcareers.nd.edu](http://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.

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### 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).

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# Informational Interviewing

This is one of the most common ways to network and gives you the opportunity to connect meaningfully with a professional. Informational interviewing is asking someone about what they do - it is not asking for a job or internship.

## Primary Goals

- Investigate a specific career field and learn about important issues in that field
- Narrow down career options or uncover options you never knew existed
- Obtain advice on where your skills might be applied
- Broaden your network of contacts for future reference

## WHO SHOULD I INTERVIEW?

You can contact a wide range of professionals from a variety of fields. Contacts generally fall into one of two categories: people you know and people you don't know. It helps to ask people you know to introduce you to people they know who work in your desired field.

### People you know:

Friends  
Family  
Neighbors  
Co-workers  
Professors

### People you don't know:

Alumni  
Professional Organization Members  
Employers  
Social Media Contacts

## HOW DO I PREPARE?

Preparing for an informational interview allows you to be more confident, make a positive impression, and ensures you get your questions answered. It also allows you to respond to questions about yourself more effectively.

To prepare, you should:

- Identify what you want to get out of the meeting
- Research the professional and his/her company
- Research the industry
- Review your experiences, interests, and skills
- Practice your introduction
- Develop a list of questions

If the meeting will be in person, be sure to arrive a few minutes early and dress in formal or business casual attire (depending on the industry and venue). If the meeting will be virtual or over the phone, be sure to identify a quiet space you can use in advance that has a strong internet connection.



## WHAT QUESTIONS SHOULD I ASK?

### Sample Questions for an Informational Interview:

- How did you enter this job/career?
- What do you do in a typical day/week?
- What are the most interesting aspects of your job?
- What do you like least about this career? And what do you find dull or repetitious?
- How would you recommend someone break into this field?
- What educational background is required?
- What kind of person would be best suited for this career in terms of personality, interests, and skills?
- What kind of experience or internship would help in this career?
- Are there specific courses a student might take that would be particularly beneficial in this field?
- Is travel expected with this job?
- What types of training do companies give to people entering this field?
- What technologies are integrated into this career?
- What special advice would you give to a young person entering this field?
- How do you see the jobs in the field changing over the next five years? What can I do to prepare myself for such changes?
- How can I learn more about this career/job?
- What professional organizations are active and responsive in this career field?
- Are there any other individuals you recommend I speak with to learn more about this career?
- What are some job titles of entry-level positions in the career field? What is the career trajectory?
- What is a typical salary range in this field?
- What advice would you give on locating opportunities, the time frame for applying, and the application process?

## Virtual Interviews

Companies see many benefits in using video technology to interview candidates. With a video interview, employers have most of the benefits of seeing a candidate in person, but without the expense of actually meeting them. More employers are utilizing Skype, Zoom, or other virtual formats, especially if you are interviewing from abroad to interview now days. These two-way live video calls are a modern you to communicate with interviewers in real time and simulate a face-to-face interaction. It's important to plan ahead and present yourself in the best way possible to ensure a successful virtual interview.

### Technology & Location

When planning for a virtual interview always check the signal strength of your internet connection. Make sure that you have a strong wifi connection - wherever you're interviewing at - well before the scheduled interview.

If using a laptop or ipad for the virtual interview, always check battery percentage way ahead of time. Keep the form of technology you're using plugged in to a charger or have one near by incase the battery drains easily.

Regarding location, arrange for a quiet space with a non-distracting background behind you.

The Meruelo Family Center for Career Development has interview rooms on the 5th floor of Duncan Student Center designed specifically for students who are interviewing virtually. Each room has wireless internet, IP video phone, flat screen TV, wireless keyboard, a web camera, and ports for USB or HDMI connection to the TV.

If using one of our rooms, we recommend coming at least 15 minutes ahead of the scheduled interview to get settled in, test our technology, and make certain everything is working properly.



## PRACTICE ONLINE INTERVIEWING

Gain access to Big Interview at [nd.biginterview.com](http://nd.biginterview.com).

### Big Interview

Big Interview is an online interactive interview preparation program. With Big Interview, users get hands-on practice with mock interviews that are tailored to specific industries, jobs, and experience levels. Utilizing Big Interview is a perfect way to conquer your nerves, gain confidence, and go in to any job interview well prepared.

### Benefits of Big Interview

- From learning Job Interview Fundamentals in Module 1 to learning how to close the interview and Ask Smart Questions in Module 10, their full video curriculum leads users through every step of the interviewing process.
- Choose from different interview scenarios.
- Participate in in-depth lessons, and practice interviews that scale in difficulty as training progresses.
- Practice general, behavioral, and technical questions.
- Save practice interviews to review later and get feedback.
- Learn perfect delivery and conquer the nerves with interactive mock interview tools.
- Get a well-rounded view of the type of questions to expect during an interview
- Participate in interactive mock interviews and see sample answers for 1100+ industries.
- Get constructive feedback in a low stress environment.



### On-Camera Presence

Present yourself professionally by dressing in business professional attire. Even though it's virtual, it's important to dress just as you would for an in-person interview. Be mindful of your body language. Make eye contact with the camera instead of looking directly at your computer screen. Focus on the camera to maintain eye contact with your interviewer.

**Companies**

**ORGANIZATION KNOWLEDGE**

- Annual Report, especially the letter to Shareholders
- History
- 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-specific terminology

**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/interviews](http://undergradcareers.nd.edu/interviews) 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/interviews](http://undergradcareers.nd.edu/interviews) 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  
 \*Please refer to [undergradcareers.nd.edu/interviews](http://undergradcareers.nd.edu/interviews) 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!

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

### STAR Technique - Example

**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.

### STAR Technique - Worksheet

**SITUATION:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**TASK:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**ACTION:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**RESULT:** \_\_\_\_\_

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## 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).